

News from the Society of Energy Professionals

Five-year settlement approved for SPEA



Photo: Brian Smith, SPEA

SPEA Vice President Peter White presenting the settlement to SPEA members at AECL's Sheridan Park facility in Mississauga

Members of the Society of Professional Engineers and Associates (SPEA) have ratified a five-year deal reached last week with Atomic Energy of Canada, Ltd.

In two meetings held Monday and Tuesday, 97 per cent of those who cast ballots voted in favour of the agreement.

Before voting began, SPEA president Paul Hnatiuk told members, "I am extremely proud of and impressed by the negotiating team, campaign team, and executive for what they

were able to accomplish and the amount of effort put in for the last ten months ... [I]n my opinion we achieved what we set out to do."

SPEA leaders set out last year to change the way their collective agreements were achieved—most previous contracts had been arrived at only after bitter strikes. They wanted to negotiate one without striking, as well as to achieve a more respectful relationship with their managers.

To that end, they:

- ◆ Negotiated a servicing agreement with the Society (of Energy Professionals) and the IFPTE
- ◆ Designed and implemented a campaign designed to pressure AECL to bargain at the table, rather than to force SPEA members to strike before anything moved
- ◆ Opened up the bargaining process to the membership—bargaining was conducted publicly, and members were regularly informed regarding what was, or was not, happening
- ◆ Were assisted every step of the way by Society and IFPTE staff and elected officials

Negotiations proved as frustrating as ever, and SPEA applied for conciliation in April, after 46 days of bargaining. During conciliation, though, the walls seemed to come down, and it became clear that a settlement was in the offing.

And what a settlement!

SPEA set out to make real gains in a number of areas, including: career development/progression (including promotions), lay-off procedure, and protection against contractors.

Here's what they got on their main goals:

- ◆ salary maximums for the highest grades increased to 115 per cent (from 109-111)
- ◆ a quota for promotions into the three highest grades of four per cent of the bargaining unit
- ◆ employees at the highest grades who terminate (other than layoff situations) to be replaced internally
- ◆ SPEA and employee participation in a more open promotions process
- ◆ expanded requirements for posting open positions to the bargaining unit
- ◆ an improved and more open training and career development program, with SPEA participation
- ◆ a new process for dealing with layoffs, including a clearer bumping system
- ◆ enhanced protection against contracting in and new protection against contracting out

SPEA members will also get the following improvements to wages and benefits:

- ◆ wages: three per cent increase per year for first three years, and 3.25 per cent in the final two years
- ◆ merit pay: minimum of two per cent of payroll in the first three years, and 2.25 per cent in the final two years
- ◆ AECL's share of the extended health care plan will increase to 75 per cent from 65
- ◆ Vision Care will increase to \$500 from \$200
- ◆ Chiropractic and massage will increase to \$400 from \$200
- ◆ New orthodontic coverage to begin in 2008, with a \$3,000 lifetime limit for each eligible enrollee

There are also improvements to work-life balance clauses, including a new "personal business" day off, improved maternity leave employment insurance "top up"; a new parental leave employment insurance "top up"; over-time over ten hours in a week to be paid at double time;

unused banked time can accumulate to 75 hours (previously 30), and will be paid out at termination (instead of being lost); and all transfers or reassignments over three months that would require a change of domicile will now be voluntary.

Finally, SPEA's ability to represent its members in dealings with managers is substantially improved:

- ◆ SPEA's right to represent employees in discipline procedures has been enhanced
- ◆ SPEA officials get more time off to attend to union activities
- ◆ SPEA's access to information about the bargaining unit has been improved
- ◆ SPEA will participate in more joint bodies
- ◆ SPEA will have the right to negotiate working conditions for employees on assignment, including outside Canada

"There's no doubt we came in with an ambitious plan," said Hnatiuk, "trying to make changes I've wanted for about ten years, and though we didn't get everything we wanted at the maximum levels, we got language in the collective agreement in all areas where we requested changes. It's very satisfying."

