



THE NATIONAL NEWSLETTER OF THE COMMISSIONAIRES UNION

Thank you for your overwhelming support

By **Ernie Hunter**

Ottawa Division Union Campaign
Interim President

As many of you are aware, the Commissionaires' Union Campaign in Ottawa had some very special guests helping us recently. Commissionaires from British Columbia and Sudbury regions joined us to assist with increasing our membership.

Our card count has increased dramatically, as has the number of Commissionaires working hard to achieve our objective.

Angele Cadieux, Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) Organizer, and Claire and Camil Poirer, activists supporting the campaign, have shown never-ending support. Their hard work, long hours and enthusiasm have benefited all Commissionaires within the Division.

I could mention others too, but the list is too long. I know they accept our thanks. Their commitment sustains our union drive.

We need more committed people like them who believe in what we are trying to do, who are committed to our cause and are not afraid to speak out for what they believe in. Commissionaires across this great land of ours can't be wrong.

The past year has been very fruitful. If it were not for union activities within the Division, we would not have acquired just some of the benefits we are asking for.



Photo by PSAC Communications

Commissionaires from Ottawa and other regions, along with PSAC members and staff, rally in front of the Corps of Commissionaires headquarters last summer as a bewildered representative of Corps management looks on. The protesters were calling for the unimpeded right of Commissionaires in Ottawa and elsewhere in Canada to unionize.

Take a look at what we have achieved since the Campaign:

- the increase in bereavement leave;
- the increase in sick leave;
- the increase to six-per-cent vacation pay to those who qualify.

And there are a number of other issues we continue to address. The Corps also sweetened the pot with some extras. If the movement to form a union was the reason for the return of some, and addition of other, benefits (Corps HQs will not admit to this) just think what can

be accomplished with a Collective Agreement. Remember, this is now a bread and butter job for most Commissionaires.

In closing, on behalf of the Ottawa Division Commissionaires Union Campaign I would like to thank members of the PSAC and all the other Commissionaires across Canada for your support. I would also like to congratulate P.E.I. Commissionaires on your application for certification and showing what determination is all about.

Another union drive launched in Windsor

Magazine ad spurs Commissionaire to join campaign

The Corps now has a new front to defend as Commissionaires in Windsor advance in their unionization campaign that began in early July 2003.

Commissionaire Fred Fisher jumped in to lead the campaign after seeing a PSAC ad in a *Legion* magazine. "I still find that ad very valuable in organizing," he says. "I show it to Commissionaires, many of whom are ex-military. They find it good to know that the union's message is getting out there to their cohorts."

There are about 130 Commissionaires in Windsor, scattered throughout different work

sites, including the airport and federal buildings. The majority, however, are working in industrial sites.

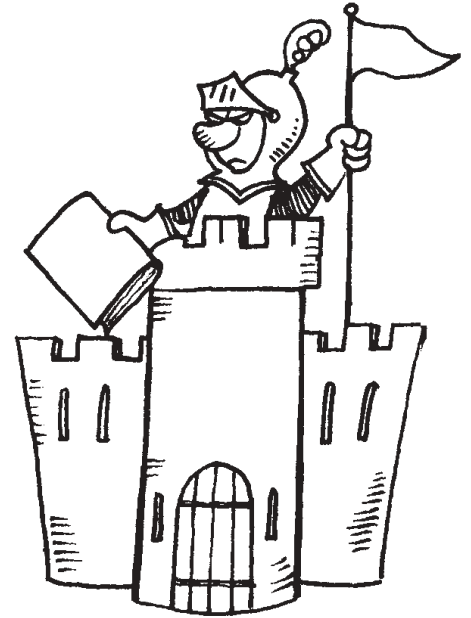
"Some of the Commissionaires I've approached have some concerns with the union, as in anything," Fisher relates.

"The majority of them are over 60 and are worried about how easy it might be for the Corps to just get rid of them because of their age. But we try to explain to them what the union is all about. For the most part, though, we've had good response."

Fisher says the main problem the Commissionaires in Windsor have against the Corps is their level of salaries.

"Definitely, there's a discrepancy between our pay scales and what the Corps is getting for our services," says Fisher.

Windsor Commissionaires hope to file for certification soon.



A collective agreement
is our best defence.
Let's unionize!

And they're off...

Nationally, the race is on for Commissionaires to unionize with PSAC.

Out in front we have Vancouver Island Commissionaires.

Closely behind is the Sudbury/Kirkland Lake group.

Almost neck in neck is the Greater Toronto Area.

St. John's and PEI are on GTA's tail.

And at the back of the pack is the

Ottawa group, but they're slowly narrowing the gap and catching up with the pack.

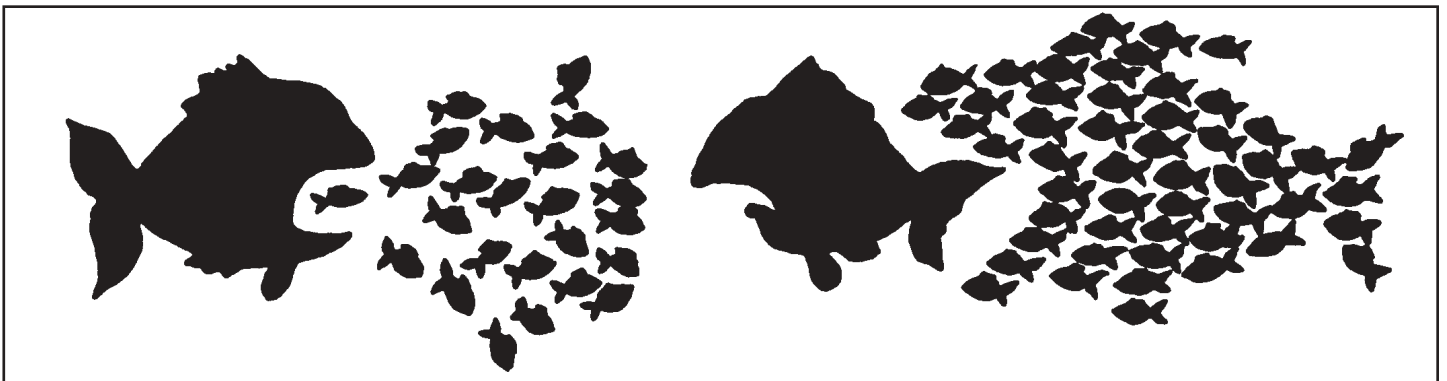
These groups have already achieved, or are close to achieving:

