



THE NO BULLETIN

OPSEU Local 217
The Niagara Parks

Volume 29 Issue 1

October 2005

So much for fair competition!

Once again fall is here and unfortunately for our seasonal brothers and sisters, layoffs. I certainly hope that all of the contractors in the Park leave before our members do. I believe that contractors should only be used when the Niagara Parks could not possibly perform the work with our own equipment and workers. Sadly this is not the belief of the decision makers in upper management. Lately it seems that we must continually compete with these outside companies. Sometimes it is very difficult to do because the playing field is not very level..

We have a Health and Safety Department and trained worker reps that help to ensure that all relevant safety legislation and policies are followed (something I have noticed is decidedly lacking in some of the contractors that have been observed working in the Park.) It is the management's responsibility to ensure contractors are abiding by all Park policies and relevant legislation but it appears that they seem unable or unwilling to do this despite the often 4 to 5 levels of management currently in place. When senior management was asked about verifying the enforcement of these issues with the contractors we were told it was the on-site manager's responsibility. You know, the little guys that are already juggling all the hundreds of other tasks that have been downloaded from upper management over the past few years. (Can you say "Pass the Buck"...)

Contractors working in the Park are still perceived as representatives of the Park. I don't see Montgomery or Stevensville workers sitting in on our customer service training courses as a few of our visitors may have found out when they approached a 'worker' whose main concern is getting in and out as quickly as possible and collecting their minimum wage.

For the contractor, the Parks is a job: get in, get paid and move on to the next place. I don't feel there is the same pride in ownership that you see in some of our best employees. Workers at the NPC, if they haven't been totally beaten down, truly care for the Parks, how it looks and how our visitors are treated. We want the job done right. *Cont on page 2*

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So much for fair competition (cont)

Remember all the sodding that was done this spring by outside contractors? The work that our people used to do. Management said that it was cheaper to have contractors do the whole job, paths and sodding. I wonder if they counted all the costs incurred by our people following behind the contractors, locating and uncovering all of the sewer drains, electrical and irrigation heads that were blindly sodded over in the contractors haste to finish their job?...So much for fair competition...

We recently attended a Broader Public Service (BPS) Conference. Myself, Ian 'angry man' Mather, Shelley Reed and Carol Penner represented our local at this meeting. We learned a lot and found it helpful to hear how other sectors deal with difficult employers. We met a lot of OPSEU activists and found they had a lot of great ideas.

One interesting point that we learned had to do with member's rights during a lockout or legal work stoppage. I felt it was important to pass on to our members. To collect strike pay and get your benefits covered, you must be a signed-up member in good standing. We have more than 150 workers that pay Union dues but have not signed a Union card. If you don't have a Union Card, please contact your steward or executive member to sign up as quickly as possible.. It was also interesting to note that we were told that seasonal workers would qualify to receive Union Benefits in the event of a legal work stoppage.

On a final note; have you ever noticed that only some excluded positions are posted. Sometimes you hear about them at work or in the newspaper want ads and you can actually apply for them. Other times they just magically appear, filled with a person of management's choosing, qualified or not. Again...so much for fair competition...

Remember Knowledge is power! See you at the November General Membership meeting.

In Solidarity
Bill Rudd



Attention all seasonals!

We have booked the Spring St Legion for a very important meeting November 10 at 7pm. We are trying to light a fire under management to get moving on the seasonal Joint Job Evaluation (JJE). You may have been given a copy of what the Parks feels is your job description. From the ones that we have seen so far, they seem really short on what we actually do. It is your right to look at your job description and add to it anything that you do that may have been missed. As the full-timers found out, it is very important that *everything* that is part of your job is documented in your job description. It will be these descriptions that will

be used to rate your job and if it is not complete you run the risk of losing out on potential points which may affect your wage rate.