Hnatiuk says it also may well mark a turn-around in SPEA's relationship to AECL. "We made strides in getting equality and respect from the employer. They realize what's going on, and they'll get us in the loop faster when they're doing things."

"This agreement definitely came from both sides."

For this remarkable achievement, Hnatiuk gives most of the credit to two factors:

- ◆ The campaign plan, as devised by SPEA, the Society, and the IFPTE, and carried out by the campaign committee and members
- ◆ Much more open communication with the membership, and much more participation from them, all of which required a huge effort to organize

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Hnatiuk sees a bright future for SPEA's relationship with the Society. "Pursuing affiliation is the next step that we have to do, and hopefully the membership will approve that."

Board highlights, May 2, 2006

The Society's Executive Board met on Tuesday, May 2nd. The following items were discussed and decisions made.

Society Council results: President **Andrew Müller** made the following observations about the Audit Plan approved by Society Council:

- ◆ the retention of an independent expert, scheduled in the plan for this meeting, would not be met, due to changes to the plan accepted by Council; the expert is intended to be in place by the June Board meeting
- ◆ while Board and Local Committee members are encouraged to volunteer to serve on the committees to be set up under the plan, the process for populating these committees will be facilitated by the independent expert

Membership Referendum: Society Council approved a recommendation for changes to the structure of the Executive Committee and Board which must be submitted to a membership referendum within 30 days of Council. Board agreed to a schedule for drafting and approving Constitutional changes such that the voting packages could be sent on May 22nd.

Unit Director elections: Elections for Unit Director positions are underway in several units. Those elections could have been delayed by last fall's Constitutional referendum, which would have changed UD terms of office to three years. The timing of the change was for lining up the next UD elections with those for Principal Officers and Local Vice Presidents. When the referendum failed, the two-year term of office stood, and the existing Constitution required elections to begin. Since the elections began

under the previous Constitution, the term of office will be two years, as before, and the elections will be conducted as in the past. Future elections will have terms of three years. Unfortunately this will mean that UD elections will still be out of synch with the elections of other senior union officers.

Recognizing that further action will need to be taken to line up all elections, the Board referred the problem to the governance committee to be set up under the Audit Plan.

Meanwhile, elections in Units 1 and 8 (OPGN) have been suspended, due to possible irregularities. Concerns were raised that nominations have been accepted for candidates who work outside the unit to be represented, and some late nominations have been accepted, while others have been turned down. President Müller is conducting an investigation. (See also article, page 7.)

Budget-related items: A special Board meeting will be called to discuss the 2006-7 fiscal year budget. President Müller will schedule a strategic planning session to be completed at that meeting. The strategic planning session will inform budget discussions.

The Society's external auditor has completed an audit of expenditures from the Collective Agreement Renewal Fund. It will be discussed in the June Board meeting.

Bruce equity: As of March 31st, the *total* Bruce equity distributions (since June, 2005) are in the amount of \$6.5 million. They are being held in trust; except for the amount spent setting up the partnership, none has been spent.

Hydro One Unit Directors: Given the workload in the Hydro One Local, the Board approved the addition of a fourth Unit Director to the Local's complement. Since the Employer refuses to pay for release time, the Society will be covering any release time incurred until a grievance on Hydro One's refusal to pay is heard. Assuming the Society wins its grievance on the matter, there will be no financial impact. The grievance is expected to be heard in July.

The Board noted that once the arbitration ruling is received, a “strategic path forward” regarding release time might be needed.

Coal Replacement Plan: The Board approved an interim budget of up to \$6,000 to “fund community action groups opposed to the (further) privatization of our electricity system.” An example is the coalition in Sarnia working on a plebiscite aimed at turning back hospital privatization and the closure of Lambton Generating Station. (See article, this page)

At a previous Board meeting, President Müller was asked to develop a community-based campaign in opposition to the Coal Replacement Plan. An outline of the plan was discussed at the May meeting. Further consideration of the plan will take place to receive input from the various Local Committees, and the plan will be brought back to the June Board meeting.

