
THE BOTTOM LINE

ALL THE NEWS FOR OPSEU LOCAL 420

No. 12

Tuesday 21 March 2006

TEACHERS, COUNSELLORS AND LIBRARIANS ON STRIKE

By Lorne Thompson – “I didn’t know that you were in our union” was said to me more than once during the past two weeks. Although Loyalist has no Librarians in our bargaining unit, we do have three Counsellors on the picket line.

Loyalist was fortunate to hire Cathy Waite in 2005. She had an offer from another College but chose to join us. Cathy has a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Toronto and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology (Trent). She has more than a decade of experience as a Counsellor in a variety of settings.

Laurie Pratt currently holds a Master’s degree in Counselling, an undergraduate degree in science and is currently on sabbatical. She is studying for her M.S.W. at Wilfrid Laurier University.

I have undergraduate degrees in social work and education and a Master of Education in Counselling. The 1984 strike led to significant numbers of new faculty being hired. I was one of those who were hired. I chose to become active in our union local and have had the honour of serving as a Steward for much of my 20 years at Loyalist.

When I first joined the faculty union at Loyalist I discovered that Counsellors did not have vacation parity with teachers. Counsellors had 30 days vacation while teachers had 44 days. I joined the Counselling Department at Loyalist directly from working as a high school Guidance Counsellor where all faculty had July and August as our vacation period.

Counsellors lobbied for vacation parity and won that fight. My coordinator at that time was certain that our little victory would lead to the Colleges laying off all Counsellors to seek cheaper alternatives.

Our current goal as Counsellors is to obtain what teachers already have – a Standard Workload Formula. Counsellors need a SWF to help them maintain reasonable and attainable workloads.

Counsellors at Loyalist are involved in both recruitment and retention activities. In the fall semester of 2005 Counsellors met with close to 500 students and prospective students. Approximately 60% of our appointments were with females. This is consistent with the gender breakdown for our College (60/40 – females/males).

Almost 30% of our appointments were with prospective post-secondary program students. We provide prospective students with information about programs, employment information, connect them with faculty members, and we often do career assessments for them. The Counselling Coordinator can expect to field 35-40 email enquiries a week and 20-25 telephone calls from prospective or current students.

Loyalist Counsellors also do a great deal of personal counselling with our students. We deal with issues such as anxiety, suicidal ideation, self-harm, addictions, relationship issues, financial problems, health concerns, hunger, effects of abuse, and family problems. We are legally required to keep detailed clinical notes of all our sessions with students.

About 35% of our current students who see us, do so for personal reasons. Of the students who saw us for personal reasons in the fall semester, 86% have persisted with their studies into the winter semester. When considering that many of these students had significant personal obstacles to overcome, such a high retention rate is one that we are very proud of.

Counsellors play an important role in keeping our campus safe. We work with our students to find healthy ways to deal with anxiety, frustration, and anger. On occasion, we make recommendations to have students removed from the campus for safety reasons.

Our teaching colleagues are responsible for referring many of the students who we work with to us. We thank you for your confidence in our abilities and we look forward to returning to work with you.

*Lorne Thompson,
OPSEU Local 420
Executive Committee
Secretary*



Photo: Harry Plummer

Faculty Reflections on Strikes Past

Walking the Line

By Michael Oldfield – The strike in 1989 added new meaning to the words of Johnny Cash!

The world looked pretty bright and rosy for this relatively new teacher then. Orientation for our first years had gone extremely well and it looked as though we were on our way to another exciting year in the Advertising program. Then came the news . .

Were On-Strike!

My first reaction was typical . . . I'd rather be in the classroom . . . what's this got to do with me for crying out loud? Life's pretty good ; we don't need this. But as I read more about the issues and talked with my far more experienced colleagues I came to look at the bigger picture. Light dawned ; this WAS about me, it WAS about the students and it WAS about maintaining and, yes, improving the quality of education students and society trusted us to deliver. Yes, this *was* MY strike.

So there we were, in the meeting hall, listening to our representatives and — in my case — learning for the first time in my life how the days and possibly weeks ahead would unfold. Nervous, yes. Concerned, yes. This was a brand new experience. But something strange started to happen. For the first time in my life I felt involved with, and committed to, something bigger, greater and more important than my own life and interests. I'd often envied those who had been able to rally around a cause, but somehow, up until that point, my efforts had been happily focused on career and family. And yes, sadly in that order.

