



Cuts?

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Welcome

Can we integrate so many new union members?
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Arbitration Powers

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Lack of Justified Discipline

By Rick Lonergan

It is out of the union's realm to have management discipline their staff in the way that we see appropriate.



In the case of the unlocked, relocked, unsafe bus that was deliberately put into service, the

union certainly told them what would be appropriate. When it comes to safety, deliberately putting our members and the public at risk has taken away the trust that is supposed to go without saying. Termination would have been appropriate, or, at the very least, a demotion. To bring them back in the same capacity as they had is a slap in the face to all of us. One of them got a few weeks

(SEE DISCIPLINE on page 3)

Tires and Speed

By Maurice Levesque

I'm sure by now you are all aware that we have had some safety concerns regarding tires on GRT buses and the speeds we run on the 401. My involvement with this started when I was called to attend a work refusal in the South. I was called because the South Co-Chair of the JHSC was unavailable and the other rep Carol Jacobi works as a Mobility Plus Operator and didn't want to offer opinions on a conventional concern.

Gord Whyte performed a work refusal saying that he had recently learned that the tires on our buses had an 88km/h speed limit stamped on the side. He felt that running this tire on the 401 at 100km/h would be unsafe. He correctly informed the Supervisor on duty who agreed to put the "I" Express



(SEE TIRES on page 3)

A Learning Experience

By Gord Whyte

As a bus driver for the last 19 1/2 years, I have learned a few things that I'd like to share with some of our junior drivers.



In 1986, we had 40-minute trips in Kitchener. We have now gained five minutes or so on most routes, making them 45-minute trips. I'm glad the city has not grown overly much since '86. Oh my!

Engineering for Safety

When the Charles Street terminal was built a number of years ago, we even made the news in Vancouver, B.C. - the buses on platform B could not pass each other and leave the terminal. The renovations took place as the terminal had its grand opening. I guess the architect goofed.

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Full colour edition of *The Informer* is available on-line.
www.caw4304.ca/informer.htm

This edition published by John A. McDonald.

Comments to johnmcdonald@caw4304.ca

We are looking for a new editor for the **February** edition.

Send contributions by **January 20th/2006**

**Attend your union meetings:
 Dec. 21
 8:00 pm**

**Labour Hall
 141 King St. E.
 Kitchener**

North Editor/ Publisher needed:

As many of you know, Wayne Bell has retired from publishing the Informer after 11 years of dedicated service. Wayne has trained John A. McDonald from the South to succeed him and try to keep up his high standards. In order to maintain balanced North and South reporting and help diversify the content, a **North editor** is being sought. The successful candidate would produce every other publication of the five yearly editions of the Informer.

If you have the ability to write and use a word processor, this may be for you. The ability to work well with the membership at large and inspire them to write for the Informer is perhaps the most critical skill that is needed. Experience in Microsoft Publisher and Word would also be an asset. Webmastering skills and web authoring software, like DreamWeaver MX, are also good which would allow for the publishing of the Electronic Informer along with the print version. Assistance is available in this area. Other skills include digital photo editing, using PhotoShop or something similar. You will also be working with Adobe Professional and will deliver the final version of the newsletter via FTP to the print shop. Contact any of our current Education and Newsletter Committee members or one of our Executive members. There will be a vote at the December union meeting to elect the new candidate as Alternate Editor of the Informer.
John A. McDonald, Editor

Contributors

Local 4304 members helping out with this issue were:

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 Wilf Clegg
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The Informer

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Policy Statement

The Informer is a publication of CAW Local 4304 and is intended to educate and inform the members. The views expressed are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the CAW or Local 4304. The newsletter committee reserves the right to edit for clarity and fact. Material of a sexist, racist or defamatory nature will not be printed.

(DISCIPLINE from page 1) off with or without pay or a stint in Hawaii. Only the employer knows. The other doesn't even start his time off until after the other one comes back.

Union members uncovered this and brought it to light. Management thought they could do it, cover it up, and nobody would ever know. Fortunately, no one was hurt or killed as a result of this. The public was told in the summer that a situation such as an unsafe bus would *never* happen again. How many times did it happen?

When the people responsible for the above situation are working, do you think that we can trust them to give us safe vehicles now, when we know that they only cared about making service at any cost in the past?

One of them was even questioned about a year ago when an allegedly unsafe bus was put out, and he said that he has kids and grandchildren that ride the bus, and he would never put any unsafe vehicles on the road.

How do you trust them now?

What happens if the public doesn't trust them and ridership declines? We will be the ones who lose our jobs.

When someone in a position of public trust in other sectors loses that trust, they do not return in

the same capacity until they can earn that trust again, if at all. If this was you or I, we know that we would not be here today.