Audit Committee: Rob Stanley (Bruce Power) the Chair of the Internal Audit Committee, noted that the res-

ignation of IESO Local Vice President **Rick Coates** meant the Committee needed another member. IESO Local VP **Al McMurtrie** and OPGI Local VP **Lanny Totton** were both nominated for the position, and the Board elected Totton.

IFPTE Convention: The IFPTE’s Triennial Constitutional Convention will take place in Toronto in July, with the Canadian IFPTE Locals as hosts. Under the IFPTE Constitution, the Society is eligible for 43 delegates. The Board felt this convention to be an opportunity for the Society to exercise its influence in the directions and plans of the IFPTE; however, delegates’ registration fees, accommodation, and release time would need to be covered. The Board approved up to \$60,000 so that the Society could field a full delegation.

Sarnia says keep Lambton open

Sarnia-Lambton residents have given a resounding “no thanks” to the provincial government’s plan to shut down Lambton GS.

In a plebiscite undertaken by the Sarnia branch of the Ontario Health Coalition, more than 97 per cent of 15,000 voters rejected Lambton GS’s closure.

The turnout was “excellent,” said Lambton delegate **Dale Lane**, a member of the plebiscite steering committee, comparable to the turnout in the 2003 provincial election. “Our Liberal MPP Caroline di Cocco got elected with 18,000 votes.”

Lambton County residents were asked their opinion on two questions:

- ◆ whether the area’s new hospital should be publicly “funded, financed, owned, administered and operated”
- ◆ whether Lambton GS should be kept open



Photo: Steve Coleman, Sarnia Sun

Lambton delegate Dale Lane casts his ballot in the Sarnia Health Coalition plebiscite. He is accompanied by Dr. Jim McKenzie of Sarnia.

“People here don’t expect a huge improvement in air quality if Lambton’s closed... [i]t doesn’t make sense to them to import electricity from the States that’s dirtier... ”

The Liberal government currently plans to build the hospital with “alternative funding”—financing with the private sector that health coalition leaders say is “too expensive” and a form of “privatization by stealth.” (Almost everywhere else in the world the Liberals’ “alternative financing” is called “private financing”.) Plebiscite voters rejected “alternative funding” by a 96 per cent majority.

Lane wasn’t surprised at the support for the generating station. “There’s tremendous support down here,” he said. “People here don’t expect a huge improvement in air quality if Lambton’s closed. They accept that we’ve got some of the cleanest units in North America running here, and it doesn’t make sense to them to import electricity from the States that’s dirtier than what we produce here.”

Private businesses and industry in the area are also big supporters of the Lambton burners, he said. “The industry around here recognizes the cost of coal-fired generation and are intimately familiar

with the cost of natural gas and the issues surrounding it, because they use [natural gas] as a feedstock.”

Staffing for the plebiscite organization was provided by the Ontario Health Coalition, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Service Employees’ International Union, and many volunteers.

While the Ontario Health Coalition has run other plebiscites promoting publicly financed health care facilities, the Sarnia plebiscite was the first to include a question on a coal-fired generating station. “The common element here in Sarnia,” said Lane, “is privatization.”

Society expert: Smart meters the provincial liberals’ gun registry

Unexpected costs and unanticipated results will doom program, leave ratepayers feeling cheated

The Ontario Government’s flagship conservation program—the installation of “smart” meters for some four to five million customers—is doomed to be an expensive failure, says a Society expert.

Dave Young, an energy engineer for Kinectrics (formerly the Research Division of Ontario Hydro), and Local Society Vice President, says the smart meters the government wants to install are too expensive, won’t do what they’re designed to do, and will leave customers who adjust their behaviour to save money feeling cheated when the government inevitably has to backtrack.

“The gun registry cost overruns will pale by comparison to what will happen with smart metering,” Young said. “We can anticipate that there will be an auditor-general investigating the expenses at some point.”

