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Bargaining Begins

by Brett Stevens (Chair of Collective Bargaining Committee)

To keep you up to date with the progress of negotiations for a new collective agreement effective May 1, 2009, you will soon begin receiving **CUASA Bargaining Bulletins**. During the period of negotiations (until ratification of a new collective agreement or a strike/lock-out is declared), the terms of the current collective agreement remain in force. The CUASA Negotiating Team, elected by Council, is: Brett Stevens (Chair of the Collective Bargaining Committee); Gerald de Montigny, Fred Afagh, Michelle de Vidi, Jason Etele and Pat Finn. The Negotiating Team has been meeting with the members of the Collective Bargaining Committee, Janet Siltanen and Isla Jordan, to formulate our proposals. The proposals have been vetted and approved by both the Steering Committee and Council (as required by the CUASA Constitution).

The employer has notified CUASA that its team is comprised of: Stephen Green (Chief Negotiator); Margaret Haines (University Librarian) Dean Rafik Goubran, Dean Jerry Tomberlin, Tim Sullivan, and Colleen Bucher (HR). In addition, the employer has informed CUASA that, in accordance with Article 34.3(c), it is opting out of binding arbitration as an impasse resolution mechanism.

Yesterday, CUASAs Negotiating Team met with the employer's team for the first time for an all day meeting.

We exchanged non-monetary proposals. CUASA's team was ready to exchange monetary proposals but the employer reserved on tabling their monetary proposals and, as a result, no monetary proposals were exchanged.

All the exchanged proposals are available for viewing in the CUASA Office (2004 Dunton Tower) during office hours (9 a.m. - 5 p.m.). The Chair of the Collective Bargaining Committee, Brett Stevens, will provide a detailed report to Council on Monday, February 23 (9:30 - noon) in 118 Leeds. Council meetings are open to all our membership.

We have two further all day meetings this week and have a number of tentative meeting times for the next 2 weeks; these early meetings are very encouraging. CUASA looks forward to continuing in this positive manner.

Decisionism--aka Management by Crisis

Arnd Bohm, President, CUASA

Most people are happy if they can avoid a crisis; just coping with the challenge of daily routine takes all our effort and energy. Hence it is difficult for us to understand policies designed to cause as well as to intensify crises. Who would be so irrational? Well, under the slogan of "if it ain't broke, break it," the planned creation of crises is an increasingly influential strategy in business and politics today.

The reasoning is simple to the point of being simplistic. A crisis offers two opportunities. One is that dealing with a crisis is a way for a manager to show how effective he is. Long periods of routine activity don't offer chances for heroic action that can lead to rapid promotion and large rewards. Second, and increasingly more valuable, during a crisis all the normal procedures of decision-making can be suspended. The crisis demands it! All the safeguards, restraints and cautions are overridden; those who point out that this is wrong are ignored or ostracized as people who "don't get it." This is a crisis, dammit! Get with the program! Environmental protection is for normal times, not when we're fighting a war. Human rights are for ordinary times, not when terrorists lurk beneath every carpet. Sound fiscal policies won't serve when we have to help out banks and car manufacturers and other corporate victims (lest their collapse destroy us too). Throw caution to the winds-- act, act, act--according to the managers' instructions. Only they can save us.

This could be justified if businessmen and politicians hadn't gone to the next stage: purposefully inventing and intensifying crises in order to use them for personal gain and to circumvent proper procedures. The most notorious example of this in the twentieth century was the arson of the Reichstag which was used by the Nazis in their seizure of power in 1933. The Nazi legal philosopher Carl Schmitt defended the tactic of decisionism, of obeying the Führer's dictatorship, as necessary in the emergency (which in fact did not exist). More recently, the regime of American president George W. Bush repeatedly relied on artificially created crises in order to legitimate his policies, such as the tension about non-existent Iraqi weapons of mass destruction or the threat to the global economy presented by lending policies that benefited the rich. The government of Stephen Harper can abandon the Conservatives' high-minded policy against deficits, on which they were re-elected, because of the looming crisis.

Closer to home, Mayor O'Brien has blocked a resolution of the bus strike in order to destroy the bus-based system of public transit and make way for a bold scheme of trains and subways. Six decades of careful planning and creative thinking have been thrown overboard so that he can appear as the heroic manager who cuts taxes and presents a radical new transit proposal.

What the governors by crises readily ignore is the ancient wisdom about sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind. When the crisis grows into a catastrophe, as it did for George W. Bush in Iraq and New Orleans and the mortgage collapse, then ordinary people who bear the brunt of the chaos, suffering and loss. The managers and politicians smile wanly, shrug their shoulders and mutter the lame excuse "I did the best I could." Where the crisis was not of their making, we can be in a forgiving mood. But where they purposefully opened the floodgates or turned up the flames, we will remember them as villains, and teach their names to our children as curses.

Email Privacy

CUASA has tabled a proposal to try to safeguard members' privacy with respect to files and email. Any such proposal, even if negotiated, cannot override the provisions of relevant legislation such as Freedom of Information (FIPPA), the criminal code or legal search warrants. Carleton University's FIPPA regulations and OCUFA's advice on FIPPA are linked on the CUASA homepage, www.caut.ca/cuasa. For sensitive communications, members are advised not to use the employer's facilities.