As the union feels the discipline was not appropriate, we are filing a complaint with the Ministry of Labour. In this complaint are numerous violations of the Health and Safety Act.

Oh, and then there is the night supervisor who feels you should be dealt with if you have one too many buttons undone, wear a turtle-neck on a cold day, arrive one minute early at Sportsworld, or have your socks on the wrong feet. The employer's priorities need to be addressed!

I hope you all have a SAFE and Merry Christmas.

(TIRES from page 1) buses on detour while this was investigated.

Randy Steckly (Manager of Fleet) as part of this investigation called the tire manufacturer Firestone /Bridgestone and asked about the speed limits of this tire. Gord and I were informed that this tire could in fact run at 105km/h for 60 minutes. Gord related several other concerns regarding the tires such as summer conditions, load factors and tire life. We asked that he obtain from the manufacturer a letter speaking to all of these concerns.

I received a call to report to the South for 5:30 a.m. the following day where we would deal with the rest of Gord's concerns and Randy would have a letter from the manufacturer attesting that the tire was safe for our application.

After assuring the Southern Border Patrol that I was just visiting and not transferring, Gord and I met with Randy and reviewed the letter sent by the manufacturer. Gord felt that it did not contain the detail he was looking for and continued his work refusal so a Ministry of Labour Inspector was called to investigate Gord's refusal.

Gord, myself, Randy, Eric Gillespie and Jason Boutcher (Corporate H&S) met with the Inspector to discuss the refusal. We discussed availability of other more suitable tires as well as limiting the speed of buses to a safer range.

It was decided that since a suitable Urban Transit tire with a higher speed rating could not be found all the buses would be electronically governed to a maximum of 100km/h starting with the "I" Express buses.

On November 18th Gord and I took out 2415 which had been governed to make sure that the governing did not adversely affect the performance of the bus in any other way. I am happy to report that performance was not affected in any way that Gord or I could detect.

(SEE TIRES on page 4)

(TIRES Continued from page 3)

I will forward at my next JHSC meeting Gord's recommendations that we add signs to the rear of the buses indicating the maximum speed and that GRT management continue the search for a higher speed rated Urban Transit tire.



(EXPERIENCE from page 1)

I was on the Operations Committee for 10 years or so, and fought to have the lane divider walls made higher, as the public could climb over them to catch their next bus. The answer I was always given was that they were within the law. This wasn't good enough for me as I feared that one day a driver was going to have a bad accident. We had all experienced close calls. I happened to be that driver. Although the walls of Jericho came *down*, the walls at the terminal went *up* to where they are today!

Pay Disparities

About 30 years ago, a supervisor made about \$2000 more than a driver. About 12 years ago, when Tom D., a good old Irishman, retired from his supervisor's position, he was making \$44,000 per year. A supervisor now makes just under \$70,000 per year. I wish my pay had gone up like that in 12 years or so.

When we became GRT, things were supposed to be equal between the North and South, and

yet ticket clerks in the South make a few dollars less than their counterparts in the North for doing the same job.

Cheryl M., in the Operations Department has been doing a great job for about three years, but as far as I know, is still on contract.

Honesty on the Job

We have had a couple of drivers fired over the years as they had lied to management and could not be trusted. I am sure we have all read the papers lately concerning a certain bus that was put out on the road improperly. I won't go any further with this one.

Preventable Incidents

Don Snow left us a good legacy when he had the Collision Review Guidelines revamped, and we now have "preventable incidents" for damage done under \$500, with no other party involved. When I had an incident a short time ago, a certain individual was not as truthful as he should have been, and told me the damage was \$700. This meant that it was deemed a "preventable accident" by the Collision Review Committee and worth 10 demerit points. I decided to appeal this decision. A phone call from Bruce B.

(Safety) revealed that he was told by the same individual that the damage was \$900. Bruce told me that all I could do was bring in some new evidence, which I agreed to do. Upon investigation by myself, with phone calls to the manufacturer of Nova buses, I found that the part was \$289.50 with an hour's labour to install.

At the appeal meeting, the appraisal listed the damage at \$1700. How it got there is beyond me.

After going through the grievance procedure all the way to the top, HR finally changed things around so that it became a "preventable incident", as it should have been from the start, had the Collision Review received the proper information from this individual.

So, if you ever have an accident or incident, be aware of what is going on. Get your own appraisal, and do your own homework, if need be.

iXpress

These days I drive the iXpress, which took GRT a long time to put together. There are some concerns about this new route. For one, there's not much time to go to the bathroom, which is something we all have to do at times.

