

555 HORIZONS NEWSLETTER

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Dealing with the Global Jobs Crisis

by Juan Somavia/ILO/CALM

Half of all the workers in the world are the working poor, currently living in families that survive on less than US \$2 a day per person. They work in the vast informal sector—from farms to fishing, from agriculture to alleyways—without benefits, social security or health care. Unemployment is at its highest point ever. In the last 10 years, official unemployment has grown by more than 25 per cent and now stands at about six per cent of the global workforce. Of these unemployed, the ILO estimates that 86 million, or about half the global total, are young people aged 15 to 24.

Despite robust economic growth of 4.3 per cent in 2005, the global economy is failing to deliver enough new jobs for those entering the job markets. We need to create 40 million jobs each year over the next decade just to keep up with the number of workers who are seeking work. Growth is not delivering enough jobs. And this growth is insufficient to reverse the deficit in decent work and reduce poverty.

The global jobs crisis is having profound political effects. In democratic countries where

unemployment is high, people are disappointed that democracy has not delivered economic benefits, and this threatens to undermine democratic institutions. A creeping growth of protectionist tendencies is appearing. Demands for greater migration control with xenophobic undertones are growing.



"I'm sorry to hear your job moved to Mexico. Will you be paying the rent in pesos or dollars?"

The job-related uncertainties associated with globalization have expanded, affecting even the middle classes. The new competition from China, India and others has created new dynamism but also new insecurities.

Business also pays a heavy price for the decent work deficit, both in profits and in public acceptance and perception. Normal business operations like outsourcing and foreign

investments are increasingly criticized for creating jobs "abroad." Many people are increasingly asking whether governments, the private sector, indeed democracy, can deliver on decent work.

Addressing this crisis is possible. Here are five concrete steps:

1. We need to put decent work objectives at the

(Continued on page 4)



EDITORIAL POLICY

The content and editing of this newsletter are determined by the committee.

We want members to feel ownership of 555 Horizons, and view it as independent of any particular segment of the union. Content comes from our base of activists, staff and other labour sources.

While we welcome your contributions, we ask that these be constructive. All articles should be signed and should contribute positively to the welfare of this union.

We encourage thoughtful discussion of all related issues and reserve the right to edit for libel, length and clarity, and to reply to those that seem to reflect a misunderstanding of the union and its policies.



The members of the editorial committee for 555 Horizons are

- Norm Bazinet - Editor, this edition
- Hyacinth Neale - Joint Editor
- Richard King - Joint Editor
- Thava Thavaraja - Joint Editor
- Allan Ternowski - Newsletter Chair, Layout & Design



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Dealing with the Global Jobs Crisis	Page 1
President's Message - <i>By Norm Bazinet</i>	Page 3
Drug Card	Page 4
Conservatives award top executives big raises	Page 5
Five reasons not to sell Canadian water	Page 5
Five Things You Should Know	Page 6
Lobbying For Credit Cards	Page 7
Letters To The Editor	Page 8
Inequality equals a shorter life	Page 8
Successor Rights	Page 9



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This newsletter marks the close of my second and last term as President of Local 555. Throughout my years of service, I have seen the local grow into a large multi-ministry group. Fortunately, over the 4 years of my tenure, I did not have to navigate the local through a strike. I found the position challenging and an intense learning experience right up to the end. When I took on the job, I put my ego in my back pocket, took advice from co-workers and soon learned to listen to people, motivate activists and delegate responsibilities (as much as people would volunteer to do). Unfortunately, sometimes there were not enough volunteers and the president ended up stuck with it.

For those interested in career development, I strongly recommend getting involved in your Local. You will develop knowledge of human resource management if you take a cooperative approach to working with management. You can develop the soft skills that management requires including organizing, prioritizing, conducting meetings, negotiating grievances, financial management and presentation skills.

On Thursday Nov. 16, we will be holding a General Membership Meeting on the 17th floor of 5775 Yonge St. (pizza/pop as usual). This meeting is being held to elect a new executive according to our recently modified by-laws. We are looking for volunteers from the steward body to fill all the executive positions including those of the President, Senior Vice-President, five Vice-Presidents (VPs for Environment, SWAT/SMOG, OFM, MGS and CSS), Treasurer and Secretary. The Local Executive will now be composed of nine individuals. This should effectively represent our multi-faceted local of over 500 members. In addition, we will be swearing-in a new stew-

ard body. Stewards are the foundation of a Local and provide the training ground for future leaders. Please volunteer for steward positions. With your help, we will have a very strong Local.

