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Issue 1

PICKET-LINE PRESS

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Operation Christmas Cheer



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Unions Deliver Holiday Support

By Chelsey Romain
The Daily Press - Timmins



NDP-Timmins, James Bay MPP Gilles Bisson and MP Charlie Angus joined the Christmas carolers. They lifted the spirits of CEP 37x members who have been locked out since

Timmins, ON - Grant Forest Product employees received an early Christmas present and support from fellow union members around the province Friday. Casandra Robinson, who founded Operation Christmas Cheer, arrived in Timmins earlier in the week.

She and her husband had driven from Ottawa with two truckloads of food and grocery gift cards for the union members who have been locked out since September. Robinson started Operation Christmas Cheer three years ago as a way to support her brothers and sisters who are facing financial hardship because of a prolonged strike/lock-out.

"I saw a need to help people on the picket lines during Christmas," said Robinson. "To bring a smile to their face, uplift their spirits, encourage them to stay strong and deliver labour's message that we stand beside them in solidarity. Their struggles are all of organized labour's struggles."

Robinson brought a bag of food for each of the employees locked out in addition to a \$70 grocery gift card for No Frills.

MPP Blames Long Strike on McGuinty Government Interference

By Strikers - COPE 343

QUEEN'S PARK HAMILTON ON - East MPP Andrea Horwath blamed the McGuinty government for leaving 70 unionized workers, mostly women, out in the cold and prolonging the FirstOntario Credit Union strike since October 2006. Horwath revealed that the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) interfered in collective bargaining. FirstOntario Credit Union's management is allowed to ignore its own by-laws and cancel its annual general meeting that was slated for December 6th.

"Your Ministry's meddling interfered with the democratic rights of the credit union members, prolonged the strike and did serious damage to the cause of these women workers," Horwath said.

Horwath slammed the McGuinty government and Ministry of Finance bureaucrats for taking the side of management and board members.

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"People like Peter Grant are taking advantage of the forest industry crisis."

"It's enough to make sure you have a traditional Christmas dinner with your family," Robinson told union members. "That's the last thing we want you to worry about at Christmas."

A month ago, Robinson sent letters to organized labour unions across the province to come to the aid of the members of Communications, Energy and Paper Workers union local 37X and support them as they continue to picket over 100 days after being locked out. The call for help resulted in 110 bags of food and \$9,800 in donations.

"This means a lot," said local 37X President Marcel Touchette, who said he was both shocked and pleased to hear Robinson wanted to help. "The members of this local are going to appreciate this very, very much."

Continued on page 2

"They don't want to provide women workers with full time hours."



December 15, 2006. Members of CEP 37x gather to receive bags of groceries, grocery gift cards and some much needed Christmas cheer from union locals across the province.

A Letter From the President of CEP 37x

On behalf of CEP Local 37x I want to express a very big thank you to Operation Christmas Cheer. Without the help of all unions it could not have been possible. It has warmed our hearts and put smiles on the faces of our members.

Operation Christmas Cheer provided a much brighter time during the Holiday Season for us. Thank you is not nearly enough for all that our Sisters and Brothers have done for this local.

IN SOLIDARITY
C.E.P. LOCAL 37-X
PRESIDENT

MARCEL TOUCHETTE



Union Delivers Holiday Support Continued from page 1

Also on hand for the presentation were MPP Gilles Bisson (NDP - Timmins-James Bay) and MP Charlie Angus (NDP - Timmins-James Bay), who came with words of encouragement and even a few Christmas carols. "People like Peter Grant are taking advantage of the forest industry crisis," said Angus. "Personally, I'm pretty pissed off that you guys have to be out here at Christmas."

In addition to local 37X, Operation Christmas Cheer is helping two other picketing unions - one in Toronto where 45 members are on strike, and one in Hamilton where 70 women are without work this holiday season.

Canadian Auto Workers Local 599 also made a donation of \$1,000 to CEP 37x, as and presented more than \$200 that was raised during September's Labour Day in the Park event.

Members were also informed that union members with children under 12 will be receiving a present from the Salvation Army, to add extra cheer this Christmas season.



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Sharing Christmas cheer

HEATHER DUHN
Timmins Times

Christmas cheer spread on the picket line last week.

Cassandra Robinson of Local 247 in Ottawa spearheaded a program three years ago, called Operation Christmas Cheer, in order to ensure no family (especially a striking family) went without a traditional Holiday meal.

From her hometown, she brought 110 bags of groceries and grocery gift cards for the picketers to take home to their families.

"I grew up with a single mother, and every year we got a food hamper," said Robinson. "I don't believe anyone should go without a traditional meal at Christmas."