A lot of the bus stops are still *temporary* stops, and as yet are not cemented into the ground. Some stops are missing, and have been replaced with either cardboard or regular bus stops. I think this is kind of cute.

iXpress Tire Issue

While driving the iXpress, I had a work refusal on November 10th concerning the tire issue. We had meetings with Maurice L. and Eric G., where we agreed to have the buses programmed so that they cannot exceed the posted speed limit of 100 kph. That was the quick fix for now. Mean-

(SEE EXPERIENCE on page 5)

(**EXPERIENCE** from page 4) while, management said they would keep looking into the availability of new tires.

On Friday, November 18, I drove an iXpress bus that had just been programmed, as per our agreement. I took it around the block to make sure we did not lose any power on take-off, and that there was no loss of power in general. We then took it on the expressway to Conestoga Mall and back, it performed as expected on the highway. The only suggestion I made was that we have a sign installed on the back of the bus that clearly states, “**This vehicle does not exceed 100 kph**”.

Style of Bus Shelters

I’m sure we have all read in the newspaper about the bus shelter debate - should we have antique or modern shelters? Who cares what style they are as long as we get shelters for the traveling public in place before winter sets in? I hope it is not going to be like the mini terminal in Hespeler which took two years to install shelters.

In Summary

The above experiences have taught me that one person can make a difference if they believe what they are doing is the right thing.

With winter upon us, drive safely, and don’t be overly concerned with the running times in bad weather. It is *your* license, and it is up to you to protect it.

Now you have learned in four minutes some of what took me over 19 years to learn.

Contract Concepts

By John A. McDonald, Editor



After a wait of almost nine months our collective agreements are finally in print and in our hands. You may also download the electronic version of our contract at caw4304.ca/contract.

The online version comes in HTML, Microsoft Word and PDF.

This hard fought for document is the most potent weapon in our union’s arsenal. It is the final product of decades of collective bargaining for this local, with each contract building on the one before.

We should all be aware that any contract is only as good as our willingness to enforce it. This means that, not only should we know the contents of our con-

tract, but we should also be willing to file a grievance whenever our rights are violated. Then, if our case is just we must be willing to take their grievances all the way to arbitration, regardless of time and effort and cost involved. This is the reason why we have just sent a department two grievance about improper over time assignment on to arbitration. A contract is a previously agreed to code of conduct that both sides are obligated to honour. Ignorance is no excuse from either us or our supervisors.

Starting with this edition of the informer, we would like to highlight some of the improvements that have been made. Are negoti-



ating team sweated over each word that makes up this document. Educating ourselves about its contents allows us to exercise

(SEE CONTRACT on page 6)

(**CONTRACT** from page 5) our full rights that they have gained for us.

ARTICLE 12: DISCIPLINE, SUSPENSION, DEMOTION AND DISCHARGE OF ANY EMPLOYEE

Art. 12.1(a) In our previous contract, the language stated that if an employee wanted union representation, it was available. With our new contract, the onus is now on the employer to ensure the union representation is offered when discipline is likely. In fact, an employee is never required to meet alone for any reason with management if they do not wish to, without union representation. Always remember that your union executive strongly recommends that you always bring your union steward with you when discipline may be possible.

Art. 12.5(b) Previously, there were no time limits on customer complaints. With this new contract, they have 45 days from the date of the incident to submit their complaint. If the complaint is to result in discipline, the customer must submit it in writing. This written complaint must then be forwarded to the Union. No longer will we be disciplined on hearsay evidence.

Take time to read over your new contract. Knowledge is power.



informer@caw4304.ca

GRT Cuts

By *Phil Whitehead*

After expanding the system in September 2005, GRT may be required to make service reductions in 2006. Routes 61 Conestoga College and 68 Eagle St., and all Bus Plus routes, will be eliminated if cost-cutting proposals are accepted by regional council.

On October 26, the finance department presented a report to the budget committee of council listing \$3.75 million in proposed expenditure reductions for 2006. The region is facing expenditure increases that are outside of its control, such as from inflationary pressures and increases to OMERS payments. Therefore, in order to limit a tax increase to 2.77%, the region must find efficiency improvements and service reductions in expenditures that are within its control. All departments were required to submit spending reduction proposals.

GRT found \$440,000 worth of reductions by eliminating the routes that have the lowest cost-recovery and number of passengers per hour.

Method of Selecting Expenditures

When choosing a method to achieve the cost-reduction targets, staff faced the choice between reducing the frequency of service on a number of routes or abandoning selected service areas. Staff appears to have chosen

the latter method by recommending the elimination of the routes with the lowest utilization.

During the mid 90s, when Kitchener Transit was required to reduce service, it spread reductions throughout the system, with unfavourable results. The frequency of some KT routes was cut in half on the assumption that customers would wait the extra time. Instead, ridership on these routes evaporated. (GRT attempted to reverse this damage in September 2005 by restoring fifteen minute frequency on several of the affected routes during peak periods.)

