

Skiing For Dreams

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Sandy Henderson Retires

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Union Works

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We Have A High-Pressure Job.

By: Ted Dewsbury & David Driver

Editors Note: The following article is from the transcript of the Jan 16 th. Union meeting.

TED: “We’ve had discussions with Management about Conflict Resolution. We need to get along. We need to depend on one another. This is a job where we come in, get our transfers, schedules and go out to our bus. We don’t have to stand shoulder to shoulder with other people. We are out in our own little world on our buses. What could be so bad that somebody pisses you off that much that we have to start battling back and forth. I really don’t understand it. The only thing that I can think of, in my opinion, is that we have a

High Pressure job. We deal with a lot of jerks out on the road. And we take it out on each other, right? I don’t know how we deal with that, I really don’t. But I’ll tell you one thing, I’m not baby-sitting. We have to learn to get along and support and help one another. Bottom line is that you don’t have to like everybody, but you do have to respect him or her. If you can’t get along, then stay away from one another.”

DAVID: “I think that I’m not the only one who has noticed a dramatic increase of interpersonal conduct issues over the past few years. I think that a lot of it is really silly issues, probably about 99% of it. But I think what we’re seeing here is the symptoms or the effects and not the cause. This organization is really poorly managed, the left hand don’t know what the right hand is doing. They don’t communicate. They treat the supervisors like garbage; we have some supervisors treating drivers like dirt. Our System has increased with things like the Ipress, free passes for the pre-secondary

(Continued on page 3)

Leaks

By Phil Whitehead

Garth Turner, the MP who was kicked out of the federal Conservative caucus and later joined the Liberal caucus, identified a method by which the government promotes its agenda by exploiting a selected journalist. Ironically, the process that he identified will be relevant to CAW 4304 members after a new contract is signed.

Turner described a lengthy process. First, the journalist is “starved” of information from the government for a protracted length of time, making their job difficult. Second, when the government wants a certain message promoted to the public, it leaks that information to the journalist. Third, the journalist, feeling empowered by being granted privileged information not provided to other journalists, takes that message and disseminates it through the media as legitimate news,

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Peter Hewitt
Dan Pope
Jim Charters
Ricky Sandhu
Susan Keels



Fruit Baskets:

(Some donated to charity in lieu)

Steve Thompson
John Heibin

Contributors

Local 4304 members helping out with this issue were:

Bob Arsenault
Steve Huebner
John Mac Kay
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Klaus Biemann
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**Next Submission
Deadline is
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Full colour edition of
The Informer is available
on-line at
caw4304.ca/informer

**Attend your
Union meetings:
Feb. 20, 2008
2 meetings:
(11:00 am &
7:30 pm)
(3rd Wed., monthly)**



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CAW LOCAL UNION MEDIA ASSOCIATION

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION
CALM
OF LABOUR MEDIA

The Informer

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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.

(High Pressure Job from page 1) schools. When you talk to Eric Gillespie and say, "what is your plan, what kind of numbers can we expect", he says, that they don't have a plan. I'm not kidding. This is how they implement this stuff. So then what happens is, it gets frustrating for everybody. So that is the cause and the rise in the interpersonal conflicts is the symptom. The solution is a really strong union, a really solid front. Unfortunately, we don't have that and that is why we have all this bickering. It has increased frustration levels where the human being will take it out on others. We have short tempers and that is why it is really rising. I could be wrong, but I've seen it go up huge. Most of what I do as Chief Steward is deal with this sort of thing. If we all stick together and we recognize what the problem is ; that is where we need to focus. We're going to have little interpersonal misconducts here and there but the bigger issue is that they are treating their employees like garbage, not only us but the supervisors as well. The whole place is in shambles."

TED: "We need to take everything that was said here tonight back into the workplace and act like adults. We need to come to the understanding, I said it earlier and you've summed it up a little better, that we are under a lot of pressure. A lot of it is from management, a lot of it from the public and we're taking it out on each other. We got to learn to step back, take a breath and say, "maybe that comment on the ra-

dio doesn't really deserve a response. Just brush it off. We need to educate each other."



Strong and A United Stand

*By Klaus Biemann
Political Education*

By the time you read this article we will have had our strike vote. Hopefully we will have sent The Region a strong message through a 100% vote in favour of strike action, if it becomes necessary.

There are many items that are being negotiated into our next contract. Our negotiating committee has its' work cut out as it hashes out issues with the Region. It is important to understand that the Region will never willingly offer its' workforce more than the bare minimum.