The new structure of the Local should assure that the new president is shielded from minor issues and only deals with major problems. With a Local of this size, this is very important. Experienced leaders will be available to guide the executive when necessary. Shortly, additional membership will be coming over from the federal government as well as the Ministry of Education and Government Services. This might require additional expansion of the new executive.

The Festive Season is just around the corner. We will be holding our annual Festive Dinner at the Mandarin Restaurant on Thursday November 30, 2006 starting at 5:30 pm. This will be my last official function within the Local as president.

I want to wish you all well and I enjoyed serving you.

In solidarity

Norm Bazinet

President
OPSEU Local 555

PS

McGuinty introduced legislation last week to guarantee that we carry our collective agreement to a new employer. This move will make the privatization of government services unattractive to the private sector.

Thank you for participating in the campaign by signing the card that voiced your opinion and made the difference – **YOU** were heard. (More on page 9) ■

Dealing with the Global Jobs Crisis

by Juan Somavia/ILO/CALM
(Continued from page 1)

centre of national and international development efforts and a new balance of economic and social policies that stress macroeconomic stability, improve competitiveness, expand social protection and channel the abundant energies of people working in the informal economy. All of this can be done in the context of open, competitive economies.

2. We need to promote employment-rich, sustainable growth. We must focus not just on global, but also on local economic development. This requires the right mix of macro, micro and sectoral policies. Work is presently the missing link in the efforts to reduce poverty. The best policy combination can only be determined based on social dialogue to adapt the “whats” and the “hows” to different national realities, cultures and development levels. This requires solid national consensus and coalition building to bring about the necessary transformations, in short, dialogue and good governance at the national level.

3. No decent work strategy can be successful without encouraging entrepreneurship, innovation and productivity. This requires the right policy and regulatory environment, a good investment climate, investment in human capital, as well as sectoral policies for value chain upgrading.

4. In a global economy, skills determine individual employability but also how a country does business with the rest of the world. We need a big push in training, lifelong learning and upgrading human capacities. This demands governments’ commitment to invest and create conditions to enhance education and training at all levels; business’ commitment to train employees on an ongoing basis; and individuals’ commitment to develop their own competencies and careers. If we can reduce the youth unemployment rate by just half, we will add at least \$2.2 trillion to the global economy.

5. Governments, business and trade union leaders and relevant international organizations, in close cooperation with other stakeholders of global society (local authorities, citizens organizations), have to join forces. The global jobs crisis is one of the biggest security risks of our time. If we choose to continue along the present path, the world risks becoming more fragmented, protectionist and confrontational.

A continued lack of decent work opportunities, insufficient investments and under-consumption lead to an erosion of the social contracts that underlie democratic societies.

Many people interpret the lack of decent work opportunities as the absence of an ethical compass in policy-making. It is time to promote social inclusion and jobs as the basis of poverty reduction, and respect for fundamental principles and rights at work. ■

Drug Card

By Richard King

The 2005 Collective Agreement with Ontario Public Service Employees and Ontario Government provides a Drug Card by November 1 2006. You should have received your card in the mail.

The Drug Card will automatically cover 90 % the cost of drugs and medicines that require a physician prescription. Saves you having to pay money out of pocket and filling in forms to get repayments. You are still required to pay the remaining 10 % of the costs of drugs and medicines + \$3.00 deductible + Pharmacy Dispensing Fee.

TIPS:

1. Request 3 months supply for one prescription vs. getting refills every 2 weeks and paying the \$3.00 deductible and Pharmacy Dispensing Fee.
2. Shop for a Pharmacy with lower dispensing fees i.e. Shoppers Drug Mart is \$12.99 vs. Zellers \$7.99.
3. If your spouse has a Drug Card give both cards to your pharmacist and get him to give you “Coordination of Benefits” and you may reduce you prescription cost up a maximum of 100 % the cost of drugs and medicines.