Routes Selected

The prospect of losing Bus Plus prompts some basic questions about the service: Does the failure of the Bus Plus routes to achieve "financial performance and service utilization criteria" arise from a lack of public interest in transit or from a deficiency in the method of the transit service as being offered?

There are indications of public demand in the service areas involved: 75 Saginaw has increasing ridership and 72 Cherry Blossom is considered too infrequent to meet the needs of both employers and employees.

Starting a route using Bus Plus has worked in the past: 71 Melran and 22 Laurentian West both achieved a sufficient number of passengers to become conventional routes.

(SEE CUTS on page 7)

(CUTS from page 6)

Vans have a capacity of 13 passengers, but in reality, it is less. If more than five passengers are in a van, passengers almost have to climb over one another to board and disembark. The awkwardness of the use of the vans creates a poor introduction to the transit system.



Bus Plus cannot serve seniors, special needs customers, those with groceries and customers with baby carriages. Therefore, ridership growth on Bus Plus routes likely is impeded by lack of easier access facilities.

Bus Plus vans are frequently confused with the supervisors' vans, causing some GRT passengers to assume that the vans cannot be used for travel.

The elimination of 61 College would mean that senior residents in Blair would lose the service that they requested for years and finally received.

Timing

Opportunities for public consultation will be made available prior to these routes being eliminated. The decision about service elimination will be made by the end of January.

Return on Investment

The \$440,000 in proposed cuts is roughly equal to the amount that the region forwarded to GRT in special funding for the purpose of getting bus maintenance back on schedule. It is not a surprise that the region wants its money back. Presumably, it was to be returned in the form of fewer costs resulting from premature wear and on-the-road break downs. However, it now appears that the region prefers to receive cash.

Strausburg Gym

By Greg Sturt-Smith

Hi everyone it's time for another update on your local gyms provided by the Region of Waterloo. Today we are going to look at the Strausburg gym. The gym has been opened since the end of April. Lisa Yates is the Employee Centre Consultant. If you have any questions or if you want to be on the board to help make decision on what happens next for the gym please email Lisa at lblaskavitch@hotmail.com.

The gym has lots of dumbbells ranges from 3lbs to 80lbs. Also, there are plenty of plates to use on the variety of machines. Finally, there is a pin board for information on correct movement of stretching, exercises, and accessories to add variety in your warm-ups and cool-downs.



Trip of a Lifetime

By Michael Hogue

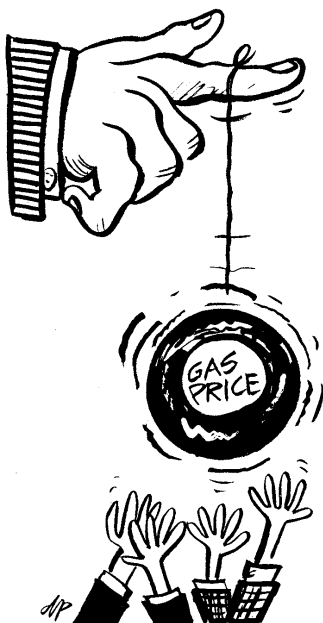
This past September, I was most fortunate to go on an all expense paid VIP tour of St Petersburg, Russia, Biakonur, and Kazakhstan. I was a guest of Telesat, a Telecommunications company that was launching the Anik F1R satellite to replace the F1 that was running at only half due to malfunction. Telesat has a program that allows one employee and guest to attend every launch with a draw with proceeds going to the United Way. John (my stepson who works for Telesat and won the draw) and I made the trip together.

After a few days of touring, which I don't have room to go into here, we were off to the Kometa Hotel on the base and dinner at the Polyot Hotel. Wonderful food and drink was had, as time grew closer for the Anik F1R Proton Launch. 3 am we were off to the Proton Club to see the Launch and Live to air broadcast back to Telesat and ILS was playing on the TV. At 3:53 am local time it went with a large flash and sparks coming off the tower.

The part that was so incredible was the pad was 8 km away and we heard the TV noise of the rocket then about 15 seconds later the real sound which completely drowned out the TV speakers. Next were the dome of light that shined all the way to the ground and the crackling noise of the rocket. After about a minute the first stage let go covering the sky in shooting stars. Night launches are more spectacular to view and what a sight to see. Cheers from everyone in the group after learning eve-

rything looks normal readings are in normal limits. Drinks and signing of the banner took place afterward. At about 5Am everyone was back to the bus to the airport to return to St Petersburg and yes, all slept well.

On the trip home, with my mind trying to grasp what I had seen over the week. I dedicate this to Kathleen My wife and John, without whom I would never have had a chance like this, and Telesat and the folks that were on the trip. Also for the Operators that helped with my trades.



A Labour Minute



The Great Organizer

There is no more important job in the labour movement than organizing workers into unions. One of the best organizers who ever lived was a Canadian named **John Flett**.