The meters the Ontario government are forcing into people’s homes will be much more expensive than current meters. They must:

- ◆ be able to report actual electricity usage to a vast, central data-gathering facility
- ◆ report on one-hour (or shorter) intervals
- ◆ provide the previous day’s readings to the utility by 5 a.m. the next morning
- ◆ be remotely programmable to handle new pricing information on a 24-hour ahead basis

“The communications linkages and data warehouses we’ll need for all of this information flitting back and forth will sink this system in the end, or, if it doesn’t sink, it will dwarf the billion-dollar gun registry that was supposed to be \$2 million. Ten billion wouldn’t surprise me at all.”

“Overall, the program will cost five to ten times what the government is estimating.”

The government has estimated the cost of installing a smart meter for every customer to be about \$1 billion. “In my opinion,” says Young, “the per-house cost of setting up a smart metering infrastructure would be a minimum of \$1000.” This would include, he said, the cost of an

electronic meter, the installation, setting up the communication channel (radio towers, phone links, or other carrier infrastructure), and buying the data warehouse hardware. “Furthermore, the actual cost per year of operating the smart meter

infrastructure would be about half this amount. It’s like installing another phone network or buying internet access for everyone. Overall, the program will cost five to ten times what the government is estimating.”

And the government very much expects customers to pay for this.

Another reason the whole thing will fail? Peak-chasing. Unless the difference between peak and off-peak pricing is realistic, he says, customers will “chase” artificially low prices, creating new peaks, and stressing the system with another set of problems.

He pointed out that in a 1970s experiment with off-peak pricing in England, with a day/night differential of 4 to 1, caused the market to over-react. Customers bought storage equipment to switch the cost of heating to night-time when prices were low. The effect was so dramatic that peak load changed from daytime to night-time. “The price differential was a big enough carrot to push people to do strange things – and they did.”

In the Ontario program, the government has set the off-peak price at 2.5 cents per kilowatt-hour, and for the peak nine cents, or right around that 4 to 1 ratio. *Real* cost differentials in the Ontario electricity system have been shown to be much less, around 1.5 to 1

“They won’t be able to sustain that big a difference,” says

Young. “The next government will be forced to rescind that differential, and the thousand dollars a house which has been spent will make the gun registry look like a bargain. Plus, the people who went out to buy the dishwasher with the timer, a storage heater—all those things that’ll help you take advantage of a 4:1 differential—will feel cheated, and they’ll be right.”

Criticizing the government’s conservation initiatives seems churlish, Young admits. “This particular motherhood is very hard to knock, because there’s a mother in there somewhere.” The “mother” is that there is a way the government could reduce household consumption, and it would be both inexpensive and effective. That would be to put an “electricity speedometer” display in people’s homes.

Young pointed to a study done in 2004 and 2005 by Hydro One, in which 500 houses were equipped with a low-cost, indoor energy monitor. Results? The simple ability to see the electricity that was being used prompted customers to reduce usage by seven to ten per cent. In a report in the *Toronto Star*, Hydro One manager Jatin Nathwani said, “We’re able to show now that, yes, it does, and it’s statistically significant. I wasn’t expecting it to be as high as it was.”

The Hydro One experiment replicates work previously done by Ontario Hydro, Young says.

Ontario Hydro Research Division developed a prototype “residential electricity speedometer” 15 years ago. I had the first prototype in my house for about six months. It worked great. I had the whole family looking at the displays and it was the one and only time I ever got my kids to turn off lights in their wake. Now Hydro One has discovered what we already knew: give people real-time feedback and you’ll get real-time results!

According to the Ontario Energy Board web-site, customers with smart meters will have to pay extra to get a monitor installed inside their homes. The OEB’s *current*



The Canadian Council of Professionals met in Fredericton, NB on May 12th. Many are dealing with management concession bargaining.