It's your Benefit ... so use it. ■

Conservatives award top executives big raises

NUPGE/CALM

The federal government has awarded raises of 2.5 per cent to top government executives and deputy ministers along with three per cent increases to the heads of crown corporations.

The increases were not announced officially by the new Conservative government, which made accountability to voters a hallmark of its election campaign last January.

Instead, Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his cabinet quietly approved the pay hikes behind the scenes during the summer doldrums. The raises are retroactive to April 1 and are exclusive of lucrative annual bonuses awarded to most executives and deputies.

In the case of CEOs of crown corporations such as the CBC and Canada Post, the value of the raises (and bonuses) rivals the total amount that a minimum wage earner would earn in an entire year.

The pay range for crown corporation heads is \$109,000 to \$445,600 a year. The

range for senior executives is \$94,000 to \$178,700. For deputy ministers it is \$170,000 to \$288,400.

A three per cent raise for a crown corporation CEO earning the top rate of \$445,600 a year works out to an additional \$13,368 a year.

By comparison, the top minimum wage in Canada, \$8.50 an hour in Nunavut, equals \$17,680 a year for a 40-hour week. The lowest minimum wage rate, \$6.75 in Newfoundland, equals a mere \$14,040 a year for a 40-hour week.

For senior government executives, the total extra pay they will receive this year significantly exceeds the total income of minimum wage earners in Canada because they also get sizable performance bonuses of three to five per cent a year.

Thus, a deputy minister paid at the current top rate of \$288,400 will pocket an additional \$21,630, thanks to a combined 2.5 per cent basic and a five per cent annual bonus. ■

Five reasons not to sell Canadian water

Canadian Perspectives/The Council of Canadians/CALM

Stephen Harper has still not clarified his government's position on bulk water exports, and the Conservative Party has said nothing about growing concerns about the stability and quality of Canada's water supply. Here are five reasons why Canada should turn off the taps on water commoditization and bulk water exports.

The free market doesn't guarantee access to water. Treating water as a commodity will widen the gap between the "haves" and "have-nots."

Bulk exports could open the floodgates to trade challenges. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) defines water as a "service" and an "investment," leaving Canadian water vulnerable to thirsty foreign investors. Once Canada allows water to be diverted outside our borders for large-scale industrial purposes, foreign investors must be given the same "national treatment" as Canadian companies.

Canada's water supply is limited. The

perception that Canada has an unlimited supply of water is a myth. More than one quarter of municipalities have faced shortages in recent years. One third of Canadians rely on groundwater for their daily needs, but we have no understanding of how long this supply will last. Only one per cent of the water in the Great Lakes is renewable, and climate change poses a major threat to the lakes, causing longer drought periods and unstable precipitation.

Public water is safer, cleaner and more affordable. Allowing corporate interests to control public water resources will weaken the central role of the government as the guardian of our water supply. When for-profit companies control drinking water, public health and safety are compromised.

Water is essential for people and nature. There is no replacement for fresh water to meet the needs of human health and livelihoods. Water cannot be treated like oil, a tradable commodity. Life is possible without oil, but we cannot live without water. ■

Five Things You Should Know

about health care wait times

Canadian Perspectives/Council of Canadians/CALM

Enemies of Medicare have used growing concern about wait times to push for private financing and for-profit health care delivery. They argue that allowing people to pay for medical services will reduce wait times by removing patients from the public system. Federal politicians jumped into the fray by making wait times a major issue in the election, offering up wait time “guarantees,” ignoring the real problems in Canada’s health care system that are causing longer wait times. Here are five things you should know about wait times.

There are no accurate statistics about wait times. According to leading health policy analyst Dr. Michael Rachlis, there is little information available on wait times. Some provinces have made efforts to establish Internet-based lists, but these numbers are typically provided by doctors and are not verified independently. Doctors, in general, keep individual wait lists and there is no coordinating body to help share this information. Canada has a serious shortage of health care providers. One of the main reasons for longer wait times is that we do not have enough doctors, nurses, radiologists and other health care providers. In some areas of the country, 60 per cent of people have no family doctor, and the problem is worse in rural areas.