Flett worked as a carpenter in Hamilton, Ontario in the early 1900s.

Because most of the unions at the time were international craft brotherhoods it was American Federation of Labor president Sam Gompers who enlisted the services of John Flett to enrol new members in Canada.

It wasn't working class solidarity that motivated Gompers. The AFL was also organizing in the U.S. and didn't want a low-wage ghetto north of the border.

Flett eagerly went to work and was astonishingly successful. He established 57 new locals in 1901 and another the following year. That is an almost unbelievable pace of more than one new local set up every week over a two year period.

In 1902, Flett was elected president of the Trades and Labour Congress, the forerunner of the Canadian Labour Congress, a fitting tribute to his great achievements as an organizer.

Labour Minutes recount the history of working people and take just a minute to read.

-Dishaw-Roy

Bring some Christmas cheer to others!!

VOLUNTEER for OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD



(A Christian ministry that provides shoe box gifts to poor children in Third World countries)

Let's try to get a group of 25 to 30 GRT drivers & family members (minimum age: 14)

We will inspect and pack shoe box gifts at the

CHRISTMAS CHILD PROCESS- ING CENTRE

866 Langs Drive, Cambridge
(Electrolux building)

THURSDAY, DEC. 1/05

6:45 pm to 9:30 pm

Sign up on Group Lists
(posted at North Garage and South
Garage)

For more info Call:

- Paul Eckmier 742-2482
- John McDonald 241-5623
- Paul Wagler 578-8072

Retarder Operation On Orion 2300 Series

By Gregory Jahn, Vice President

This month a member asked that I look into a particular 2300 series of bus in regards to the retarder operation. The member expressed that the retarder had been moved from the accelerator pedal to the brake pedal.

It was after looking into the issue in depth that I realized that perhaps more education is in order for all of us, myself included.



The retarder operation on an Orion 2300 series of bus is actually on both accelerator and brake pedal combined. Transmission retarder operation is interrupted by the operator depressing the accelerator pedal. Release the accelerator pedal and retarder operation is applied in the first stage at 33%. This part is done electronically. When the operator depresses the brake pedal slightly a 4 p.s.i. air switch activates the second stage at 66% of transmission retarder operation. Further depressing the brake pedal acti-

vates a second air switch which then applies the third stage at 100% transmission retarder operation.

Remember that this entire transmission retarder percentages drop to 0% at any moment the A.B.S. detects wheel slippage while braking.

Our Union's concern is that for the A.B.S. to work it must release air pressure to the wheel sliding and deactivate the transmission retarder during braking. But if the operator does not have their foot on the brake pedal at the moment a rear wheel were to start too slide due to retarder operation in bad weather, there is no air pressure to be released. Due to wheel speed this could cause the retarder to be engaging and disengaging repeatedly which was felt would only further burden the operator duties trying to control the vehicle. This is one of the reasons as to why the Union has fought so hard to have the retarder switches installed in the 2300 series. This would allow the operator to shut the retarder off in bad weather giving the operator a more controllable and predictable brake operation.

I would like to thank our member in department # 2 who has the duties of taking care of a lot of our changes being requested by either Health & Safety or Operations committee that being mechanic Moe Kosza, and for taking the time to give me a little in depth knowledge in this issue.

Welcome Aboard

By John A. McDonald, Editor

"See if this fits you." I'd just been on the job for about two weeks when one of our senior drivers, Hughy Critch, handed me his unused uniform jacket. When I found that it fit perfectly, he said, "Keep it. You look better in a uniform, and they won't give you one until next year." With that kind gesture, a wonderful relationship started between me, a junior driver, and a thoughtful, senior driver. Periodically, he would give me simple tips that helped with my driving skills or ways to deal with certain passengers. It wasn't so much the things that he gave me, but just the fact that I was made to feel welcome in this new union environment.

This past year has brought a record number of new employees to GRT. At our recent union meeting, the problem was brought up as to how to integrate these new union members into our Local. The suggestion was made that more resources be put into educational tools such as this Informer. While I welcome such an investment, let me suggest an even more effective way of introducing these new members to union life.

May I suggest that we look to some of our universities for the methods they use to provide support for first-year students as they adjust to the university experi-

(SEE WELCOME on page 11)

(WELCOME from page 10)
ence?

In many ways, a union environment is just as foreign as moving from high school to university. The University of Ontario in Os-



hawa uses a program called Student 2 Student Mentoring. It is described as a “program that matches incoming students with our upper year students in their faculty. Upper year students are the experts on life at University, and by establishing these collaborative partnerships, first-year students will have the opportunity to learn about campus life from someone with first-hand experience. Student 2 Student Mentoring is all about **students helping students**. It’s about gaining knowledge and sharing knowledge. It’s about providing support

and conveying practical information, student 2 student.”

