

Atlantic Vice President's Report
December 4-8, 2007
Ottawa, Ontario

It has been a very busy time since our last Executive Meeting, and our struggles with the Employer seem to be continuing to mount. There have been successes with the help of Local executives and members in our fight against injustices, however there are several issues that have UPCE extremely concerned

Attendance Management

Again, the employer is not addressing this issue with the "input" of those who know the employees better than most. This would be the Bargaining Agents. The Post Office is developing, and has developed a Plan that is not only intrusive, but is invasive. They also now have a new supplier in Manulife, and their record of intimidation to those who are missing work for legitimate reasons, is not positive. The wording is carefully written in their Plan, however the Practice that is done by some managers and HR and ER managers, is intimidating to say the least. There is a reason for attendance problems with this employer, and some of them are very apparent. These are the fact that the work atmosphere and environments are in many cases poison. The Union(s) have been expressing these concerns for years, however the Employers choose to disregard our input, and "blame" the employees for all absenteeism. This leads to employees missing work because of what actually takes place during their working period. There are obviously real problems; however the Unions have virtually no input into the Attendance Management. Not that we would endorse their tactics, however there are some real solutions that we can provide, and CPC seems to want to go "it alone".

Our members also have a responsibility to take advantage of the Employee Assistance Program, whether they trust it or not. It is mandated to be confidential, and that is exactly what we expect it to be. And if members are experiencing problems at work or home that "could" be helped from an assistance Program, it is beneficial to do so. The Collective Agreement is clear. The main onus is on the Employer to provide a safe and healthy work environment, however the employee also has an obligation to also report dangerous and unhealthy activities.

Negotiations and Bargaining Demands

The UPCE and PSAC have started to meet regarding our negotiations with the Post Office and Purolator. We also have a third round of negotiations and that is with our Office Staff-the AEU- this year. So as all can well appreciate, we have a very busy schedule ahead of us. The UPCE is hoping to have negotiated settlement as quickly as possible, as it is in the best interests of both Parties. However, once again, we will be

depending on members to support the negotiating teams. These are two very hard employers to deal with at the Table, as we have experienced, however with new leadership with both parties, we are hoping to have open dialogue, with employee's and member's interests at the forefront. Ms. Greene has stated that she wants to work with Bargaining Agents, and this will be a good opportunity to optimize this to employees. The UPCE/PSAC will not be going into negotiations with unreasonable demands, however we cannot afford to further erode our Collective Agreement, as we experienced in the last round of Bargaining. To have two Bargaining units negotiating in the same year is going to require incredible amounts of time, energy, resources, and the help of the Bargaining Agent, PSAC.

The UPCE needs to clarify language that is being interpreted very differently by "both" parties. This causes a great deal of frustration, and unnecessary complaints and grievances. We also need to look at the replacement of some Arbitrator's as they are either cause for concern, or are causing both parties to continue to have unresolved issues. Letters from PSAC/UPCE Nationally and Regionally will be sent to all UPCE Local, and there will meetings shortly after with members to raise the issues and demands of each Local, as this allows the PSAC/UPCE to have the direct input as to what priorities are at the Local level. This needs to be done in an efficient manner, and Locals are encouraged to make sure that any demands that they may have are to be discussed and voted on Locally.

Contribution Holiday and Pension Monies "Recovery" by Employer

Canada Post sent a memo to all employees who contribute to the CPC Pension Plan stating that because there was a Surplus in June 2007 in the Plan, which they were within their rights as Trustees to take a Contribution Holiday. What was "not" in the Communiqué was that they were also going to "Recover" the monies that they paid into the Plan for the last several years. The monies that they paid into the Plan was necessary because the Plan Actuary determined that the Solvency deficiency was at a point that forced the Trustee, who is Canada Post, to make sure that there were "sufficient " monies in the Plan. The UPCE/PSAC is getting Legal advise on whether the Post Office can take money from OUR Plan, have a Contribution Holiday and disguise the recovery of monies as same (which in our opinion only allows Canada Post to "not contribute"-does not allow them to recover). We feel that this decision by CPC to take monies that they are responsible for, and to use it for "new infrastructure". This is part of Revenues, in our opinion.