The proposed use of for-profit, private clinics would pull health care providers into the private system, making wait times even longer in the public system, as shown recently at Winnipeg’s Maples Surgical Centre. The centre is now offering MRI scans for \$695, and these are being done by two technologists who left jobs at the public Health Sciences Centre.

“Guarantees” are no guarantee. Harper has promised the government will “work with the provinces” on a health care guarantee so patients can receive essential medical treatment within clinically acceptable waiting times. If they don’t get care within that time, they could go to another province, to the U.S. or to a private clinic—and

the government would pick up the tab.

At a recent conference organized by the Canadian Health Coalition, Manitoba Health Minister Tim Sale said the provinces have already spent a year discussing health care guarantees and have concluded they can’t meet guarantees without addressing other problems in the public system. Dr. Brian Postl, Federal Wait Times Advisor, also confirmed that moving patients from one province to another, or into private clinics, only displaces the problem.

Money alone won’t solve the problem. The 2004 First Ministers’ Health Accord committed \$41 billion to improving Canada’s health care system, including \$5.5 billion over 10 years to reduce wait times. Benchmarks were established in December 2005 in five key health care areas that have been prone to longer waiting times. But Dr. Postl cautions that simply putting money in the system isn’t enough. He says that creating centralized wait lists, using electronic technology rather than a paper system to share information, and addressing the staffing shortage as well as the facility and equipment shortages, are all key to reducing wait times.

Wait lists can be reduced in the public system. There are many examples of how wait times can be addressed in the public system. The Alberta Hip and Knee Replacement Project is one of them. Because centralized assessment clinics were set up, patients were seen, on average, 17 days after referral from a family physician. Wait times to see a specialist were decreased from 35 weeks to six weeks, and wait times for surgery went from 47 weeks down to fewer than five weeks. Patients also experienced shorter stays, with coordinated follow-up by their family physicians. Evidence has shown that sending patients to private clinics only costs more and often results in inferior care. ■

For more information on the Council of Canadians’ health care campaign, visit www.canadians.org.

Lobbying For Credit Cards in Ontario hospitals

NUPGE/CALM

Several powerful medical groups are pushing for a change in the Ontario Hospital Insurance Plan that might lead to significant user fees being introduced to provincial hospitals.

The working group, which includes the Ontario Hospital Association, Cancer Care Ontario and the Council of Academic Teaching Hospitals of Ontario, is recommending Ontario hospitals be permitted to administer non-funded intravenous cancer drugs and that the patient be charged for the cost of the drugs and the visit.

"They have even suggested ballpark fees such as \$250 per visit for basic infusions and a flat annual fee of \$2,500 for more complex cases. Those fees don't include the cost of the drugs, which could be an additional \$20,000," Ontario Public Service Employees Union president Leah Casselman warns.

"When you go to the hospital for medical treatment, you may be asked for your OHIP card, but never your VISA or MasterCard," Casselman. "Drugs administered in the hospital have been covered under the medicare system—up until now."

She says the door to this initiative was opened by "an unheralded change to the way cancer drugs are approved for public coverage." "Last year the provincial Liberals quietly changed the criteria from one of determining whether or not a drug had any medical benefit, to one of whether the benefit outweighed the cost. To that end, they placed an economist and a medical ethicist on the panel to help make these decisions," she notes.

"Now that cost has crept into the decision-making process, this could be the wedge to introduce other user fees in the hospitals, especially when these proposed fees extend to associated health services."

Casselmann says the lobby organizations have a legal opinion suggesting that the changes would not violate existing law. They also claim there is "an exodus of patients" to a private Toronto clinic and to U.S. hospitals, "but provide no statistics to back this up," she adds.

"The Canada Health Act is quite clear in its definition of insured hospital services, including 'drugs, biologicals and related preparations when administered in the hospital'," Casselman says. "While the working group may seem to think there is wiggle room on whether or not these treatments fit the definition of medically necessary under the act, they may find themselves at odds with many of Ontario's oncologists over the issue," she argues.