Our union could greatly benefit from this type of volunteer program. So often it takes years for new union members to become involved in the union and join a committee or attend a union meeting. My experience has shown that posters on bulletin boards have very little effect. What it takes is for someone to walk up and say “Are you coming to the union meeting tonight?” It is the personal touch that makes all the difference.

Before I go further, I’ll have to admit that I don’t expect the union to immediately create a “new member mentoring program.” What I hope for, in the short-term, is that the next time you run into a union member whose name you do not know, that you take a minute to introduce yourself. Let them know that they can speak with you at any time, should they have any questions about the new job. Perhaps even give them your phone number. In short, I encourage you to step out of your comfort zone and make him/her feel welcome.

Eventually I would like to see a mentoring committee set up to co-ordinate compiling lists of volunteer union members, and then provide this list to our president. During their initial meeting with our union president, new members would be asked if they would

like to become involved in the New Member Mentoring Program. The mentee would then be assigned a mentor from the list of volunteers, and introductions would be made. The mentor would:

- introduce them to their union steward
- take them to their first union meeting
- and generally introduce them to others.

And then there are the more delicate matters, such as interpersonal conduct between union members that need to be explained. For example, if a person has never worked in the union environment before, they may not realize things like the fact that we are never supposed to complain about a fellow brother or sister to a supervisor. Rather, we are expected to approach the offending party directly, or speak to our union steward. (This, of course, does not include criminal matters.) Generally, the relationship would be fairly casual, and would only formally exist for one year.

Does this make sense to you?

Then take the first step and shake the hand of a brother or sister that you do not know. Then speak to your union executive or steward and let them know your thoughts on the matter.

If there is enough support, we can bring it to a union meeting and discuss it.

Let’s strengthen our union. Let it begin with me.



Arbitration Powers: A Case Study

Submitted by R. Simpson, Chief Steward (N)

On Saturday November 12, I and the Chief Steward from the South attended a full day workshop on Advanced Grievance Handling. The instructor (Luis Domingues) was excellent. He had a passion and extensive case arbitration experience from a union perspective. What was important about the training is that we have to examine the idea of challenging management rights, learn more about the duty to accommodate with a focus on disability and to let us not forget that just because we have a union in the work place, we are not bomb proof, as the following case example shows. If people are interested I will submit additional real life cases in the next issues.



Case No. One, Local 127 and Ontario Steel Products (True Story)

A worker was discharged for falsifying records of units worked

(SEE ARBITRATION on page 14)

SAFETY & WINTER DRIVING AT GRT

By Maurice Levesque, JHSC, Labour Co-Chair

It's going to be a long, snowy and icy winter at GRT. Last winter we had a particularly vicious ice storm in February. On that day system wide, we had a high number of collisions (Approx. 15)

The C.A.W. executive and I thought some of the **44 soon to 54 new drivers!!** could use a little helpful winter information and opinion. What follows are my thoughts and opinions on winter storm driving based on my knowledge of OH&S regulations, GRT Operating policy and discussions with M.O.L. inspectors.

The person who is ultimately in charge of whether or not it is safe to driving a given bus down a given street at a given time is **YOU** the operator behind the wheel. You have the **right** under OH&S legislation to "refuse to do work or do particular work where he or she has reason to believe (a) any equipment, machine, device or thing the worker is to use or operate is likely to endanger himself herself or another worker; (b) the physical condition of the workplace or the part thereof in which he or she works or is to work is likely to endanger himself or herself. (OH&S Act Sec. 43(3)(a)(b))

It would seem to me that a driver might have "reason to believe" that driving during an ice or snow storm "is likely to endanger him or herself"

There seems to be a **misconception** out there among drivers that if you perform a "work refusal" you will get into "trouble" or be considered a "bad" driver by management. I have talked to many GRT supervisors and believe me they say they have neither time nor the inclination to "lie in wait" and "get" drivers who perform work refusals.

Additionally if any of them ever did so they would be in violation of Section 50(1)(a)(b)(c)(d) of the OH&S Act which states. "No employer or person acting on behalf of an employer shall: dismiss or threaten to dismiss a worker, suspend or discipline or threaten to suspend or discipline a worker because a worker has acted in compliance with this act or sought enforcement of this Act"

In fact if you performed a work refusal based on weather and road conditions and the M.O.L. inspector did not uphold the refusal the worst thing to happen is that the inspector would order you to return to work!! To my knowledge GRT policy concerning winter storm driving is to drive safely **first** and to worry about the schedule **second**. I cannot ever envision as GRT Supervisor telling an operator to "get that bus on time" or to drive faster during such conditions. To

(SEE WINTER on page 13)

(**WINTER** from page 12)
me one of the best ways to cope with snowy and icy conditions is to “drive an appropriate speed for conditions” If that speed happens to be 1km/h then so be it. Don’t get caught up in that “gotta finish on time” mentality.