The Plan is in good financial shape financially, however with the markets being as volatile as they have been, we have made our opinion clear to the Post office, and are concerned that the monies that are being recovered, are not only not allowed, but not in the "best interests" of the Pension Plan. The UPCE has filed a National grievance regarding both the Contribution Holiday, and the Recovery (recouping) of monies by the Post Office from the CPC Pension Plan. For some reason, we cannot seem to emphasize

enough to the Post Office, being the Trustee's, that this is OUR money, not CPC's. Another issue that employees to the Plan can never give up is the Defined Benefit Plan. Many Employers are falsely convincing many plans to become DC (Defined Contribution) instead of DB (Defined Benefit). The Pension Plan is a "Deferred Salary" that we are entitled to, and that is how we have to come to recognize it. It is for the "work" that we do, and it is our Future.

2008 Convention

Again, this is going to be another huge undertaking to "organize" when we are possibly in the "middle" of two or three negotiations. However, I feel that we will be successful in achieving all situations placed before this National Executive. We will be gearing up for this at the same time as negotiations, and we have determined that this is not a good strategy for next Convention. It is just too much work for Locals, members, and the National Executive and Office to have in the same year. The National Executive was given clear mandates from the last Convention, and those included us to be financially responsible, and look at many different options in order to save expenditures. Many different situations were studied, and some were successful, while others were not viable.

Locals and Executives

If not for the great work of our Local executives, the UPCE would certainly not be functioning and representing members like we have been. The UPCE faces very large obstacles with the "belt-tightening" excuses that our employer continues to enforce. There has to be more positions filled, and proper training provided.

Finances

It looks to be another year where the UPCE National Office and current National Executive have been able to manage the members' money so that there will not be a deficit. This is a great accomplishment, as we saw deficits for several years before this new Executive were given strict mandates and instructions at the 2005 UPCE Convention to not have deficits. We have been close to our budget of members for this year to date, however we need to ensure that CPC does not continue to just download work from those retiring, to those UPCE members that are staying employed.

UPCE STAFF

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sister France Beaudin for her many years of service to UPCE. France has decided to leave UPCE in June 2007 after 18 years with us, and we wish her all the best in her future endeavors. Thank you France. The National

office Staff are working great with the executive and UPCE members.

Disability and Termination of UPCE Members

Employees within the Post Office are receiving very troubling and disturbing letters from Canada Post on their status after two years of disability. When the supplier Sunlife Insurance, determines that members are "totally" disabled, they forward this information to CPC, and instead of allowing our members and employees to remain on Long Term Disability, which we all pay for, the Employer demands that these employees apply for Canada Pension Medical Retirement, which in turn admonishes CPC from "keeping the employee on the 'books'". It is the human effect that also causes great mental anguish, and terminates the employee from Canada Post. If the employee does not follow instructions from Canada Post and apply, they are terminated. Then they will not be eligible for certain benefits. These employees are the "most vulnerable" of all workers, and yet this employer has chosen to sever all ties with the employee. The UPCE/PSAC will be seeking legal opinion, and will be fighting this through the Grievance Procedure, and then after exhausting this method, we will be seeking redress through the Human Rights Commission. This is not the way employees expect to be treated when they are the most vulnerable. This is for all employees and is not targeting UPCE. The callousness and legality will be challenged by UPCE if there is a possibility for success.

Other Conferences

Richard and I went to Athens, Greece in May for the UNI Conference. There could be not a better time to see the other Post Office Union Representatives from all over the world, as we are now being deregulated by "stealth". What I mean by this is that Canada Post is slowly having pieces of it's' operations taken from disguised Multi-Nationals. The International mail re-mailers that exist now are taking our mail and distributing all over the world. Bill C-14 is in its second reading in Parliament, and we have heard nothing about this through the media or the employer. We have a responsibility to call our MP's and ask them NOT to support this bill, as it allows companies like Spring Global Mail. (SGM) is a global joint venture combining the expertise, systems, networks and products of TNT, Royal Mail Group and Singapore Post. Responsibility for Spring's customers, limited capital assets and future business in the United States were assumed by Pitney Bowes in March 2007. The Spring website says they are the world's largest private international mail provider.

