



Dear Colleagues,

January 7, 2010

The upcoming vote to authorize a strike mandate is the most important vote since the 1970's when College faculty voted to join OPSEU's predecessor, the Civil Service Association of Ontario. The Colleges have decided to use this round of negotiations and the recent revisions to the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act [CCBA] to test the resolve of faculty.

The Ottawa Citizen quotes former college fact finder Gene Swimmer on the issue of imposed terms:

“Gene Swimmer, a labour-relations expert at Carleton University said that the colleges' decision to impose terms on the workers drew a clear line in the sand.

‘I think it's important for people to understand that if there is a strike, the strike was not necessarily caused by the union,’ he said.

He also said that while there is nothing immoral about it, imposing terms and conditions is usually done “to bring about a showdown.”

The power to impose terms and conditions of employment is not unusual, but exercising that power is rare.

What is different in our situation is that we are in a forced transition period. Usually when an employer imposes terms and conditions, they must first declare an intention to lock-out.

Also, most unions have their strike mandate in place early in the bargaining process.

The contention that a strike mandate guarantees that you will be out on strike the following day is just part of the employer's whisper campaign. Historically, 75% of strike votes end in a settlement without a strike. The culture of college and OPSEU bargaining was that the strike vote, while commonplace, was taken later in the bargaining process and had to be preceded by fact finder's report and a vote on the “offer last received” from the employer. No longer. Now, the employer has the right to take an offer vote.

The imposition of terms and conditions means more to you than either management's position or the union's. If the faculty give in to the imposed terms, that will become the model for all future negotiations at least in the colleges and perhaps beyond.

The goal of having a workload formula that modernizes an outdated system, that allows professional teachers to decide pedagogy for their students, is no small dream.

But it is a possible dream if you stand up and resist the imposed terms and conditions. It is possible if you vote your resolve. It is possible if you recognize that the strike mandate is a tool that provides pressure on the management that gets them back to the table. Faculty strike votes in the past have resulted in a settlement 75% of the time.

On January 13 vote your resolve – vote Yes.

Handwritten signature of Warren (Smokey) Thomas in black ink.

Warren (Smokey) Thomas
President

Handwritten signature of Ted Montgomery in black ink.

Ted Montgomery
Chair, OPSEU Bargaining Team

Handwritten signature of Paddy Musson in black ink.

Paddy Musson
Chair, CAAT-A Executive