

Political Action & Pension Obligations

Report on CEP National Executive Board Meeting January 17-20, 2011

During the January Board meeting at Solidarity House (pictured below) we received updates on the potential timing of a federal election. Also discussed were this year's provincial and municipal elections throughout the West and the need for us to have a vigorous conversation about politics with our members. The failure of the anti-scab legislation due to the Liberals, the ruination of our country by the Tories, it doesn't leave us any options in terms of our own organization. Our members need to understand that a Tory majority is a disaster for Canada.

The meeting began with anti-harassment and diversity training as recommended in both the Barriers report and the Officers Report. While the title of the day long session was "Walk a Mile In My Sandals" and the presenter was obviously experienced and talented, the Board expected more. The CEP has come far in a short period of time (our Convention was almost entirely free of harassment complaints) the Board recognizes much work remains to be done on equity issues.

Our budget discussions were dominated by our pension obligation and the potential effect changing interest rates will have. While the pension is over funded on an on-going basis, on a solvency basis it is at 92%. The laws prevented us from contributing before now and a 1% raise in rates would entirely erase the obligation to contribute any of the \$4 million in.

Staffing was also extensively discussed. Last fiscal year (which runs from September - August) our staff was reduced by 6 people and in the current year it is anticipated we will be down 13 more positions, all due to attrition.

The Board once again approved a deficit budget. After \$500,000 two years ago and \$1.3 million last year, this year it is anticipated to be another \$500,000. While troubling, there is still more than \$7 million dollars in our general

account and the Defence Fund and Organizing Funds are exceptionally healthy.

Under Policy 614, up to 25% of the Defence Fund income may be spent on national campaigns or to defend our certificates and a lot of the Board's time is spent on these funding requests.

The SOS campaign received \$100,000 with an impressive presentation package. This Saskatchewan campaign aimed at protecting and promoting the province's crown corporations which employ thousands of our members is a model for us all. It has member buy-in



and support, it has built alliances with other organizations and it has hired its own staff (Sister Jen Britton) so she does not distract from servicing other locals and can be focused on the campaign.

A campaign in Alberta educating the public around possible funding cuts to school boards which could put our members jobs in jeopardy and a national campaign protecting bargaining rights at Shaw Media were also funded for \$30,000 and \$50,000 respectively.

Also, \$500,000 was allocated from the Defence Fund to the General Fund to pay for last year's campaign over runs.

There are some encouraging signs the union's efforts in organizing are beginning to pay off. The membership numbers have stabilized around 116,000 and with quite a few campaigns in the pipeline, the

possibility is we may begin to start to grow again soon.

The Structure Committee has had one meeting and reported orally to the Board they had begun their work. Two more meetings are scheduled before the next Board meeting in June.

As well, the Board received reports from the Education Committee, the Equity Committee and the Exonerated Committee. The Rank & File Board members are all members of the officers salary committee but while we met, the decision was to table any decision until June because there is still a large number of Locals yet to settle, especially in the Eastern Paper pattern where a wage increase of zero is currently optimistic.

The Women's Committee reported on plans for the national conference to be held in Ottawa in December 4-6. The Young Workers had yet to meet. Their conference is set for June 3-5, the weekend prior to the next National Executive Board meeting.

An extensive review of the National Convention was conducted by the Board based on feedback from the

members. At the June meeting all the financial information regarding the banquet and the free bags will be available and the Board will have to make some decisions. Concentrating on resolutions, reducing the number of guest speakers and other business could allow us to reduce the time spent at Convention. The workshop on pensions sparked considerable debate and diverse opinions. One highlight which attracted a number of compliments and everyone agreed was innovative and well executed was our live webcast of Convention.

Co-ordination between the regions is growing. Ontario and Quebec are sharing staff resources and the West is cooperating with Ontario in pursuing a company who stole our dues from one of the CMAW locals. ▲