

The Rapaport Report

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January 2006

Right Wing Governments Come And Right Wing Governments Go But the Union Is Forever

(a slight rewrite of an old OPSEU saying)

The results of the federal election are bitter and sweet. The NDP picked up seats yet **Stephen Harper** will be our new Prime Minister. It will take some time to figure out what this all means. The Region 5 EBMs are hosting a discussion for February 1st, 5:30 at the membership centre at 31 Wellesley East.

It is obvious from the results of last week's election that it is time for democratic renewal.

Fair Vote Canada argues that our first-past-the-post system of electing Members of Parliament, riding by riding, results in a distortion of voters' choices. There are 308 seats in Parliament. The Tories received 36.2% of the popular vote and 124 seats, 40.3%. The Liberals received 30.2% of the popular vote and 103 seats, 33.4%. The Bloc received 10.5% of the popular vote and 51 seats, 16.6%. The Bloc only ran candidates in Quebec where they won 43% of the popular vote, 68% of those 75 seats. The NDP received 17.5% of the popular vote and 29 seats, 9.4%. The Green Party received 4.5% of the vote and no seats. In this configuration, the NDP and the Greens are the big losers nationally.

If the allotment of seats reflected the popular vote, in a system of **Proportional Representation (PR)**, Parliament would look remarkably different. The Tories would have 112 seats – down 12. The Liberals would have 94 seats – down 9. The Bloc would have 33 seats – down 18. The NDP would have 55 seats – up 26. The Greens would have 14 seats – up 14.

What about **Stephen Harper's** Tories? They are a scary kind of Tory. They disapprove of the overall structure and existence of a caring government. They dislike the notion that a government should take responsibility for the health and well-being of the wider group in the population, the so-called 'making a living class' that I wrote about in the December issue of *The Rapaport Report*.

Not surprisingly, they are opposed by OPSEU and our allies. We have seen two distinct oppositional strategies at election time.

The first strategy is to make an expedient alliance with the more centrist Liberal Party, 'strategic voting', which OPSEU and many other unions supported in the 1990's. Support the stronger Liberal or NDP candidate in each riding to prevent a Tory win. This strategy can only occur in the first-past-the-post system. It can be discarded in a more

democratic system of proportional representation. Among large and visible unions, only the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) practiced that strategy in the recent federal election.

Most of the labour movement, including OPSEU, adopted a second strategy. This strategy argues that the most practical opposition to very right wing parties and governments is to work for a strong NDP.

This view is behind the attempt to have OPSEU affiliate directly with the NDP. The fear is that without the NDP, Canada will evolve into what many of us see as the banality and corruption of two-party American electoral politics. The vast majority of unions and the Ontario Federation of Labour have adopted this perspective. They conclude that a strong NDP is essential for the incubation, discussion and broadcasting of issues and ideas that in the end will make a better society for people like us who have to work for a living.

OPSEU's place in the political and electoral world is a 'work in progress'. In the last issue of *The Rapaport Report* I wrote a brief history of our political rights and practice.

The **Mike Harris** Tories tried, unsuccessfully, to clip our wings. OPSEU is still here and growing. We provide a space for working people in the public sector, to bargain for our working and living conditions and to operate in the wider political and social worlds. OPSEU is our ticket.

We owe this ticket to future generations; to fight for unions, for collective bargaining, for pensions, against commercializing the public sector or downloading it to LHINS-like bodies, for more rights for injured workers, for the environment, for the most vulnerable.

Now, we get to deal with **Stephen Harper**. Where is **Mike Harris** now? He is finally testifying at the Inquiry into the death of **Dudley George**, where he belongs. And just like his good buddy Mike, **Conrad Black** is also getting his comeuppance.

Andy Todd, our now-retired senior negotiator, coined the phrase at the top of the page. OPSEU will still be around long after **Stephen Harper**.

The Executive Board met on Wednesday and Thursday, January 25th and 26th. Here is another issue of *The Rapaport Report*.