And that's exactly what we'll get from them without a powerful mandate. Without a strong strike vote mandate, the Region will not take us seriously and will therefore only offer us what they think we are worth. Scary, I think.

Personally, I believe that we are **one** whole contract behind everyone else that is of comparable size to our transit property. I think that the time is **now** that we get things right and end up where we should have been years ago.

This will only happen if we give our negotiating committee the tools it needs to extract major concessions from the Region. The one tool is through a strong strike mandate. The other tool is to show the Region that we have risen above the divisiveness that bickering amongst ourselves can cause, and that we stand together, strong and united.

Our union executive and our negotiating committee will work hard to produce a good contract with the Region. Only you and I can make it really happen through strength and solidarity.



(Leaks from page 1)
even though it is not.

The current contract negotiations are the fifth negotiations at which this CAW 4304 member has been present. I was also present each time at the aftermath, when the same technique was utilized by someone in management to foment dissent within the membership toward the local leadership and national representative.

Here's an outline of what occurred after all four previous negotiations: First, a contract was ratified, even though many of the members who voted in favour of ratification had reservations about whether or not the negotiating team had not obtained the best possible deal. Second, one of those members with reservations was taken into the confidence of a member of management, who informed them that the negotiating team had settled too easily, and that management had budgeted additional money for wage increases. Third, the member felt especially privileged for having "insider" information and began to share it with numerous other members, who, in turn, become upset with the local leadership for accepting a wage increase that was lower than what management had been prepared to give.

In each case, the person selected by management had the two personal characteristics of being trustworthy (*ie.* they wouldn't reveal the name of the manager who provided them with the in-



formation) and credible and believable amongst their peers.

Any such member can be nicknamed a "camel": someone who is willing to carry an important cargo under difficult conditions for the benefit of its master, and for little reward.

The general pattern of a manager's scheme has taken several forms: In one instance, the then-director of transit confided the "information" several months later to two members during a social occasion. In another instance, a member of Kitchener city council laughed as he told a disaffected former union executive member that the current executive had settled too soon. (This instance was ironic because the union member who told me this story believed the anonymous politician absolutely, despite otherwise believing that all politicians were untrustworthy.) In another instance, a member came into the lunchroom and insisted upon telling everybody that he had been "upstairs" and couldn't mention the name of the per-

son who had provided him with some important information. The greatest variation on this theme occurred when a city official complimented the union leadership in the media for its "responsible" actions in settling quickly. Apparently, he was hoping to cause the members to reject the tentative contract at a ratification meeting a week later. The apparent scheme failed.

After the next contract is signed – hopefully, *hopefully* without a strike or lockout – any member who finds themselves being taken into confidence by someone who supposedly possesses important information, should remember that there is a name for a person who provides you with confidential "information". This name is normally utilized without justification for racist remarks, but in this case it is appropriate and accurate. The name is "camel jockey."



COLLISION REVIEW

September 2007

By Lazlo Bori

As stated before the Region wants Transit to be one big happy family. Therefore I will not be segregating North or South or Mobility Plus in this report.

	March	April	May	June	July
Incident	3	7	1	2	0
Preventable Incident	1	2	4	7	0
Non Preventable	16	11	9	5	11
Preventable	10	6	3	1	3

If you notice in July there are only two categories, Preventable accident or non preventable accident. The reason for this is because the Region decided to revert back to the old Kitchener Transit Draconian ways. There is no forgiveness, if you hit a mirror against a sign or tree branch you are guilty and will lose your safe driving award. If the damage to the bus is \$10 or \$10,000 the result is the same, "PREVENTABLE".

The point system is gone, Management will be deciding on your punishment depending on the severity of the accident. The Region believes (mistakenly), that they will make you a better driver by giving you, a stern talking to, sending you to counseling or for retraining.

Unfortunately this program was not coordinated with the scheduling department and for some silly reason our schedules remain tight. Maybe the winter sign up will give us the time to drive safely.



Picked up in Passing

By John Mac Kay

I ran into Tony Brooks the other day and Tony announced his cancer was in complete remission, Also at the strike mandate meeting John Heibein says hello, and John is doing well. Both look forward to coming back soon.

Radio "KAOS", we have 54 radios in Cambridge and 165 in KW. Use your head, Pick up some pocket time tables. And when a customer asks a question, you can say "I am sorry were are very busy, I cannot get an answer at this time".