Pictured are: (rear, l to r) Glenn Paskaruk and Glenn Penner (Manitoba Hydro engineers), Ross Galbraith (NB Power), Bob Young (City of Winnipeg), Ross Johnson (City of Saskatoon), Ron Bauer (Manitoba Hydro supervisors), Michel Trudeau (Hydro Quebec scientists), Cal Green (Manitoba Hydro supervisors), and Richard Long (Society); (front) Ramzi Chahine (Hydro Quebec engineers), Rod Sheppard (Society), Larry Bailey (NB Power), Brent Olynyk (City of Winnipeg), and Annette Perry (NB Power)

standard for “smart” meters is to let customers log on to a web site to see what yesterday’s bill was. Young: “How smart is that?”

CIC: UD candidates must work in unit to be represented

Candidates for unit director must be employed in the units they wish to represent, the Society’s Constitutional Interpretation Committee has ruled.

Earlier this month, Society members currently in Darlington NGS units were nominated to run for unit director positions in Pickering NGS Units 1 and 8. When the Chief Returning Officer accepted the nominations, President **Andrew Müller** suspended the election processes, and referred the question of eligibility to the CIC.

The CIC ruled that, though the Constitution does not specifically forbid it, members from outside the unit to be represented are not eligible to run as candidates to represent that unit. The CIC based its ruling on:

- ◆ Clauses referring to Alternate Unit Directors clearly limit eligibility to those in the unit, and this is sufficient to show that the intent of the Constitution is that unit directors themselves be from the unit served
- ◆ In previous similar situations, CROs have not accepted nominations of candidates from outside the unit

As a result of the CIC decision, **Dennis Minello** has been declared acclaimed as the UD for Unit 1. In Unit 8, an election will be held, with current UD **Peter Tien** and **Heinz Mueller** as the candidates. Balloting materials for that election will be sent to eligible voters next week.

The CIC is the final authority on the Society’s Constitution. Its decisions are final, and there is no appeal.

The CIC also ruled that locked ballot boxes may be used in UD elections, provided the CRO agrees to them.

Pensioners’ Chapter holds second annual general meeting

The Pensioners’ Chapter is in good shape, building relationships and growing, says Chapter President **Ian Elder**.

The Chapter held its second annual general meeting on May 13th in St. John’s United Church in Toronto. President Elder reported on the Chapter’s efforts over the year since its inaugural meeting, and members elected a new Vice President.

“Our first year was a learning experience,” said Elder.

We’re building relationships with the Society, with our members, and prospective members as well. We’ve

been fielding questions from people asking about our Chapter who are finding that the PWU chapter doesn't represent them well, and perhaps it's time to join our chapter, now that we're established.

The priority over the next year, said Elder, will be to “involve the membership. We've got all these committees established now, and we want members to get involved in them.”

Dave Jefford, a retiree from Ontario Power Generation, was elected to replace **Fred Hodgson** as Chapter Vice President. (Hodgson had resigned for personal reasons.) Elder was re-elected President, and **John Kroeger**, a New Horizon retiree, was re-elected Secretary-Treasurer.

OPGN Local: Guard your personal medical information

Employers are asking for too much information, and members should be hesitant to give it to them, says the OPGN Local.

“Arbitrators accord a high priority to employee's privacy with respect to medical information,” says Local VP **Olaf Heilandt**. “Unfortunately, many employers don't. We all need to watch out for unnecessary or unreasonable intrusions on our privacy.”

The Local has produced for its members a Q&A on personal medical information outlining the types of information an employer is entitled to, and when they're just being nosy. For the benefit of members of other locals, that Q&A has been distributed with this *Newscast*.

Employers often want reports from employees' doctors, and sometimes ask for a lot of information. What they can have depends on the collective agreement and the law—the general rule is they are not entitled to more than they've bargained for.

There are three general situations in which an employer is entitled to some level of information:

- ◆ certifying an absence due to illness
- ◆ certifying fitness to return to work from illness
- ◆ and seeking accommodation or modified work due to disability

These situations are in an ascending order of information requirements.