Executive Board Meeting – January 25 and 26

BPS Grievance/Arbitration Data Base

The Executive Board received an update on this project, to create a searchable database for the BPS OPSEU rights arbitration database. CAAT and OPS already have an OPSEU designed and maintained database on arbitration awards. The launch of the BPS database will occur at Convention. There will be staff from the grievance department to showcase the database and explain to members.

Liquor Board Employees Division (LBED) – Local Structure Revision

LBED had a Local Assembly on January 23rd and 24th. Over 100 LBED activists attended. (See LBED article on page 6.)

The LBED received training on how to run OPSEU locals. They also took another look at the LBED local structure approved by the December Executive Board meeting. They made a few revisions to that structure.

Mike Sullivan, Second Vice-Chair of LBED, reported these revisions to the January board meeting. They were minor changes and were accepted by the board.

Report on the Campaign Against the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN)

In coalition with three other large unions that represent health care workers; CUPE, ONA and SEIU, OPSEU is

opposing LHINs. (See the article by **Patty Rout** on page 5.)

We voted to finance the LHINs public campaign with \$250,000. Each union agreed to contribute that amount.

The Campaign to Stop LHINs held an organizing meeting in Toronto on Wednesday night. A group of EBMs attended. I ran into many OPSEU activists from the health care sector and the Ministry of Health. Many spoke passionately at the microphones about the dangers of LHINs and privatization of health care services.

2006 Budget

We discussed and debated the budget for much of this meeting. It is still not complete. We should (must) complete the budget at the March board meeting so it can be presented at Convention in April.



"Your math homework: model a federal budget...allow funding for essentials such as food, housing, health, education and absolutely NO: no bid contracts, no pork, no privatizing public assets, or cooking the books."

Successor Rights Campaign

Successor rights ensures that workers maintain their union and collective agreement when the work is divested or sold. In 1995, OPS and Liquor Board employees lost our successor rights. When a branch or a service is divested or privatized, then those workers must re-organize if they want to remain in a union. Workers with successor rights keep their union and collective agreement when the work is divested. We voted \$20,000 for a campaign to recover successor rights for members in these two sectors.

Executive Board Report

At every convention, the Executive Board presents a report on its activities over the past year. Three EBMs are chosen to write that report. They are Eddie Almeida (Region 2), Dave Lundy (Region 4) and Yours Truly (Region 5).

Executive Board Committee Elections

Peggy Maybury was elected to the Strategic Planning committee and the

MDT/SDT committee, replacing **Terry Downey**.

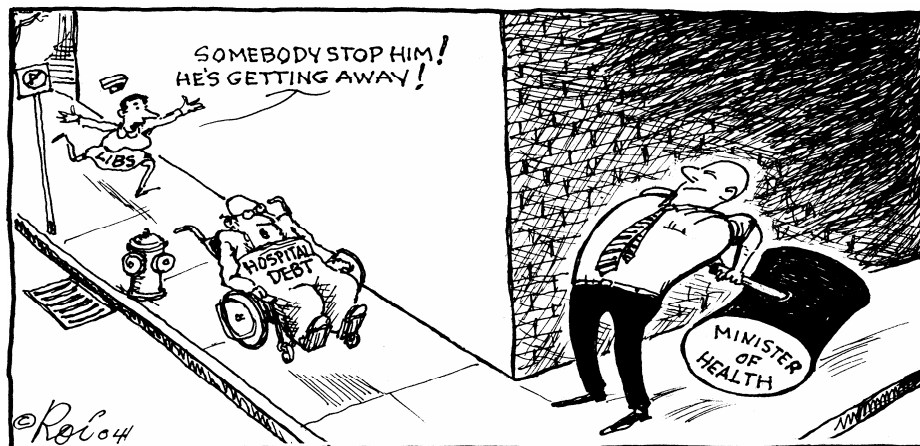
Pension Liaison Committee (PLC)

Jordan Berger, was re-appointed to the OPSEU Pension Trust for a 3 year term.