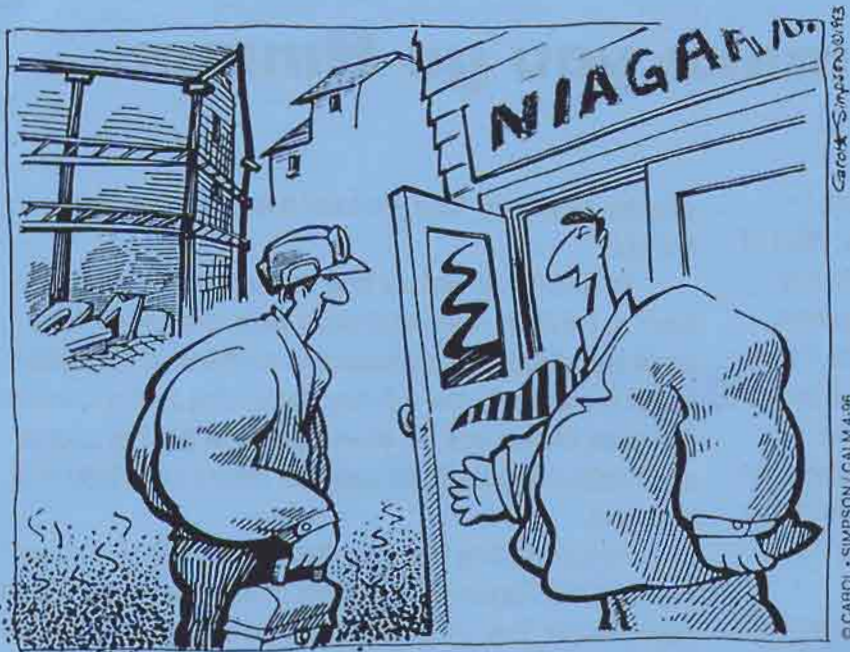
At the meeting we also hope to co-ordinate and group similar jobs and find a spokesperson to represent jobs with a large number of workers so we can approach this very big job organized and prepared. It will be the same type of meeting that was held two seasons ago at the Victoria Park Restaurant with the previous JJE Committee when we first started working on the seasonal JJE. Since then, management has seen fit to change some of the job descriptions from what they

were previously. That is why it feels like we are going back to the drawing board (we are)

I hope to see a great turnout of seasonals November 10th

Also, just a reminder, it's layoff season, so all you seasonals that exercised your right to seniority and asked for extra work and/or early recall must be vigilant. The Parks will not admit if they make a mistake. You know your job and seniority better than anyone, so it's up to you to make sure that the Parks toes the line. You have a contract...enforce it!

In solidarity
Barb Wilson



"Our work rules are simple. We rule. You work."



"He's my best employee. He does the work of five relatives."

Com-mu-ni-ca-tion!

The exchange of thoughts, messages, or information

Back in the spring, the NPC held three communication seminars, one of which was with a group of *selected* Union employees and managers of all levels. The other two were held with a group of *selected* local citizens (How these people were selected has not been discussed.)

These meetings came about, in part, as a result of the findings put together by the Burke Group. The Burke Group was hired by the Parks to put a survey together and have it sent to 300 random (random?) employees.

Poor communication was one of the main concerns brought up by the survey and thus the reason for the communications seminars.

The expected end result of the communication seminar was to convey a sense that management and employees would come closer together with open conversation.

Well it is now almost November and has much changed, I wonder? Not long ago, during a meeting with senior management, some questions were raised about excluded positions. The response from management was: *"The matter is awaiting review at the Grievance Settlement Board (GSB) and we do not want to discuss this matter."* During Mediation at the GSB the mediator presented an opportunity to discuss the matter as a group. Management said: *"No"*

I've had to deal with several situations this season that could have easily been avoided with some basic conversation

As usual, most of the disagreements were brought to my attention because the end result would have meant that the Park would have to spend money on its workers.

It is truly unfortunate that the person responsible for passing on the results of the survey and the presenter and promoter of "better Communication" is rarely seen in the Park which makes it quite impossible to communicate with us, his staff.

*In solidarity
Ian Mather*

Things that make you go Hmmm....