She said her only mission is to bring cheer and let the people know that everyone in organized labour is thinking of them. An estimated \$10,000 was collected this year to be distributed within three locals in the province currently in a labour dispute. This includes an impromptu donation presented by CAW Local 599 who presented

Cassandra with \$1,000, and another \$238

raised through a local Labour Day picnic.

Grant employee Rick Brousseau told The Times he's been on strike before in 1997, but the dispute lasted only four months, and he was on his own at the time.

"This time I have a family to support, but there are a lot of people willing to help out," he said.

Despite the slightly colder weather and the length of the dispute, though, moral is still high on the picket lines, and the donations gave them the slight boost they needed.

"The guys really appreciate this," said president of CEP Local 37-X Marcel Touchette. "People are holding strong, and this has brought spirits up."

Robinson said the last three years have been a learning curve, but with the help of her husband, Richard Robinson, has managed to make it work.

"This year the kickoff for fundraising was Nov. 15, but next year I plan on starting in September," she explained. "The first year, I bought turkeys. Try packing 25 turkeys into a van... That's part of the reason I went with the grocery gift cards, that, and not everyone eats turkey as their traditional meal."

Robinson was also pleased to announce that those who receive don't forget. Last year the United Steelworkers in Hawkesbury received in excess of \$17,000, and this year, they contributed to the fund.

"The feeling I come away with is a real high," she said. "To see a man walk away with tears in his eyes, because we helped him at Christmas makes me feel like a million dollars."



CEP Volunteers from L to R; Vince, Luc, Casandra, Andre, Coco, Marcel and Marc help to sort and bag food collected for the members of CEP 37x locked out.



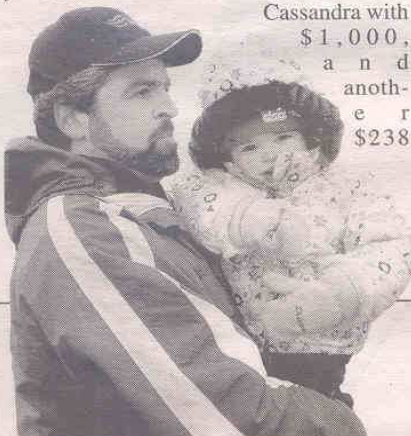
MPP Blames Long Strike on McGuinty Government Interference *Continued from page 1*

"They don't want to provide women workers with full time hours. They don't want to make proper pension plan and WSIB contributions. They want roll backs on sick benefits. Do you think women workers should be treated this way?"

Horwath told Deputy Premier George Smitheman. She cited the government's interference as "unprecedented and unfair." The credit union's bylaw stipulates the meeting had to be held within 120 days of fiscal year end. But FSCO's decision allows the board to postpone the meeting for up to 60 days after workers return to their jobs. "This is an outrageous interference in the collective bargaining process," Horwath said.

The AGM was seen as a crucial turning point in negotiations. Credit Union members planned to attend and ask hard questions about the shabby treatment of the workers, who are represented by COPE Local 343.

COPE 343 has started a petition and a copy is included with this newsletter.



ABOVE: Rick Brousseau holds daughter Kate as they wait for their bag of groceries from Cassandra Robinson of Operation Christmas Cheer (pictured at right with Marcel Touchette).



Lodge 2243
Toronto



IAMAW • AIMTA
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MACHINISTS AND AEROSPACE WORKERS
L'ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DES MACHINISTES ET DES TRAVAILLEURS ET TRAVAILLEUSES DE L'AÉROSPATIALE



Solidarity Brings Christmas Cheer to R-Theta Strikers

By Mona Burke & Gary Hynes - District Lodge 78

MISSISSAUGA, ON - The days dragged into weeks and then into months and each time bargaining resumed, the result was an offer that was less than the one previously rejected by the membership and through it all, the resolve of Machinists striking against R-Theta Thermal Solutions never wavered.

Nothing tests the solidarity of striking workers more than the Christmas season - the daily need to provide food, clothing and shelter for their families - takes a back seat, albeit temporarily, to the pressure to give something extra during this special time of year. The 40 members of IAMAW Local Lodge 2243, on strike since April 6, 2006, remained committed to their union's efforts to negotiate a fair and decent contract with a reluctant employer, no matter how long it takes.

Their faith in their union and the solidarity of the Canadian Labour movement was rewarded on Tuesday December 19, 2006 when the striking members and their families attended a Christmas party sponsored by IAMAW District Lodge 78. Cash donations from IAMAW Local Lodges across the country and individual IAMAW members ensured every child of a striking LL 2243 member received a Christmas gift from Santa himself. In a true show of union solidarity, the members of Bakery, Confectionary, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 426, who work with IAMAW LL 235 members at Christie-Brown of Toronto, raised more than \$1,100 for the event and CEP Local 247 of Ottawa, through its 'Operation Christmas Cheer' donated \$50.grocery gift certificates to each striking member.