- a fair job posting process;
- secured benefits;
- seniority;
- a grievance procedure with teeth; and
- an end to favouritism.

Those at the back of the pack no

longer want to be at the employer's whim. They are demanding a say in their workplace. Fairness is the ultimate reward when crossing the finish line.

Those still track-side are biting at the bit to join the race. We can be sure that as more collective agreements are ratified and implemented, and Commissionaires realize the benefits of going union, all regions will be getting in on the action.



Wave upon wave

No one would know more than those who live so close to the ocean that rocks, no matter how hard, eventually get shaped by the ocean's relentless waves. Commissionaires in Newfoundland will be applying this lesson in their union drive.

Newfoundland Commissionaires lost a certification vote last July by a very narrow margin. About 42 per cent who voted were for the union and the rest were against.

“We accomplished labour status. The Commissionaires union, at least, is recognized as a union by the labour board, and the Corps will have to deal with us as a union.”

Don Ouellette
Newfoundland
Commissionaire

To Don Ouellette, one of the Commissionaires who led the organizing campaign, the loss isn't a defeat; it's a lesson.

“The Labour Act has many loopholes,” he says.

“We need to learn how to get around them, and we are now learning very fast.”

Ouellette points to the P.E.I. Commissionaires' union drive, as a particular point of inspiration.

“They went three times to battle,” he says. “And they're not giving up.”

To Ouellette, there is no doubt

that his fellow Commissionaires in Newfoundland do want a union, but the employer's dirty tricks have made it difficult for them to freely join.

Two days before the certification vote ballots were counted, the province's labour board found the Corps guilty of having violated the Labour Act when they used intimidation tactics against their employees during the union campaign. This is a similar violation that the Corps was found guilty of in Alberta recently.

But the Corps in Newfoundland

was only told to “cease and desist” after the Commissionaires have already cast their ballots. At that point, the damage had already been done.

“I was expecting the labour board to call for another vote,” says Ouellette. “Not only a ‘cease and desist’ order.

“But it's clear now to the Commissionaires that they have an employer who plays dirty politics. How can you not want a union when you see this?”

See WAVE on page 4



We are looking for volunteers, Commissionaires who want to receive training in organizing/representation, and others who wish to share their leadership skills for the benefit of all Commissionaires. We are currently forming National Committees to address our shared concerns and to address future campaigns in a coordinated, orderly fashion. Please contact Les Buss at 604-240-1382; Chris Wilson, Ontario regional Organizer at 416-

485-3558; Allan Johnson at 604-430-5631; Jim Macmillan-Murphy at 250-953-1053; Mark Power, St. John's, Nfld. at 709-726-6453; and Angèle Cadieux, Ottawa, at 613-560-4261 for further information on how you can help.

We will be publishing a list of all officers, stewards, and volunteers nationwide as soon as possible. Thank you and we look forward to meeting many more Commissionaires in the future.

PEI Commissionaires can smell victory

By PSAC staff

It's been a long journey for the Commissionaires of PEI, but the determination to see their rights enshrined in a collective agreement have brought them to the point where they can smell the victory of becoming the next certified unit of Commissionaires with PSAC.

As reported in the last issue of the *National Newsletter of the Commissionaires Union*, the application to represent the group was submitted in May 2003. At the time we foresaw no further roadblocks to being certified.

But as the Corps of Commissionaires has shown time and again, they will pull out all legal stops to prevent Commissionaires their due right of bargaining agent representation: the Corps challenged the application on the grounds that they were not the employer.

Hearings commenced in June. On a positive note, the Labour Relations Board of P.E.I. stated up front that a representation vote was not required.

The only determination to be made was that of "employer."

Two days of hearings were not sufficient to address this question and subsequent dates were set in September.

The organizing committee of some 10 Commissionaires has been solid throughout the campaign. Many Commissionaires attended

the hearing in support of their union.

There is confidence that it is only a matter of time now until the Board rules in the Commissionaires' favour and certifies PSAC as their bargaining agent.

Wave: A step towards victory

Continued from page 3

Ouellette and the rest of the Commissionaires' union supporters, however, are still determined to get unionized and will begin signing up union members again soon so they can file for certification early in 2004.

What keeps them going is the fact that they gained something even in this last campaign.

"We accomplished labour status," says Ouellette.

"The Commissionaires union, at least, is recognized as a union by

the labour board, and the Corps will have to deal with us as a union. For dignity, respect and job security, a union is the only way to go."

In other words, Newfoundland Commissionaires may not yet have a piece of paper that says they're a union, but the Corps has been forced to deal with them as if they were a union.

That's a step towards victory. Certification is now only another step forward.

And that's how waves shape rocks: One piece at a time.

Check out our Web site and get some current updates on the Commissionaires' campaign at:
www.psac-cmre.com or www.psac-afpc.com .

Contributors to this issue:

Ernie Hunter
and PSAC Staff

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