2008 SKIING FOR DREAMS

By Steve Huebner

The weather outside is frightful but for skiers it is so delightful. The Skiing For Dreams planning committee is putting the final touches into place for this year's ski-a-thon, scheduled for February 26. For all of you faithful sponsors, we thank you in advance. Ann Boehm, our local Children's Wish representative, has given us brochures and a recent news letter to give you an idea as to where your money is going.

For the skiers we have good news! Marlene McCracken has confirmed that Stock will sponsor our trip with a school bus, free of charge. Arrangements for a restaurant in Collingwood are being made to host our prize dinner. Yes, there are prizes for being a part of Skiing for Dreams, so sign up soon. \$50.00 minimum is required for all employees and guests who ski at the reduced rate. A ticket for every \$100.00 of donations will put your name

in the draw for the major prize. More information can be found with the Skiing For Dreams posters at the Strasburg Transit Center as well as the G.R.T. North and South drivers' rooms. We can all work together. Support your annual Skiing For Dreams charity ski-a-thon. Ski, donate, have fun.



2008—The Make the Ski-a-thon at Blue Mountain



Ski-A-Thon 2008

By Klaus Biemann



Once again our annual Ski-A-Thon is upon us. On Tuesday, February 26, we will be leaving from Conestoga Mall to Blue Mountain. Stock Transportation will be providing a school bus at no cost. This free bus ride to Blue Mountain and return to the Tri-Cities is available to any Ski-A-Thon participant.

Steve Huebner will be looking after the downhill participants, and I will be responsible, as in the past several years, for the cross-country skiing and snowshoeing activity.

Once we arrive at the base of the Blue Mountain Resort parking lot, I will be shuttling the cross-country skiers and snowshoers to the Nordic Centre – Scenic Caves chalet at the top of Blue Mountain. This is where you will

pick up the more than 20 KM of groomed ski and snowshoe trails.

We hope to be on those trails by 9AM. While on the trails, feel free to drop into the chalet for eats and drinks at anytime you wish. At around 4PM we will be shuttling back to the parking lot at the base of Blue Mountain Resort for the bus ride into Collingwood, where we will dine and hand out door prizes to all of the Ski-A-Thon participants.

Trail fees are around \$12 per person for the ski trails, and \$18 for ski rentals. Snowshoe rentals would be about \$25 per person.

The trails meander through forests of sugar maples, beeches, and oaks atop the Niagara Escarpment that offer breathtaking views of Georgian Bay 300 meters below, at scenic look-out points. And, being in the heart of snow belt country,

you will find snow conditions second to none.

For a nominal sponsorship of \$50 you can hitch a free ride to Blue Mountain Resort and the Scenic Caves Nordic cross-country ski and snowshoe trails courtesy of Stock Transportation and participate in the activities at rock bottom prices. If you collect \$100 or more you are also automatically entered in the major door prize event.

Since it's inception back in March, 2000, this noble event has raised almost \$34,000 for the Children's Wish Foundation.

Good work, Paul Eckmier, and to all those who participated in the past.



Sandy Henderson Retires



By John Mac Kay

Yes it is true after 27 years of service Sandy said , and Every one who was in ear shot heard her say, enough of this . I am out of here. Always interesting never short on getting into a conversation , topical, and just plane Sandy. We will miss you in the lunch room and on the job.



Sandy is comparing the size of; never mind I can't print that, Oh yes I remember the size of one of her favorite tropical fish she has seen . As one of her hobbies is scuba diving and I am sure Sandy and her husband Bill will be doing a lot of this now that she is going to enjoy the good life. A trip to Jamaica is also on Sandy and Bill,s agenda now.



Don't worry Be Happy

By Bob Arsenault



The next time you stop and pick up that customer at the bus stop . Smile it's remarkable that a simple smile will make your day be so much more enjoyable. For the past four years driving with GRT I have learned a lot working with positive people and this year is with out a doubt the easiest for me personally . It's the law of attraction it's universal so when I smile at every customer that boards my bus 90% of people will give me a smile back. So it's a win win situation. Try it out for a week and you will not only feel better, but your job won't feel so much like work. Have a happy , safe and healthy new year everyone... Bob Arsenault (don't worry be happy)

99% in Favour

By John A. McDonald,
Election Committee chairperson

The membership has given our negotiating committee, led by President, Rick Lonergan, a solid vote of confidence with a 99% strike vote. This is the highest level of solidarity this local has displayed in recent memory. The previous two strike votes yielded 98% in favour of strike action, should it have been necessary. The fact that 50% of our membership showed up to vote in extreme weather conditions is a further demonstration of the solid backing our union leadership enjoys.