I have asked M.O.L. inspectors a couple of times over the years “would you uphold a work refusal based on weather and road conditions?” the answer was probably but several factors would have to be in place first. These are 1) that all school buses in the area had been cancelled or pulled from the road. 2) That police and news agencies were making regular announcements advising people to “avoid all unnecessary travel”

Even with those conditions in place the inspector still said he would have to come out and make a determination at the particular location at the time and that his ruling would not necessarily apply to Transit as a whole.

If you have any questions about the information contained in this article do not hesitate to call my on my union cell phone at 497-7870

My Best Morning at GRT

By Maurice Levesque

Crap my alarm didn’t go off on time!! Its 5:50 a.m. and my bus should be rolling out of 6A5 about now. I dial Dispatch expecting the worst and a honey

voiced supervisor says don’t hurry we’ll see you when you get here.

Yippee! I think 5:51 a.m. and the sarcasm flowing. I put on my least wrinkled uniform one gray sock and one blue sock and hammer out the door. No time for Timmy’s this morning I moan as I shove the car into gear and punch up Warp six.

Visions of pink slips and white slips roll across my half-opened eyes as I weave in and out of traffic. I can see my breath in the moonlight as I complete the 800-meter dash from the Zeller’s parking lot to the Dispatch desk.

Time to face the music. “I’m here” I call to the Supervisor on duty. “Your bus is gone and the Assistant Manager would like to see you now.” He says. Uh Oh! I think, “when was the last time I was late? Someone call in a complaint? Did the red light camera get me?” I slink to his office and he meets me at the door.

“Come in Maurice. Glad to see you would you like a cup of tea? Cream and sugar isn’t it?” I’m thinking what did I do? Is HR and a pink slip on the way? “I can meet my bus downtown I offer hopefully” No no he says, “we’ve got you covered for the day”

This is just getting more bizarre. “So Maurice I thought I’d take this opportunity to tell you what a wonderful job you’ve been doing for us the last 8 years.” Disbelief creeps across my face. No really,

we appreciate the effort you put in day after day.

A knock at the door. It’s the Manager of Transit and the Assistant Director. “Hi Maurice would you like some fresh baked muffins. My wife made them this morning.” I’m thinking did I go to the right transit property this morning?

The Assistant Director sits down and says, “we’ve decided to put all those extras you wanted in the new buses including the Vibrate massage drivers seat” Behind him the Manager says” we’ve also took your advice for a Winter Schedule and added 15min to the running times for each Route”

Wow this is the best day I’ve ever had at transit! A phone is ringing on the desk I pick it up but it’s still ringing. I sit bolt upright! Crap it’s 5:50 a.m. and my alarm didn’t go off on time.

Mark your calendars!

Our 7th Annual “SKIING FOR DREAMS”
CHARITY SKI-A-THON
for the
CHILDREN’S WISH FOUNDATION
is
TUESDAY, FEB. 7/06
COLLINGWOOD

- Downhill skiing at Blue Mountain
- X-C skiing & snowshoeing at Scenic Caves Nordic Centre

(MORE DETAILS COMING SOON)

(ARBITRATION from page 12) on under a piece work incentive system. The worker got credit for doing more work than was actually done. The worker admitted to these facts. The union was challenging the severity of punishment – fired/discharged. From the records submitted during a two week period, the worker was paid an additional \$4.00 per day he was not entitled to. The employee admitted that this practice had been going on for about a year. Neither he nor the company was certain how much money was actually paid out improperly. The worker had been a valuable and good employee for twenty years without any complaints or discipline incidents on his record. The company had not disputed the worker's good record.

The worker was 45 years old. This was the only work he knew how to do. He had a child to support.

The Decision

Note: Arbitrators are usually called in after the fourth level of a grievance at a daily cost of \$2500, it is not cheap and the decision is final.

This real life arbitrator stated in his award that in an average case he would agree that discharge was an appropriate punishment. In this case however, he said "...the grievor had established a long and favourable record with the company prior to his last year. I believe that an employee is entitled to receive some credit for this, to be balanced against subsequent misbe-

haviour." The arbitrator also acknowledged that such a punishment would place "...tremendous economic hardships upon the grievor." He then went on to say "...If there is any reasonable doubt as to the adequacy of the punishment I think that the grievor should be given the benefit of such doubt." "If the grievor wishes to be reinstated, he must:

- Reimburse the company approximately \$1000 he was improperly paid. Upon doing so be entitled to re-employment.
- From the time of his lay-off until the full reimbursement to the company is to be recorded as an unpaid suspension.
- And with the further penalty to the grievor he shall lose ten years of seniority.