Marie Stokes

I must say, of all the things in the newsletter, I seem to get the most feedback from this feature. Most of the workers that I hear from have a good chuckle and look forward to the next issue, as for the management, I have not heard any comments. (I am still with the Parks and haven't mysteriously disappeared, so I take it as a positive sign) I am always on the lookout for more 'ammo' for my editorials and some people have gladly put a little bug in my ear to wonder about some of the things that our workers have seen and the rumours that swirl around the water coolers everywhere.

Take politics, it's easy to see why people's opinion of some politicians are less than stellar. Every day we read in the paper about cronyism and kickbacks. People in power that abuse their privileges. I guess everyone in a position of power should be entitled to their entitlements, as one fine speaker demanded. It just burns the butt of the average working Joe that these entitlements are gained out of the pockets and on the backs of the working class. Its really easy to spend someone else's money, especially when there seems to be no accountability.

I guess the Parks is no different from any other government beaurocracy. it is just a miniaturized version of the government. Sort of like Mini-Me to Austin Power's Dr. Evil. (*Oh My! Was that my outside voice?*)

Sometimes the questions just beg to be asked, if only to raise awareness that we are *not* idiots and we *do* see what goes on around us (perhaps more than some management would like to think). Especially since we actually do the work in the Parks.

One questions the need to change contractors for the Parks Cellular phone system. everyone gets issued a phone and a number and the next thing you know all the phones are trashed and new phones purchased and all the numbers changed. Obviously there *must* have been a great savings in cost to prompt such a quick change in cellular providers... much more than the cost to change everything over...I hope..why else change providers? Hmmm...

Ever wonder how the Parks determines which wines they carry and flog as their premiere wines? I do. There are so many great Canadian and local award winning wineries to choose from. Is price a consideration? Or perhaps the number of awards certain

wineries receive for their product? It would be interesting to find out!

I'd also like to find out how the businesses in 'shantytown' at the Maid of the Mist plaza were determined. Was some sort of focus group consulted on the what our visitors would like to see? How did they decide that a tattoo parlour and glass blower was the way to go? How did they choose which tattoo business? I'm sure that there's more than one. Hmmm...

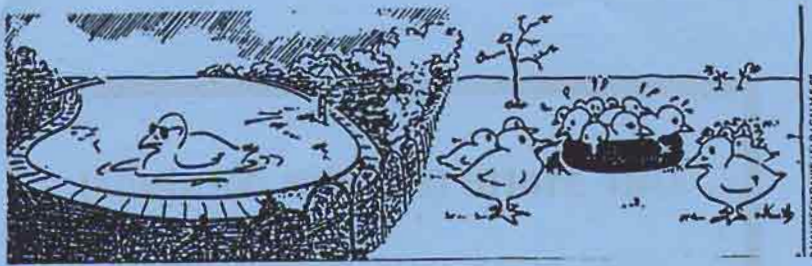
Isn't it amazing that you often see the city of Niagara Falls and the Region tendering out contract work in a fair and open manner. Everyone gets a chance to apply. With all the building and contracting out in the Parks lately, when was the last time that anyone saw any Parks work publicly tendered. I guess no-one can compete with the chosen few, so why bother even advertising, (of course, how would you know if you could get a better deal, if no-one else knows about the job).

Is it true that the public at one point was able to book private, non-Park-related entertainment through a Park paid for number? Would this be on Park-paid time as well?? Hmmm...

Even if we are not Rhodes Scholars, most of us can add two and two and get something we perceive as four. Maybe the powers that be will think of that when they say that they just can't understand why employee morale sucks.