I was further impressed by the speeches given by Rick, Ted, Harold and our national representative, Bill Gibson. While not revealing any specifics of the negotiations, they let us know what their intentions were and how they plan to achieve them. I've spoken to several members since who came away feeling even more confident in our union leadership. In my 19 years as a union member, I cannot recall a time where we have been able to assemble a better team than what we have in place this year.

Another difference from previous years is the level of preparedness that this local has, should it be necessary to set up picket lines. We have a Strike Preparedness committee in both the North and the South led by

(Continued on page 11)

To Whom ever may be con- cerned:

By Rhonda Guenther

Regarding the Petition being circulated in favor of reinstating the greeting “Merry Christmas”.

First of all no one is telling drivers as individuals that they can not say “Merry Christmas” to who ever they want. The issue is whether or not religious expressions such as “Merry Christmas” should be displayed on municipal government public vehicle signage.

Furthermore, if this petition is ever publicly presented to The Region of Waterloo it is likely to be a HUGE embarrassment to Grand River Transit. It would expose GRT to the accusation of allowing systemic racist attitudes to run rampant among its employees. I can foresee calls for sensitivity training coming from numerous outraged community figures. Imagine such a petition being circulated within the Regional Police Force?

Generic greetings like “Happy Holidays” show respect for the whole community, not just the Christian community. Since, we are a pluralistic society, governed through a democratic secular process, and we do not have an official state religion, I believe the government got it right when they decided to refrain from displaying all religious greetings.

“All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated. The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis”.

Reaffirmed By The UN’S 2005 World Summit In New York.

NOTE: The foregoing article has been reproduced by Klaus Biemann (Political Education) for The Informer with Rhonda’s permission.

Some Thoughts on Rhonda’s Letter

By Klaus Biemann,
Political Education

In the aforementioned article, Rhonda states her case in an eloquent and precise manner. As our Canadian society becomes infused with an increasing array of different cultures and religious beliefs, it is only natural for many generational Canadians to feel somewhat intimidated – the feeling that “minorities are taking over”. At certain times of the year, such as Christmas, such feelings bubble up to the surface. The perception that “Merry Christmas” be displayed

everywhere is based on the belief that Canadian ideals are based on Christian belief.

It is not my intent to either refute or support this notion. What is important to remember is Canada has a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, under which the individuals of every religious and cultural persuasion have their rights enshrined without fear of persecution. That is what Democracy is supposed to be about.

In Canada, we are allowed to express ourselves freely, either verbally or through the display of signs and expressions around our homes and cars, and so on. No one will ever challenge that. However, within the public domain such as with government buildings and public transit, such expression may be more difficult to justify.

Within the public domain, the display of Christian values (i.e. Merry Christmas) may in fact affect the sensitivities of other cultures and beliefs. Unfortunately, this is a highly complex issue that can’t easily be resolved to everyone’s satisfaction.

I am certainly not debating the “rightness or wrongness” regarding these issues. I only wish to point out to everyone that the issue of “Merry Christmas” versus “Happy Holidays” should not merely be seen in simplistic black and white terms, that is, the “us versus them” mentality.

Editor's note: The petition was signed by 174 staff and is now with the operations committee.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

By *Lazlo Bori*

As you all know by now, the idiotic, idealistic, unreachable Kyoto accord is dead. This historic decision was reached by the 20,000 hypocrites (environmentalists) who flew to Bali, wasting millions of liters of fuel and dumping tons of pollutants directly into the atmosphere, for a vacation and a conference.

Having heard that, the National round table on the environment and economy, tried to have our Government impose a "CARBON TAX"; a tax on manufacturers that burn carbon to produce a product.

Can you say, I must leave Canada because I can't afford to live here?? Lucky for us both the Conservatives and Liberals agreed that they will not impose such a tax "at this time".

With all of the hype about Global warming, the Government is going to impose stricter regulations on the auto industry. Cars will have to create less pollution and get better fuel economy. This means that the auto industry will have to invest billions of dollars into

research and development. The end result means that car prices will rise by 3 to 7 thousand dollars. Who will be able to afford a new car in the future???

Another commodity that affects us all is oil. Its price has started to skyrocket since the Americans invaded Iraq. Before the invasion the price of a barrel of oil was \$15. After the invasion it went to \$34 and it has not stopped since. Ever wonder how the U.S. is paying for a war it can't win??