Things at home became a little easier once I was able to articulate the *whys* and *hows* of the situation. A quick look at the budget made us realize what we could, and would have to, do if the strike continued for months rather than weeks. Knowing that the cause was *just* made the tough decisions easier to make. Picking up the first Strike Pay cheque was an interesting moment, though. We all know that feeling, don't we?

The days moved along. Some were excruciatingly slow, some flew by. As the days turned into weeks the money belt got slimmer and slimmer, but somehow the resolve seemed to strengthen in direct proportion. There was a special bond. We were facing the same challenges together. Clearly, I was now part of something very special indeed.

Folks were thoughtful and generous when out on the line. Hot coffee arrived, seemingly out of no where. Gulped down with appreciation I noticed that those with “experience” of strikes took a more gentle approach to their consumption of fluids. Hmmm . . . no loo, no *Johnny-on-the-spot* . . . the nearest tree perhaps?

Eventually, just as our representatives had explained, the two sides came together and a solid contract was signed. Relationships with local administration quickly returned to normal and once again the classrooms and hallways came alive. A little lighter in the pocket book in the short term, but far richer in experience, we walked through the doors.

Yes, walking the line, the words of Johnny Cash, took on a whole new meaning that year!



This is Loyalist's Fourth Strike!

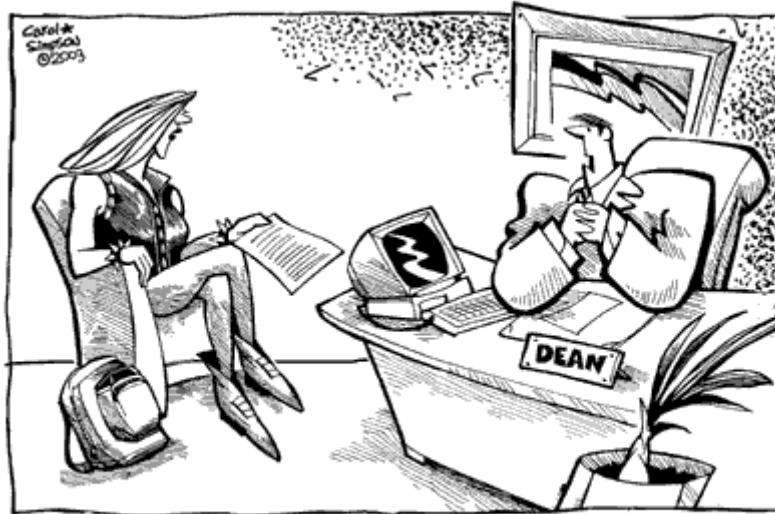
By Wallace Rendell – Retired Loyalist College faculty member, and Past President of Local 420, Paul Wall, visited our Strike Office this morning with some interesting news. This is the fourth strike by faculty at the College – not the third!

Paul reported that faculty province-wide were in a strike position in 1974 when, at the last minute, an agreement in principle was established on paper that would avert the strike. Not trusting to such an agreement, Paul led faculty out on strike anyways! It lasted half a day!

In 1974, the official title for our union was not OPSEU, but its ancestor, the Civil Service Association of Ontario (CSAO), first established in 1911. 1974 was the first year faculty gained the right to strike under the new Colleges Collective Bargaining Act. Anything could be bargained, except pensions, and there was a no-scab provision. However, the new act set in place the barrier to strike to part-timers, an issue we continue to battle over during this dispute, now 30 years later. *Additional sources: A Short History of OPSEU.*

LABOUR PAINS

Courtesy Carol Simpson Productions © 2003. Reprinted with permission of the artists. Visit their website for more workplace cartoons, www.cartoonwork.com



"Put it this way Ms. Holcolm, if your grades don't improve, this college is going to be out \$25,000 a year in tuition and fees."

Local 420 Scholarship Fundraising

"Pitter Patter"- Let's Get at 'Er

By Lorne Thompson – We give graduation scholarships and entrance scholarships (to wards of the Children's Aid Society) to our students. It is not widely known that we donate to scholarships funds for our students. During the strike we will not be contributing to our fund. Applications for graduation scholarships may come as soon as April 1 so we could advertise an extension to that deadline as part of this initiative.

I would like to explore the opportunity to do some fundraising to make up for the lost contributions to our scholarship fund. On Sunday April 9 at 10 am the annual "Pitter Patter" 5k/10k will be run at Loyalist. The run was started by Justice Studies faculty and students in cooperation with Belleville Community Policing. Constable Aaron Bucci (Loyalist grad and Loyalist's community policing liaison) is the organizer.