The PLC and the Strategic Planning Division of OPSEU have developed a database of the pension situation in the Broader Public Sector. There are too many BPS members with either no pension coverage or inadequate pension coverage. We presented our findings to the Executive Board. The same presentation was made to a meeting of BPS Sector Chairs the preceding week. The Executive Board gave us a green light and \$10,000 to explore solutions to this pension problem in the BPS.

Political Action Committee (PAC)

The PAC reported to the Executive Board about the recent Federal Election. OPSEU supported 25 NDP candidates in Ontario. There was a lively debate about our not supporting **Bob Eaton**, who ran as a Liberal in Leeds-Grenville



Stopping Local Health Integrated Networks (LHINs)

By Patty Rout, Chair OPSEU Health Council

"All this is fine, provided you are not either a hospital employee who is being laid off or forcibly transferred, or a patient who has to travel 100 kilometers for a routine procedure." - Ian Urquhart, Toronto Star, December 3, 2005

Bill 36 creates and empowers LHINs. Sadly, it also diminishes access to local community health care and creates a crisis in the entire health care system. Bill 36 is being rushed through Queens Park over the next six weeks.

OPSEU, along with the Ontario Nurses' Associations (ONA), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the Service Employers International Union (SEIU) have created a coalition to respond to this legislation. Our four unions represent over 200,000 health care workers.

Through LHINs, the government plans to tender many health care services. The competitive bidding model has been devastating to the homecare sector. We do not believe it will be any different in the health care sector.

Competitive bidding drives up costs and diminishes the quality of healthcare. Workers' wages and benefits are driven down. This system drives away workers. It has become very hard to attract people to work in the homecare sector.

We do not want this system in the health care sector. There is no job security for members and the health care system is worse off.

Within their LHIN, hospitals bid to provide health services. There are plans to create centers of excellence by centralizing programs. Ironically these 'local' networks push healthcare further from the community.

George Smitherman, provincial health minister, claims that it makes the system less costly. The very opposite might be true.

This bill must not pass in its present form.

- Bill 36 enables the LHINS to move or transfer employees from their workplace by overriding collective agreements;
- There is no expiry to Bill 36;
- The sick and elderly will travel further for health care as services are centralized;
- There will be a large new, unneeded level of management and bureaucracy;
- For-profit companies will be invited to bid on service contracts;
- Regional disparities will be greater;
- Real cost drivers, such as pharmaceutical companies will continue to drive up the cost of healthcare.

We are asking members to get involved by networking among themselves, co-workers, friends and families about this damaging change to the health care system. Write, email or phone your MPP about these changes.

Other 'Stop LHINS' actions:

- OPSEU members are speaking at a public hearing on February 6, 7 and 8 at Committee Room 151 at Queens Park.
- A media campaign. Each union, including OPSEU, is chipping in \$250,000.
- Visit www.stoplhins.ca for more info and updates.

If this initiative is truly about improving health care, why are doctors, ambulance drivers, laboratories and public health all excluded from the LHINS?

LHINS are not about better healthcare. Let us expose them for what they are; the commercialization and degradation of health care, competitive bidding, driving down labour costs and weakening unions.

Your Home in OPSEU

Local Assembly of the Liquor Board Employees Division (LBED)

LBED had a Local Assembly on January 23 and 24. OPSEU staff and EBMs met with over 100 LBED members and discussed how to run an OPSEU local and how OPSEU is governed; Locals, Convention, Divisions, Sectors, Executive Board, etc.

Five LBED locals are being created in Region 5. All five locals are multi-unit locals described in Article 12.2.4 (b) of the OPSEU Constitution as '...a group of members from one Ministry, department, institution or agency of the Government of Ontario who work at two or more locations within a given geographical area but who have separate relations with management based on the different location.'

Local 5107 represents 459 members in 24 stores and one Service Centre in Western Toronto, Brampton and Mississauga.

Local 5108 represents 286 members in 19 stores in northern Toronto, Thornhill, Unionville and Concord.

Local 5109 represents 353 members at the head office and Toronto warehouse.

Local 5110 represents 300 members in 19 stores in central Toronto.

Local 5111 represents 247 members in 24 stores in eastern Toronto and Markham.