In OPG, employees are sometimes required to submit a “medical absence report” after being absent due to illness or non-occupational injury for five days or more. Since certifying an absence should only require a brief note from a doctor, and does not require a diagnosis, the Local has advised its members to cross out the section authorizing OPG to communicate directly with the patient's doctor, and not to complete the section requesting a primary diagnosis.

An employer requesting more information to certify an illness should be prepared to show a compelling reason, such as a well-founded suspicion of fraud, the Local says.

Where an employee is returning to work, managers are generally entitled to satisfy themselves that s/he is fit for duty and not a risk to her/himself or co-workers. A doctor might be asked, for example, to indicate that the employee's duties have been reviewed and that the employee is capable of performing them. There is no reason to provide diagnostic information; however, where an employer can demonstrate a solid basis for it, a functional abilities evaluation might be required.

Where an employee is seeking accommodation or modified work, an employer may be entitled to detailed information about the employee's restrictions, limitations, expectation of recovery, and other factors affecting the employee's ability and accommodation needs. Even at this stage, an employer can probably not reasonably demand diagnosis information, but an independent functional abilities evaluation might reasonably be required.

Employees who are uncomfortable with their managers' demands for information should seek advice from their unit directors, says Heilandt.

The OPGN Local's Q&A was produced by Heilandt and Society Staff Officer **Elizabeth Traicus**.

CLC: Federal budget a disappointment for ordinary working families

The Canadian Labour Congress has termed Stephen Harper's federal budget a "disappointment."

In an analysis issued shortly after the budget was announced, the Congress says it "stresses tax cuts and security issues over virtually all other priorities, and undercuts the ability of the federal government to make a positive difference in people's lives through social programs."

These priorities run against what the Conservatives said they'd do if elected, says the Congress, which was "to govern in the interests of ordinary working families."

Essentially, the Conservatives have adopted the Liberal government's income tax cut, and added cuts to the GST and to business taxes. They clearly propose to leave most important areas of social spending to the provinces. Adding it all up, the Budget marks a significant retreat from the active leadership which is needed to create a more equal and caring Canada.

The Congress notes that federal spending will actually decrease as a percentage of GDP, "from 13.7% in 2004-05 to 13.0% in 2007-08." Tax cuts and spending initiatives are to be funded in part through cuts to federal program spending—\$1 billion this year, and another \$1 billion next.

The Congress says the federal government has turned its back on the Kyoto Accord, Canada's aboriginal nations, and the childcare program the Liberals under Paul Martin negotiated with the provinces.

CLC: child care system needed

Participation of women in the Canadian work force is at a record high.

That's the conclusion of Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey for the month of April, 2006, which notes that 58 per cent of Canadian adult women were employed in the period in question.

"This brings new evidence, if new evidence was needed, of the need for good, safe and affordable early learning and child care centres across the country," said Ken Georgetti, president of the Canadian Labour Congress.

"Social policy should address the reality that exists, and not try to force working mothers to return home when the vast majority of them are already working outside of home," explained Georgetti. He also noted that women make up the majority of unionized workers in Canada.

"Developing a competent and reliable early learning and child care system in Canada would boost productivity and sustain employment".

IFPTE fights Bush Administration plan to contract out dam operation

The IFPTE has joined thirteen other unions calling for the U.S. Congress to put an end to the possible privatization of the positions of 2,000 or more lock and dam operators employed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Army Corps wants to designate lockmasters—the supervisors of some lock and dam facilities—as performing work that is "inherently governmental," and cannot be contracted out. The jobs of the operators and mechanics working for those supervisors would be classified "commercial," and thus eligible for privatization.

A bill introduced recently in the U.S. House of Representatives would define all operation and maintenance of locks and dams as "inherently governmental." If passed, it would prevent the Corps of Engineers' move. The bill was co-sponsored by Democrat Lane Evans and Republican Ray LaHood, both of Illinois.