This is very similar to the 1996 Mandate review; however this Government will not even have witnesses and speakers to appear before the Committee.

International mailers or re-mailers, as they are also known, collect and ship mail to other countries where the mail is processed and re-mailed at a lower cost. Some ship to the United States, where the basic rate is slightly lower. Some companies ship to developing countries that have lower costs as a result of a two-tier international mail system that is designed, in part, to address the differences between developed and developing countries. So re-mailers collect and ship this mail, but Canada Post currently has the exclusive

privilege to collect, transmit and deliver letters in our country. This is the basic problem facing re-mailers. After a number of years of trying to find a solution to this problem, Canada Post took legal action against re-mailers and won (all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada). At the moment, re-mailers are violating the law. Bill C-14 would change the law by removing international letters from Canada Post's exclusive privilege to deliver letters.

Most postal unions oppose deregulation of postal services because they believe it will have a negative impact on employees, the public, and the post office.

The Post offices in Sweden and New Zealand have been "gutted" of their workers, and these privatizations' has led to rural areas being serviced badly.

I was in Colombia for over a week as the eastern Canadian delegate for the PSAC, with 16 other NGO representatives from seven different countries. This was called Witness for Peace. You may see the work done by this Organization at www.witnessforpeace.org. This was paid for by the Social Justice Fund of PSAC, which is actually funded by Employers through money obtained at negotiations. It was a true experience to the cruelty and the poverty experienced as the result of Large Business destroying land for resources and displaces hundreds of thousands of people. This was not a trip with any type of the accommodations that we experience when we normally travel. It was filled days of visiting communities and the people who are being affected. This Social Justice Fund must continue as Union represented also, as we have an obligation not "just in the workplace".

Grievances

The actual grievances of UPCE have been handed back to PSAC, and there were several very crucial reasons for this decision that was made by the National executive. However, the complaints, the resolutions, the mediation, and the filing of the grievances remain with the Locals and the National Executive. The arbitrations will however, be done by representatives from PSAC. That being said, in the Atlantic Region, seldom do we ever reach that final stage of Arbitration, as we work the problems out and resolve all complaints with the exception of about 1-3%. So the actual workload of the Vice President's will not decrease substantially, as we will continue to work with CPC, LR, the National Office, and the members to resolve the complaints and grievances before they get to Arbitration.

Education

The National Education Course that was facilitated and prepared by our National Education Committee in June of this year was a huge success. Marilyn, and the rest of the team of committee members that included Edie Leger, Marina Anstey, Shelly MacIntosh, and Michel Caron did a wonderful job, and the participant's who attended were a great mixture and made the course successful. It was by far the best National Education Course that has been presented by UPCE ever. The National Office, as usual was also

instrumental in the preparation of the material. We received accolades from many of the participant's, and we thank them for that. It will make the next national course easier to develop, as the members' participation was very helpful to all.

Staffing

Canada Post has not, in my opinion, been visionary regarding succession Staffing. We are having so many Terms and Part Time people fill in for those who are leaving. The Corporation Knowledge is impossible to replace, but CPC is not even attempting the transition of "passing" some of this knowledge on before people leave the Post Office by ensuring that "new" people have the opportunity to obtain the "tacit" knowledge that our members possess. This cannot be just taught through a training session, or training Manual. It must be passed on through the succession teaching from experience to those without the knowledge. There are some managers that are starting to be extremely worried and concerned that there will not be the proper training to retain customers, as well as employees.

In Solidarity,

Mike Moeller
Atlantic Vice President
Union of Postal Communications Employees