OUT ON A LIMB

By Wilf. Clegg (*Grey Owl*)

It's time for another kick at the cat. I do appreciate the positive feed back I've been receiving. Thanks.

As promised here's my view on the iXpress. The customers I've talked with have been very positive in their response. They think it's great that they can now get to K-W or Cambridge without having to ride a milk-run bus. This can only be accomplished by the operators doing a truly professional job. Even with the recent problems that have occurred, the drivers have continued to behave in a professional manner. The real test will be how

they perform in the bad weather that is coming, Good Luck!

We, I mean Grand River Transit have been having our problems as of late. I know it's not us, its management, but that's not how the general public perceives it. We are G.R.T., whether we like it or not. Let's all behave in a professional manner. We can't alter what has happened in the way of discipline at the management level. Complaining to our passengers can only demean our image in their eyes. We know that the wrong types of tires are being run on the iXpress bus route and I hope that will change.

With the holiday season fast approaching and another anniversary is getting closer, or just past, depending on when you are reading this. It's hard to believe that it

was eighteen years ago that I first turned a wheel for Kitchener Transit (after a brief sojourn with Cambridge Transit). November 23 seems like such a long time ago. Mark Kind, did you think we would last this long? After all this time your still the Junior / Senior driver and I'm still the Senior Junior driver, no matter which division we work in or were we are on the seniority list.

Speaking of seniority, why can't the number of vacation allotments, especially in the summer, keep pace with our growing numbers? It just does not seem fair that an operator with only a few years seniority can't even get one week in the summer. I know the argument the really senior driver will give, "I had to spend

(SEE LIMB on page 15)

COLLISION REVIEW

	<u>August</u>	<u>September</u>
North:		
Incident	2	2
Non preventable	8	11
Preventable Incident	3	5
Preventable	4	6
South:		
Incident		1
Non preventable	2	3
Preventable Incident		
Preventable		1
South Fleet:		
Preventable	1	
North Fleet:		
Preventable		1
Mobility Plus North:		
Incident	1	
Non Preventable	1	1

September was the worst month for preventable accidents in G.R.T. history. Several drivers were charged by the police for speeding and causing accidents. G.R.T. has grown and has expanded into many new areas. The running times we are given, are insufficient to drive in a safe manner. As you all know, the more people you pick up and the more stops you make, the faster you have to drive to maintain the schedule, which becomes dangerous. You as a driver, are upset and stressed, the public is upset because of late buses and missed connections.

Our schedules only work in off peak times, when the traffic and our loads are light. Once we enter peak times it is very difficult to maintain a schedule. If snow and ice come in to play, the entire system will fall apart as it

always does on the first snow-fall of winter.

The best advice that I can give you is to slow down and drive in a safe manner. Remember “safety first” yours, the passengers and the publics. Use your schedule as a guide. If you are running late and are supposed to have lunch, then let the Supervisor work with you, to provide you with a lunch break.

Our schedules are tight and rigid, there is no give. The interlining of buses does not work. Even on dry days buses run late and break down, service is missed and people are upset. When snow falls and the streets are covered in ice, buses can’t maintain service because we have to drive slower and are held up by traffic. When you have a bus that does three or four different routes, (Interlining) with driver

changes due to lunch breaks, you are asking for disaster.

That is what happened on November 17. The route 12 bus schedules are too tight and can’t maintain their schedules. Service was lost on routes 17, 27, 9, 12. Half a dozen drivers helped to bail out the system by offering their services after their shifts ended. This helped, but did not solve all of the shortcomings of the system. By midnight the salters had covered most of the City but we were still held up for 7 min at the Terminal because an interlined bus could not make it to the Terminal on time.

So again I remind you all, to think about safety, slow down and drive in a safe manner. Do not worry about being on time. Let’s make this winter season the safest that G.R.T. has ever had.

I would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Laszlo Bori

(LIMB from page 14) twenty years before I got a summer holiday so you should too”. But that was 25 years ago and times change, and so should the system.

That’s all for this time, although I’m politically incorrect have a very Merry Christmas, God bless you and watch over you this holiday season.



Day One! iXpress

Well Equipped to Keep it "On Time"



LARGE TIM HORTON COFFEE

Must be filled "before" reporting for work.

CRASH HELMET (GRT Certified)

FEED BAG
Eliminate need to stop for unnecessary lunch break.

SCHEDULE
Try not to get lost.

RACING GLOVES

Necessary to hold onto steering wheel at excessive 401 speeds.

CATHETER

"Installed" to eliminate all unnecessary washroom breaks

SHORT PANTS

To keep great legs cool.

OVERSIZE BOOT

Needed to hold accelerator pedal flat on floor for long periods of time.

No Reason To Be Late Anymore!

Model: Wayne Cooper