"These members have conducted one of the finest strikes I have ever witnessed in all of my experience in the Canadian Labour movement," said IAMAW District Lodge 78 Directing Business Representative Gary Hynes. "We just wanted them to know that their union and the rest of the Canadian Labour movement support them."

When the party was over, Hynes and his staff discovered there was a surplus of more than 80 gifts. So he and some volunteers loaded two trucks and drove to the Mississauga plant site to distribute the remaining gifts to the members on the R-Theta picket line. The scab labour and supervisors inside the plant observed first hand the meaning of union solidarity and service to the members.

"These members have conducted one of the finest strikes I have ever witnessed in all of my experience in the Canadian Labour movement"



IAMAW DL 78 organizer Mona Burke(l) and DL 78 DBR Gary Hynes(r) present IAMAW Local Lodge 2243 strike picket captain Maurice Rajanayagam with more than \$2,000 worth of grocery gift certificates donated by Operation Christmas Cheer.

The \$50.gift certificates were distributed to each of the 45 members of LL 2243 who have been on strike against R-Theta Thermal Solutions in Mississauga since April 6, 2006. The donation is part of an annual 'Operation Christmas Cheer' which raises funds to purchase grocery gift cards for distribution across Ontario to union members on strike during the Christmas season.



"We don't want you to sell your soul....
We'd just like to rent it for a while."

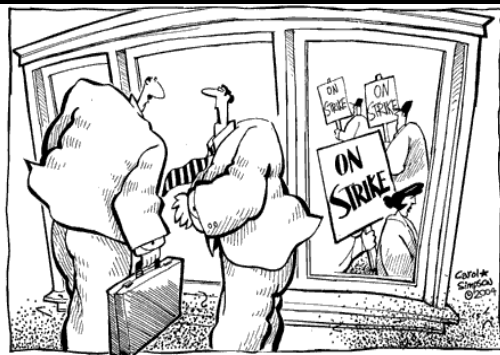
Canadian Office & Professional Employees Union Local 343 - Hamilton

By Barb Rowell - COPE 343 Chief Steward

Hamilton, ON - Members of the Canadian Office & Professional Employees Union Cope Local 343 would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year and all the best in 2007. Operation Christmas Cheer made our Christmas Season a huge success.

Day eighty of our strike is fast approaching. This has been a very long strike particularly during this time of year. The weather is on our side though and the sun is shining brightly. Fortunate for us, Operation Christmas Cheer is on our side too. Through Labours generosity our members were able to have a "normal" Christmas morning with family and friends.

Christmas is extra special when there are young children gathered around the tree on Christmas morning anxiously awaiting to open their gifts with a sparkle in their eyes and a grin on their faces. Just one glimpse at those rosy cheeks and smiling faces on Christmas morning says it all. Thank you for making that possible for our young families.



"It's not fair. We have to make up lies about the union... but they get to tell the truth about the company."

The FirstOntario Credit Union Grinch continues to steal Christmas from its Striking Workers

It is not enough that the striking employees at FirstOntario Credit Union must deal with the wind, rain and frigid weather, they must also deal with the constant lies and misinformation being given by their employer.

Just as the Christmas season draws near, the CEO has added an additional financial burden on the striking workers. The CEO has determined that these credit union members and their families will be treated differently than all other credit union members. While other members of the credit union are having service charges and fees reversed, the striking members and their families will be required to pay these fees, which include fees incurred for not doing their banking at their struck employer.

In addition to all of the concessions being demanded and the total slaughter of the collective agreement contained in the final offer, the Credit Union took the cruel step of cutting off sick benefits for employees who were off on sick leave prior to the strike. Clearly there is no humanity left at FirstOntario if the credit union finds this action acceptable.

The anti-democratic action of cancelling the Annual General Meeting flies in the face of democracy and member ownership on which credit unions were founded. **Please call or email CEO and President, John Lahey at 905-387-0774, ext 231 or john.lahey@firstontariocu.com and tell him to immediately rescheduled the Annual General Meeting.**

The 70 members of COPE Local 343 were forced to take strike action on October 20, 2006 to protect their collective agreement from the employer's final offer that would see the slaughtering of their collective agreement.