IFPTE President Gregory Junemann said:

This issue is critical on many fronts. Our nation's economy as well as homeland and national security are dependent on the skilled and experienced lock and dam operators employed by the Army Corps of Engineers. Targeting these jobs for privatization is not only unwise and enormously costly to taxpayers, it is also contrary to the fact that lock and dam operators are indeed Inherently Governmental positions and are therefore exempt from contracting.

Mike Arendt, a lock and dam operator, and member of IFPTE Local 561, said "Navigable rivers and water supply are of paramount importance to the United States... The federal government must maintain daily operational control of our 'critical infrastructures.'"

The IFPTE has made saving the lock and dam operations a priority, saying in a release, "This is simply a competition that should never come about."

Meet Elizabeth Traicus

There's a new face in town.

Since the end of January, **Elizabeth Traicus** has been a Society labour-relations officer, serving the OPG Nuclear Local.

Elizabeth's a lawyer, and comes to us from her previous employment in the Ontario Nurses' Association's London office. Her experience in the labour movement is wide and varied, however, not all of it in legal services.

After spending four years in religion, culture, and philosophy at Wilfrid Laurier University, she "had to go and get a real job," and ended up a clerk in a Canada Employment Centre in Kitchener.

I'd been there about two days, and there was a union meeting. I thought, "What's a union meeting?" and they told me it was for the workers, so I thought, "I'm a

worker, I'd better go"—it seemed a bit like an obligation. It started from there. I think the pivotal moment was when all the clerks in the federal government went on strike—98 per cent of them were female, and nobody ever thought they'd take the federal government on. That's when [my interest in the movement] solidified, and I've never really wanted to do anything else.

She spent 16 years from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s as a member and elected officer of the Canada Employment and Immigration Union. Among her achievements were the development of a sexual harassment workshop program, the founding of the union's first women's committee and women's conferences, and the union's first policy paper on part-time workers. Among other things, the policy asserted that there shouldn't be *proportionate* pension plans and other benefits for part-time workers—they should be fully paid.

It started from being in a predominantly female union. The higher paying jobs were all men, and



Recent addition to the Society line-up: Elizabeth Traicus

the clerks were female. We tried to introduce some language for part-time workers, and there was such resistance at the bargaining table—because they were cleaners: “They’re not serious workers, why do you care about them?” And there was a huge backlash from women as well. It’s really progressed since then, but back then it was, “part-time workers work for pin money.”

Bargaining around part-time workers’ issues was a real accomplishment for the CEIU, she says. “We were really proud. It all started from that—talking about women and working, and how women don’t work full-time, or want to but can’t. It was out of that that we got things like care-and-nurturing leave.”

She decided to enhance her career path by becoming a union-side labour lawyer, graduated from Osgoode Hall in 1995, and articulated with the United Steelworkers of America. “In some respects I don’t know how I did it—I was working, and I had two children under four, and I was by myself. It was a lot of work.”

She then hired on with the Service Employees’ International Union in London as their “legal department.” SEIU was farming all its arbitrations out, and paying over \$1 million per year for them. “I put forward a proposition to them that they could hire me, and pay me horrible wages,

and I would reduce their bills ... I made a mistake—I should have asked them to pay me 10 per cent of everything I saved them.”

While Elizabeth’s a lawyer, she cautions against relying on the legal system if one wants real change.

I think it’s important for unions to recognize that some of the more progressive, fundamental changes that have been made in our society weren’t done through the legal system. They were made because people walked the streets with picket signs Unions don’t get their power through investing in more lawyers, and winning more cases. It’s not that you don’t get good things out of it—you do—but you can’t just rely on it.

Elizabeth grew up in Toronto, near where the old Greenwood Racetrack used to be. She’s resided in London for the last eight-plus years. She has two daughters, Andrea (17) and Vanessa (20), who is a student at Conestoga College in Cambridge.

Spare time? She’s a “passionate reader,” and with her daughters, likes to go every now and then to a “female-friendly” gym for some boxing.

Fortunately, she’s on *our* side.

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