We have quite a number of runners among our faculty. I would like to encourage faculty members to sign up for the Pitter Patter and to do some fundraising for our scholarship fund. I believe that we could create a fundraising form that would allow faculty members to seek donations (for the scholarship fund) that would make up donations lost during the strike.

The benefits of organizing the fundraising would include:

- Publicity for our scholarship program
- A financial boost for our scholarship fund
- Good publicity for our union – perhaps a photo opportunity for our President handing in faculty registrations for the race to Aaron
- We will be contributing to fundraising for Community Policing
- A way of bringing some additional purpose to the strike for our members

We may wish to encourage non-runners to fundraise by walking the course or to simply support our runners by making a donation.

Editor's Note: Those interested in participating in this event, or in any fund-raising efforts by Local 420, please contact Lorne Thompson as soon as possible.

Billy Bragg Revisited

On the cover of **THE BOTTOM LINE** No. 9, Scott Whalen's article referred to a song by Billy Bragg entitled, "*There is Power in the Union*", sung by fans of Bragg as if it was an anthem. Reprinted below are some of the lyrics. The melody is that of an old Baptist hymn, "*There is Power in the Blood*".



*There is power (there is power)
In a band of working folk
When they stand, hand in hand;
That's a power (that's a power),
That will rule in every land,
One Industrial Union Grand.*

Su Doku

If you've never tried one of these puzzles before, here are the rules. A puzzle is complete and correct when: each row and column have the numbers 1-9, and each demarked box has the same. No number may be used more than once in any row, column, or demarked box. Good luck!






				3				
		6	9		8	5		
		9		6		8	3	2
	1	4			7		8	
	9						1	
	7		8			4	5	
9	5	8		7		3		
		1	4		5	7		
				8				

Source: www.free-sudokus.com

WEATHER ON THE LINE

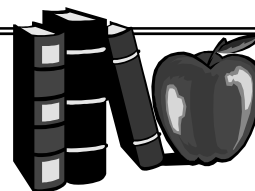
The forecast for the week suggests a warming of temperatures, increasing cloudiness, sunny periods with isolated flurries. Dress for intermittent precipitation.

5-Day Forecast

	TUE MAR 21	WED MAR 22	THU MAR 23	FRI MAR 24	SAT MAR 25
					
HIGH	1°C	1°C	3°C	1°C	3°C
LOW	-11°C	-5°C	-6°C	-5°C	0°C
CONDITION	Cloudy Periods	Isolated Flurries	Isolated Flurries	Isolated Flurries	Cloudy
P.O.P.	30%	30%	40%	40%	30%
WIND	N 15 km/h	NW 25 km/h	NE 10 km/h	N 10 km/h	N 15 km/h

Source: www.theweathernetwork.com

Updated : 20 March 2006, 12:55 EST



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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TODAY'S WEATHER



High	1°C
Low	-11°C
Condition	Cloudy periods
P.O.P.	30%
Wind	N 15 km/h

5-day Forecast on page 7

Editor's Note: Paula's letter is not reprinted here as it was only available as hard copy. Get the actual newsletter at the line to read her complaints about what she has found in the classroom, class-size-wise, at Loyalist College. - WBR

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March 9, 2006

Leah Casselman , President
Ontario Public Services Employees' Union
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Dear Sister Casselman:

Congratulations to you and the 9,100 members of your community colleges faculty and librarian bargaining unit who are standing up for quality education in your current round of bargaining. Know that you have the support of the 70,000 members of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. The issues you are fighting for are important ones – important to students and important to your members.

These issues – smaller class sizes, workload, and more full-time jobs – are issues for elementary teachers and education workers too. The strike your members are engaged in will force a broad public debate about what makes high-quality education. We know where we stand. With you and your members.

Being on strike is not easy. I know that there will be times when your members feel isolated. Let them know that the thoughts and best wishes of ETFO's members are with them. We are all part of the public education system in Ontario and like you we are committed to making that system the best it can be. Your efforts to protect and enhance the working conditions of your members and the learning conditions of your students will improve education for us all. Thank you for your courage and your commitment.

Find enclosed an initial contribution to your strike fund. Do not hesitate to let us know what we can do to help bring this strike to a successful conclusion. Please share our message with your members so they know we care.

In solidarity,

Emily Noble
President