Each of these five locals will establish and elect its steward body, Local Executive Committee (LEC), table officers and delegates to Convention. The five locals are entitled to 13 Convention delegates.

LBED activists have already participated in our weekend union training program and at Labour Day. After the locals are established, they can affiliate to the Labour Council and to the Greater Toronto Area Council as OPSEU locals.

Liquor Board employees are very much like us. As employees of the Liquor Board, they are Crown Employees. They participate in the OPSEU Pension Trust. They have a long and proud history of fighting privatization. That all sounds very familiar to me.

Seek out the LBED delegates and activists at Convention and other OPSEU events. Welcome them to OPSEU. They are our sisters and brothers.



Injured Workers in Ontario – It's Time to Change WSIB/WCB
By Marion Endicott

Marion is in Local 525 and works for the Injured Workers Consultants Community Legal Clinic. **Marion** helped organize the annual Injured Workers Christmas demonstration at the Ministry of Labour building on University Avenue in Toronto.

The McGuinty government must change workers' compensation. Injured workers suffer under the Harris compensation law which removed workers and compensation from the focus of the system. The "unfunded liability" has the Liberals frightened of reform and fearful of upsetting employers with rate increases. If they restored employer rates back to the levels before the Tories 27% reduction, the unfunded liability could be brought under control. The system was set up on a pay-as-you-go basis and the "unfounded liability" is simply a worry for those who want to privatize the system. Injured workers are requesting meetings with MPPs. We hope that OPSEU joins us in those meetings.

Liberal MPP **Mario Racco** came on behalf of the Minister of Labour. Here are *excerpts* from a letter sent by The Bright Lights Injured Workers Group on January 12th.

Dear Mr. Racco,

We wish to thank you for attending our annual Christmas demonstration.

In your speech, you announced that the Board will now restore clothing allowances to their former levels. This has been a long sought benefit restoration and we are pleased that it is finally resolved. However we are fundamentally disappointed. Even this small benefit restoration will not apparently be retroactive. Even this full clothing allowance is held down in its value by the lack of full cost of living increases.

Mr. Racco, the Harris government introduced many cuts to the compensation system. It is not reasonable to make us wait so long to restore things to where they were, never mind actual improvements. The *one* clear promise to injured workers made by the Liberals before they were elected, was to restore the full cost-of-living. Not even that has happened. Just this month, all of us received letters from the Board telling us that the value of our benefits are reduced by 2.3%. We have been getting reductions for a decade now and have lost 20% of our compensation. This is simply not right. It is our fear however that nothing will be done. Although some long sought improvements are happening at the Board we are forced to suffer a bad law that legislates poverty.

Research recently conducted by the Street Health Community Nursing Foundation and funded by the Wellesley Central Health Corporation, studied homeless (81% of those studied) and marginally housed (19% of those studied). It found that 57% of those studied had had a WCB/WSIB claim and the injury was part of their current situation. These were people who had work and a home before their injury.

We would like to talk to you about the need for changes. With you as the representative of injured worker constituents in Thornhill and as a government member of the Standing Committees on Justice Policy and on Social Policy, we hope that we could have a very useful discussion.

Other News

The CAAT-A Team Calls a Strike Vote

Frustrated with the pace and the direction of negotiations, the OPSEU CAAT-Academic team called a strike vote for February 7th.

The Rapaport Report caught up with a very busy **Ted Montgomery**, chair of the CAAT-A bargaining team and president of Local 560 at Seneca College.

Brother Montgomery had this to say. "Settlement is possible, but it takes a reasonable and responsible management to achieve it." **Ted** also pointed out that College Presidents had salary increases of 6.1% in 2004. In the two year period, 2002-04 the presidents saw 20.65% increases. "The current offer on our table is 12.6% at the end of four years."

The CAAT-A team called a strike deadline of March 7th.

4,000 Thanks to the Phone Bank Volunteers

Carl Mohan of Local 541 and **Maria Rodriques** of Local 528 ran the Region 5 federal election phone bank. Many activists pitched in to call over 4,000 OPSEU members in five Toronto ridings. Thanks to all of you.