For further information contact COPE Local 343 at 416-703-4448, or 1-888-224-5553; email cope343@on.aibn.com.
Cope343

"The Credit Union took the cruel step of cutting off sick benefits for employees who were off on sick leave prior to the strike"

TIMMINS TIMES Wednesday, December 27, 2006

Grant workers dig deep

KIMBERLEY SHER
Timmins Times

Having been on the receiving end of organizations donating meals throughout the duration of an ongoing strike, Grant workers have thought of others in need this Holiday Season.

Marcel Touchette Union president of CEP Local 37-X wants Timmins to know Grant strikers are grateful for all the support they receive and they are still thinking of those who may be in need.

“We know we’re not the only ones having hard times. We still think of others while we are waiting and willing to negotiate,” said Touchette. “We have only one female union member among us, our sister striker, and she came up with this generous idea.”

Claire Tremblay, fellow union striker, has firm ideas about the upcoming Holiday Season.

“Me and the boys got together and

collected our pocket money and came up with \$175 to donate to the South Porcupine Food Bank, and help people in need around the Holidays. It’s easy to remember others in need while being out here. It’s nice to help out,” said Tremblay.

On behalf of the strikers, Tremblay presented the cheque to Richard Bouvier, South Porcupine Food Bank vice president, recently.

“I think it’s just great,” said Bouvier. “Being all the way out here like this, with all they have to think of, and still they give to other needy people.”

The food bank is preparing for yet another busy season.

Though Bouvier reports the food bank is well stocked, he finds it is still in need of some

foods. Having regular deliveries twice a week, the food bank could still use canned soups, canned potatoes, pasta, Kraft Dinner, canned beans, and other non-perishable items.

“Every little bit helps. The food bank never has too much. There’s a lot of need out there, especially during the Holiday Season,” said Bouvier.

“It’s easy to remember others in need while being out here.”

Claire Tremblay

“We know we’re not the only ones having hard times. We still think of others while we are waiting and willing to negotiate.”



Operation Christmas Cheer!

WANTED: Volunteers

Without a doubt, somewhere in Ontario we will have Brothers and Sisters walking the picket-lines next Christmas.

In September 2007, Operation Christmas Cheer will start to mobilize again so that we can pledge support to all union local on strike/lock-out during the Holidays.

Interested in finding out how you can make a big difference with very little effort next Christmas?

For details send a quick email to casandra@operationcheer.com



Bill C-257 Brings Ontario Workers A Little Closer to Fairness and Balance During Labour Disputes



Re-printed from AIL Labour Letter/CALM December 2006

OTTAWA, ON - Canadian Labour Congress called second reading passage of anti-scab legislation, Bill C-257, “a Victory for workers’ rights.”

CLC President Ken Georgetti further urged quick passage of measure. “Canadians who work under the

federal labour code are now a little closer to the fairness and balance that exist in labour relations in Quebec and in British Columbia,” said Georgetti.

“We urge the House of Commons to press on and move to third reading approval without delay.”

Measure would make it illegal for employers to hire replacement workers while their own employees are locked out or on strike.

Passage of legislation is long-standing priority for Canadian Labour which said legislation will help create

“more tranquil labour relations in the federal jurisdiction”.

CLC said use of replacement workers prolongs disputes and has often provided the flash point for violence or injury on picket lines.

January 22 National Day of Action Thousands Across Canada to Demand Action on Forest Sector Jobs Crisis

By CEP National in Ottawa

OTTAWA, ON - Canada's largest union of forestry workers and other concerned citizens across the country are taking action to make the forest sector jobs crisis a federal government priority.

The Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada had declared January 22 a National Day of Action for Forest Sector Jobs.

SENDING A UNIFIED MESSAGE TO STEPHEN HARPER

Thousands of Canadians will be sending a unified message to Stephen Harper and members of Parliament that forest sector jobs are worth fighting for.

"This crisis should concern every Canadian because forest sector jobs support hundreds of communities across Canada that are an integral part of the Canadian economy," says Cecil Makowski, Vice-President of CEP Ontario.

"Though thousands of jobs have already been lost and the communities they support face economic devastation, the federal government has been sitting on its hands."



NO INTENTION OF CAVING

"What will solve this crisis is economic investment by the industry with immediate urgent support from government," says CEP National President Dave Coles, adding that: "We have no intention of caving in to certain employers' demands for concessions from our collective agreements. That is no solution."

"We want the government to pay attention to what's happening to one of Canada's most important industries and we want meaningful actions."

"thousands of jobs have already been lost and the communities they support face economic devastation"



NATIONAL STRATEGY

In a message being delivered "en masse" to all MP's by email January 22, Canadians are demanding that Stephen Harper and Parliament adopt a national strategy for the forest sector that will lead to economic rejuvenation and job stability.