"Released on a Friday in July, no doubt the working committee is hoping this will be quietly adopted. If these treatments are medically necessary, cancer patients should expect the province to pay these bills and uphold the provisions of the Canada Health Act," she says. ■

Letters To The Editor

get your message out

CAW Health, Safety and Environment Newsletter/CALM

Letters to the Editor are a cheap, effective way of conveying your viewpoint to a lot of people.

Letters to the editor are well read, more than a newspaper's own editorials. Editors love to get letters to the editor. It means that someone is reading their paper.

Newspapers love debate and controversy. More controversy means more readers. People read the smaller, community papers, yet community papers are crying for letters.

Bigger papers run letter by subject in proportion to the numbers they receive. They go into pro and con stacks. If pros outnumber cons by two to one, two pros will be printed for every con. So even if your letter doesn't get printed, it can help tip the balance for your point of view. People write letters to the editor when they strongly disagree or agree with an editorial or another letter, when they want to correct faulty information, or when they are angry about something.

Where can you get information to write a letter to the editor? Picket line leaflets and union bulletins have made their way to the letter page when members took the time to use the information and write their own letters.

- ◆ Pointers on writing a good letter to the editor
- ◆ Brevity. Keep it short—200 to 350 words maximum.
- ◆ Timeliness. Write the letter within a day of the issue you are responding to. The longer you wait, the less newsworthy it is and the less likely you will write it.
- ◆ Clarity. Keep your argument straightforward and easy to follow.
- ◆ Politeness. Attack the argument, not the person.
- ◆ Humour. A little humour or an ironic twist will catch the editor's eye.
- ◆ Accuracy. Check your facts.
- ◆ Authority. If you are writing on behalf of your local union, your letter has a better chance of being printed but if you say you are writing for the local, make sure you have their okay.
- ◆ Personal first-hand knowledge. This improves your chances of having your letter printed.
- ◆ Identify yourself. Don't forget to sign your name, give your address and a day-time telephone number where you can be reached. ■

Inequality equals a shorter life

CAW Health, Safety and Environment Newsletter/CALM

"Life expectancy in rich nations correlates precisely with levels of equality," says Richard Wilkinson.

In his new book, *The Impact of Inequality: How to Make Sick Societies Healthier*, the University of Nottingham professor of medical epidemiology says people in Greece have a longer life expectancy than people in the U.S.—at half the GDP per capita. In fact, the U.S. has the lowest life expectancy in the developed world.

People in Harlem in New York City live shorter lives than the people of Bangladesh. The prime reason is heart disease.

Is it poor diet or lack of exercise? No, says Wilkinson. **It is mainly stress, the stress of living at the bottom of the social order—the stress caused by disrespect and poor self-esteem.** ■

Successor Rights To Crown Employees Finally, after three years of promising to restore

Liberals table bill on successor rights, "whistle-blower" protection for Crown employees

Three years after promising to restore successor rights to Crown employees, the McGuinty Liberals have finally tabled a bill in the Legislature to do it.

Gerry Phillips, Minister of Government Services, rose in the Legislature yesterday to introduce the Public Service of Ontario Statute Law Amendment Act. If passed (and there is no reason to think it won't be) the new law will give Crown employees the same rights already enjoyed by other Ontario workers.

So-called "successor rights" give unionized workers whose work is sold or transferred to a new employer the legal right to move with their jobs with their union and their collective agreement intact.

"This legislation happened because our members have kept the political fires burning under successor rights for more than 10 years," said Eric Morin, OPSEU chair of the Central Enforcement and Renewal Committee for the OPS. "This is a huge victory for all our members, but especially our activists who never stopped believing that 'same rights' could become a reality."

The restoration of successor rights also helps over 6,000 OPSEU members who work at the Liquor Control Board of Ontario and other Crown agencies.

"The current government has said quite clearly that it will not privatize the LCBO, but governments come and government go," said OPSEU president Leah Casselman. "Restoring successor rights makes privatization a more expensive option for any government in the future, and therefore it should be less likely to happen."

The government also introduced "whistle-blower" protections for Crown employees who speak up about wrongdoing. Employees will now be able to go directly to the Integrity Commissioner without fear of reprisal, the government says.

"It's a step in the right direction," said Morin. "We need time to look at it and determine

exactly what it means, but as long as the Integrity Commissioner's office has the resources it needs, I think it's a positive move for the OPS."