"THE POLLS ARE INCONCLUSIVE...19% FAVOR YOU, 17% FAVOR YOUR OPPONENT, AND THE REST WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOU BOTH SHOT ON SIGHT"



This budget will be presented and voted on at the next General Membership meeting, November 17. Amendments can be made to the budget in the form of a motion that will be discussed and voted on by the membership. If you are interested in how we will spend your local monies, I suggest you attend the upcoming meeting

Proposed Budget for 2005-2006

Budget breakdown	<u>04-05 proposed</u>	<u>04-05 Actual</u>	<u>05-06 Proposed</u>
Income: Rebates	\$18,000.00	\$13,404.65 ^①	\$17,000.00 ^⑩
Expenses			
Meetings: GMM, Exec & Stewards	\$2,000.00	\$2,226.75 ^②	\$2,000.00
Educationals	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$400.00
Alternate costs (Convention)	\$1,500.00	\$2,262.65	\$1,500.00 ^⑪
Bank Charges	\$65.00	\$60.39	\$70.00
Postage	\$2,000.00	\$1,503.35	\$1,900.00
Office supplies and printing	\$2,000.00	\$2,695.81 ^③	\$2,200.00
E-mail/ internet	\$1000.00	\$720.00 ^④	\$720.00
Other meetings	\$300.00	\$105.51 ^⑤	\$300.00
Executive expenses	\$9000.00	\$7,500.00 ^⑥	\$7,500.00
Sponsorships: Wreath	\$65.00	\$0.00 ^⑦	\$65.00
Misc (CALM & Info membership)	\$210.00	\$110.00 ^⑧	\$210.00
Total Expenses	\$18,140.00	\$17,184.46	\$16,865.00
Balance Remaining	(\$140.00)	(\$3,779.81) ^⑨	\$135.00

Key to budget notations

1. Rebate amount lower due to timing of deposit of rebate cheque.
2. 5 General Membership, 6 Executive, 4 Steward
3. Increases in printing cost, 3 Newsletters
4. Only a portion of internet covered. Max of \$15/month over 12 months (\$180per executive)
5. Constitutional Committee Human rights and JJE meetings
6. Lower due to reduced number of executive members
7. Was not contacted by Legion this year.
8. Did not join Labour council, Expect to next year, left monies in.
9. Defecit not truly reflective of totals because of timing of rebate deposit.
10. Left lower to reflect on lower numbers in bargaining unit.
11. Left amount at \$1500 because there are no regionals in 2006.
12. Bank balance as of July1, 2005: \$6091.53, with \$725.04 in outstanding cheques

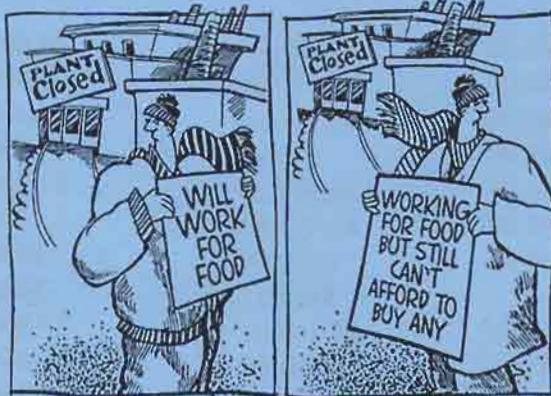
Who's Hungry

The Daily Bread Food Bank/CALM

A report released by the Daily Bread Food Bank in Toronto has found that more than one third of food bank clients are the working poor.

The report, *Who's Hungry?* surveyed more than 1,620 people at 54 food banks in the greater Toronto Area.

The results showed that while 45 per cent of the employed food bank clients were earning more than \$10 an hour, they were unable to get more than 25 hours of work a week. The average total monthly income of working people using food banks is \$1,246--just under \$15,000 a year--which is well below the poverty line in this urban area.



Our Motto (Besides No Bull!)

The *No Bulletin* is published and mailed to all members. The *No Bulletin* is **your** newsletter. If you have any related articles, jokes or cartoons, please give them to:

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(905) 357-4219

We welcome your comments and suggestions and we reserve the right to edit for length and content.

Authorized for distribution:

M. Stokes for B. Rockel



Mark these dates!

Seasonal JJE Meeting

Thursday, November 10
Branch 479 Legion
7pm

- * discussion of job descriptions
- * determination of job representatives

General Membership Meeting

Thursday, November 17
Branch 479 Legion
7pm
Spring St, between Ferry St and North St

- * Budget
- * Updates

Come and participate!