CEP National is sponsoring a symposium on Parliament Hill where union leaders, industry stakeholders and MP's will study "The Future of Canada's Forest Industry in Canada" with a view to developing solutions.



A Letter from the Editor

Happy New Year from Ottawa, our great nation's capital. Operation Christmas Cheer was a success and labour's mission was again accomplished for the third year in a row! Over \$14,765 in cash/grocery gift cards along with two truck loads of food were delivered to the picket-lines of CEP 37x, IAMAW 2243 and COPE 343 over the Holidays. In total, 214 Brothers and Sisters benefited from a food hamper/grocery card and had the peace of mind knowing that they could afford a Christmas dinner for their families. These locals/members are all still on strike/lock-out and from my understanding will be for months to come. I had the privilege of spending time on the picket lines and the opportunity to talk with many members. Some have been on the job for over 30 years and their stories of hardship were heartfelt. It broke my heart to learn that many men have health issues and are unable to afford expensive life saving prescriptions - the employers of all three locals cut-off their group benefits.

The members were astonished with the outpouring of support from labour and asked me to pass along how grateful they are to all OCC supporters for their extraordinary show of solidarity, kindness and all the personal notes of encouragement locals wrote. The locals listed below have spread the cheer by volunteering their time, collecting food and or by sponsoring a family with a grocery gift card.

Amalgamated Transit Union local 279 Ottawa - **Canadian Auto Workers** locals 598 Sudbury and 1520 St Thomas
Canadian Union of Postal Workers locals 566 London and 580 Ottawa - **Canadian Union of Public Employees** locals 4705 Sudbury, 4000 Ottawa, 4186 London - **Communications, Energy and Paperworkers** locals 324 Dryden, 1999 London, 156 Espanola, 30-0 Kingston & Belleville, 247 Eastern Canada, 34-0 Ottawa, 16-0 Goderich, 39 Thunder Bay, 1323 Dryden - **Int Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers** District Lodge 78 Toronto, lodge 1550 Stratford, Lodge 1863 Goderich - **Ontario Public Service Employees Union** locals 121 Goderich, 479 Ottawa, 124 Sarnia - **Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation** all locals in Ontario - **Public Service Alliance of Canada**, UNDE 635 North Bay, UEW 70742 Gatineau - **United Food & Commercial Workers** 175/633 Toronto - **United Steelworkers** locals 14193, 889L and 13173 Port Hope, 7175 Cobourg, 5533 and 1503 Belleville, locals 3222 and 3209 Gananoque, 9211 and 8794 Hawkesbury, 9343 Cornwall, 9597 and 8327-24 Ottawa, 4820 Renfrew, 11-0001 Montana USA - **Teamsters** local 938 Toronto - **Councils & Committees**; Ottawa District Labour Council - Kingston District Labour Council - London & District Labour Council - Timmins & District Labour Council - United Steelworkers Eastern Ontario Area Council - CUPE Sudbury & District Council - CUPW Ottawa Women's Committee - Ontario Federation of Labour. **Unionized Company Sponsors**; AIL Canada, Altig International and Paul's No Frills Timmins. A note of appreciation to Denise at The Salvation Army, she cut the red-tape and delivered gifts from Santa to all our union children in Timmins just in time for Christmas.

Special thanks, to these amazing people. Your involvement brought some much needed cheer to many in hardship.

Marlene Rivier OPSEU, Duncan MacDonald OFL, Wyman Mackinnon CUPE, Gary Bragnalo OPFC CEP. Many members of OPSEU 479 including Lucy-Ann, Donna, Dorothy, Selena, Pamela and Robert. George, Jennifer, David and Angelo of UNDE 635. Allan and Dave USW 9597. Marcel, Andre, Luc, Marc, Vince and Coco CEP 37x. Lindsay Lynne CEP 247. Barb Rowell COPE 343, Mona Burke IAM AW District Lodge 78. Kelli Flora, and Brother Jim Williams the president of United Steelworkers 11-0001 Montana USA. Two days before Christmas, the members of this local made a miracle happen for the remaining 70 families of COPE 343 who were without a sponsor. Thanks to them, all the striking members received a grocery gift card.

Operation Christmas Cheer is only possible because of the compassion and generosity of many different unions and individual efforts from all across the province. It is an annual, worthwhile cause that brings a lot of happiness to union families facing adversity during the Holidays. Next November we will start by collecting one can of food and one dollar at a time, and we will continue to help as many members as possible.

In Solidarity,

Cassandra Robinson

Cassandra Robinson

Founder, Operation Christmas Cheer

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www.operationcheer.com

AIL Canada - Public Relations

CEP 247 - Secretary Treasurer