Elections at Labour Council

The next meeting of the Labour Council occurs on Thursday, February 2nd at 7:30 pm at the OFL Building at 15

Gervais Drive. There will be nominations for the March election for the executive and the committees, municipal, women, equity, education and international affairs. There is an OPSEU caucus at 7:00 in the Resource Centre at the Learning Education Centre.

Region 5 Discusses the Federal Election

The Region 5 EBMs are hosting an informal discussion on the federal election. What do the results mean for OPSEU, for the public sector, for Canada. Please join us at the Membership Centre at 31 Wellesley East at 5:30 pm on Wednesday, February 1st.

Region 5 Women's Caucus

The Region 5 Women's Caucus is holding their next meeting on Tuesday, February 7th at 5:30 pm at 31 Wellesley East. Contact **Yvonne Bobb** or **Gloria David** for details.

Region 5 Human Rights Committee

The Human Rights Committee is holding a meeting on Tuesday, January 31st. Contact **Cecil Beckford**.

Labour Council Forum

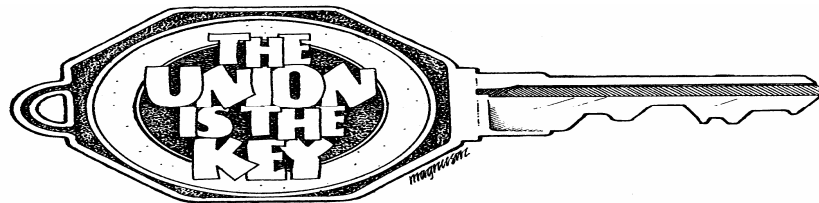
The Labour Council is holding a forum 'Women in Politics: Getting Involved'. It is on Saturday, February 18th at 8:30 am at Metro Hall, 55 John Street. Contact Labour Council at 416-443-3663. It is designed to encourage and increase the participation of women within their unions, their communities and in the political arena. Region 5 picks up the \$25 registration fee.

Notices and Events

Region 5 Discussion on Federal Election – Wednesday, Feb 1st, 5:30 pm, 31 Wellesley E
 Labour Council Membership Meeting – Thursday, February 2nd, 7:30 PM, OFL Building
 OPSEU caucus at 7:00 – 7:30 in the LEC Resource Centre
 Region 5 Woman's Caucus – Tuesday, February 7th, after work, 31 Wellesley East
 CAAT-A Strike Vote – February 7th
 Greater Toronto Area Council (GTAC) Meeting – Wednesday, February 15th, after work
 Labour Council Political Forum – Saturday, February 18th, 8:30 AM, Metro Hall
 Region 5 Weekend Union School – March 4-5
 Deadline for Convention resolutions and constitutional amendments – March 6th
 Region 5 Retirees Group – Tuesday, March 7th, 10:30 AM
 Executive Board Meeting – March 25-26
 OPSEU Convention – April 20-22
 Region 5 Weekend Union School – June 3-4

Region 5/OPSEU Contact Information

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Yvonne Bobb, Region 5 Member, Provincial Woman's Committee - ybobbl@sympatico.ca
Cecil Beckford, Region 5 Member, Provincial Human Rights Committee
 OPSEU representative on Labour Council Executive - ceceilb@rom.on.ca
Carl Mohan, Region 5 Member, Provincial Youth Committee -
 cmohan@opseu541.org
Bob Taylor, President, Greater Toronto Area Council (GTAC) - 416-482-6680
Gloria David, Contact, Region 5 Women's Caucus - 416-314-6484.
Tony Carneiro, Chair, Region 5 Retirees Group - 416-787-7033
Toronto and York Region Labour Council – 416-441-3663
OPSEU Direct – 416-443-8888
OPSEU web site – www.opseu.org



The Rapaport Report is the newsletter of David Rapaport, Region 5 Executive Board Member of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, OPSEU. I am responsible for the contents of the newsletter. If you have complaints, comments, praise or criticism, please get in touch with me. I would like to hear from you. I can be reached at 416-651-1659 or at drapaport@opseu.org.