You have heard all of the oil companies crying about costs, and how they can't make a profit, and every disaster befalling them has to be paid for by the consumer, because their overhead is so small. For 2006 Exxon posted a net income of \$39.5 Billion; there are entire Nations whose annual gross domestic product is less than a quarter of Exxon's profit.

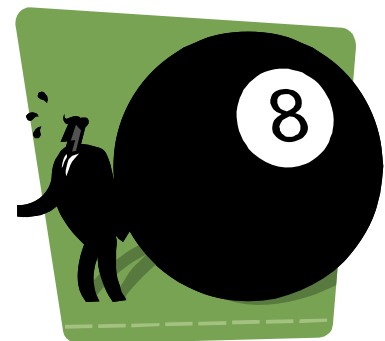
We are paying \$1.00 + per liter of gas here in Canada. WHY???. In New York State the tax on gas is .68c a gallon or .18c per liter. Here, in Ontario we pay \$1.20 per gallon or .32c per liter. With the U.S. and Canadian dollar at par, we still pay far more for gas because we get hosed by the oil giants and our provincial and Federal governments.



(99% In Favour from page 9)
Monica Menner and Wayne Mastromatteo. Both have been working hard to organize picket line duties. Strike captains have been assigned and an Internet page has been devoted to negotiations issues (caw4304.ca/negotiations). By the time this goes to print we will have held strike Captain meetings to finalize the details for signing up our members for picket line duty.

Also new this year, your election committee issued a Personal Information Verification card at the polling station, along with the strike vote ballot. Our union now has the most accurate membership list in our history. So far we have 50% of our membership on an e-mail list, and have recorded the cell phone numbers of about 70% of our members. If you've not yet registered your e-mail or cell phone, please contact John A. McDonald at caw4304@rogers.com, or call him at 241-5623. Further, we are building an online membership directory to improve communications amongst our membership.

The ball is now in the Region's court to give us the fair and equitable contract that we deserve.





Union Works

By *Monica Menner*

The combining of our radio channels has created much chaos and confusion for operators and supervisors alike. In the past if an operator needed to contact a route for connections they would call on N1 in Kitchener or S1 in Cambridge. If they needed privacy to make vehicle arrangements, etc. they would use K2 or S2. Dispatch and Road Supervisors could be reached on one channel. This system worked overall. On January 7, 2008 a new radio system came into effect. Now we have operators from two separate service areas on the 'GRT Channel'. Road Supervisors are on K1 or C1 dependent on service area or D1 for Dispatch. Operators are being advised to make arrangements for their vehicles on a public channel. Further they are being advised that they should not contact security directly, but must go through a supervisor. In an emergency situation where every second counts, we now have time delays because nobody is quite sure who handles what. Supervisors are more difficult to contact and often times we must repeat ourselves on a separate channel. The right hand does not know what the left hand is doing. Kitchener and Cambridge have

their own way of operating specific to their separate service needs. Now that our radio channels are combined into one big happy GRT Channel those differences are more pronounced. ALL operators are hearing about accidents, connections and directions, to places non-specific to their service area. Radio noise is incessant and adds to the distraction we already face. This added 'noise' is a safety issue which causes undue stress and distraction, putting our mental health and well being at risk. Personal attacks between operators are happening more frequently. Some operators are so fed up that they are sitting on supervisor channels, turning their radios down and sometimes even turning them off completely. Until this situation is resolved we need to exercise common sense. Is it really necessary to call for connections? Schedulers are responsible for making connections; we are responsible for following our time cards. If run times are too tight, I'm sure that with enough public feedback our schedulers will resolve the problem. In an emergency situation switch to E911, you are guaranteed to get a quick response there. Need directions? Call D1, they have a map and they're in a better position to read it. There is a train of thought out there that this change at contract time is a ploy by management to promote division among the ranks. If so, we should not be venting our frustrations on each other in the form of personal attacks, on an open forum, within earshot of the public. We all need to work together. So next time

you pick up your handset, ask yourself, is this call really necessary?

Dress Down Days

Every Friday in 2008 is a Dress Down Day if you are part of the payroll donations.

45 are for United Way and your 2008 Casual Day Button MUST be worn or a **United Way Sticker purchased for \$3.00.**

No Buttons may we worn on the following dates & appropriate stickers will be available for \$3.00 from your United Way Rep:

Feb. 8

March 4

Apr. 11

May 9

June 13

Dec. 5