See below for details on how successor rights interact with the OPSEU collective agreement in the OPS.

How making successor rights legal will affect OPSEU members in the OPS.

If passed, the new legislation to return successor rights to Crown employees will affect the rights of some OPSEU members whose work moves out of the OPS in future.

In bargaining in 1996 and 1999, OPSEU made great leaps forward on contract language to make up for the loss of successor rights. The 1996 strike forced the government to make "reasonable efforts" to find jobs for OPSEU members with the new employer when their work moved out of the OPS. In addition, the jobs offered had to be "at terms and conditions that are as close as possible to the then existing terms and conditions of the employees in the bargaining unit."

OPSEU grievances related to "reasonable efforts" brought privatization of the OPS to a virtual standstill for most of 1997. The settlement of those grievances brought more improvements to the contract in 1999. Those improvements set out specific rules for four different types of transfer. In some cases, these rules give members more options when deciding whether to move to the new employer or not.

Job security matters related specifically to transfers of work out of the OPS are governed by Appendix 9 and Appendix 18 of the collective agreement.

Nothing in the new legislation changes the language of the collective agreement. However, the CERC has negotiated an agreement with the government that covers the interaction between the new legislation and the collective agreement. Yesterday's legislation depended on the deal being signed.

The agreement says that, where there is a "sale of business" as defined by the Labour Relations Act, Appendices 9 and 18 of the collective agreement do not apply. Instead, employee rights

are modified as follows:

1. When workers take a job with a successor employer, they keep their collective agreement rights and their service and seniority. They don't receive termination or severance pay.
2. If any employees do not receive a job offer from the successor employer, they receive a surplus notice and can exercise all their rights under the OPS collective agreement (bumping, enhanced severance, etc.).
3. Employees who resign their OPS job after receiving notice that their work is being transferred, but before they receive a job offer from the successor employer, give up all their rights under the collective agreement.
4. Employees who refuse a job offer with the successor employer receive termination pay but give up all other rights under the collective agreement.

perform even the most basic tasks of its mandate."

Bagnall pointed to cuts to operating budgets for Conservation Officers and provincial parks as just two areas that are starved for funding this year.

"An ordinary citizen can no longer walk into an MNR office to get information, because the doors are locked," she said. "In our forests, the Ministry has only the dimmest idea of what the forest companies are actually doing, because we don't have enough staff to police their activities."

MNR now stands for "Ministry of No Resources," MERC member Dave Fluri said.

On Nov. 16, the MERC is asking OPSEU members to wear black, attach orange flag tape to their car aerials, and sign petitions to send to local MPPs.

OPSEU locals with members in the MNR are planning activities to attract media attention as well.

"This is not just a one-time thing," said

To view the text of the agreement between OPSEU and government, visit
<http://www.opseu.org/ops/frontlines/frontlinesnov032006attach.pdf>

Some transfers of work out of the OPS may not be a "sale of business." In that case, Appendices 9 and 18 continue to apply just as they do now.

"We think we've achieved our main goal with this agreement, which was to keep OPSEU members working at high-quality jobs," said CERC chair Eric Morin.

MERC calls Day of Action for Nov. 16 as MNR continues to crumble

"Ministry of No Resources" launches pre-budget campaign

The OPSEU leadership team in the Ministry of Natural Resources is calling on all OPSEU members to join in a "Day of Action" Nov. 16 to protest budget cuts in their ministry.

"Our ministry is crumbling around us," said Elaine Bagnall, OPSEU chair of the MNR Ministry Enforcement and Renewal Committee (MERC). "The MNR can no longer adequately

Fluri. "We will be asking members to wear black at work every Thursday between now and the provincial budget.

"This Ministry needs an immediate cash injection and a long-term funding commitment." The MERC is inviting OPSEU members in other ministries to join the protest.

"We realize that we are not the only ones under the gun," said Bagnall. "There are no fewer than 14 other ministries that have seen their budgets flat-lined and are facing the same types of problems we are.

"We hope to build this campaign in the months ahead so that funding for public services is an issue in the next budget and the next provincial election." ■

*Original authorized for distribution
by Leah Casselman, president.*