



G S U

N e w s

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2003 / Issue 5

Busy third quarter for GSU

The third quarter for GSU has been busy and productive on many fronts.

GSU Reps Lawrence Maier and Dale Markling, together with General Secretary Wagner, have tackled a small mountain of grievance arbitration's on behalf of GSU members. Between Canada Day and September 30 more than \$130,000 in lost wages has been recovered for union members.

On August 29 GSU received a disappointing arbitration decision in the case of two employees who challenged their long-term layoffs as being job elimination's in disguise. The arbitrator ruled that on the particular facts of the case the employer acted genuinely in laying off the grievors and was not trying to avoid giving a notice of job elimination that would have carried severance pay with it. GSU's position in the arbitration was hobbled by the decision of the two grievors not to testify in the hearing.

On September 23 GSU received a favourable arbitration ruling in the

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case of a SWP employee who was required to provide standby service, without the appropriate compensation, for a period just shy of 29 months. In addition, the employee worked overtime for which he was not paid. GSU is in

the process of tabulating the amount owed to the grievor. Settlement of the case is anticipated to run into the tens of thousands of dollars.

A major arbitration case concerning the Article 24 rights
(Continued on page 3.)



Bargaining focuses on seniority, benefit plans

The Unit 1 (Operations) bargaining committee met with Sask Wheat Pool management on Oct. 21 and 22.

The Union side pressed hard on the difficult issues that remained outstanding from Oct. 9 and 10. The Oct. 9 and 10 talks centered on seniority proposals and some outstanding benefit plan issues.

The Company has proposed the virtual elimination of seniority rights from both CSD and Office collective agreements. Management's scheme would result in members having very little seniority protection on lay off or recall. Market Center Managers would decide who goes, who stays, and who gets called back. They would also have nearly complete control over promotions.

The Union Committee proposes to

retain the current seniority language in Article 12 for all posted positions, but they have proposed significant changes to simplify and strengthen the lay off and recall procedure.

The Union committee broke off the talks when it became clear that the Company would not agree to withdraw their cutbacks.

"The members need good news for a change, not a kick in the teeth," said union bargaining spokesperson Lawrence Maier.

Bargaining will resume Dec. 8 and 9 after union members have been consulted at annual meetings.



Upcoming Events

✓ **GSU annual membership meetings** - November and December.

Notices have been mailed and posted on the web page - www.gsu.ca.

✓ **Unit 5 (AgPro Moose Jaw) bargaining** - Nov. 12 and 13.

✓ **Unit 1.4 (Heartland, North Battleford) bargaining** - Nov. 20 and 21.

✓ **Unit 4 (AgPro Saskatoon)** - Nov. 24 and 25.



GSU News

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CALM

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Labour's world

Union workers more productive

A study of nearly 1,200 building projects in the U.S. found that union construction workers are 17 per cent more productive than their non-union counterparts. "That might come as a surprise to people who don't know the construction industry," says James Williams, general president of Painters and Allied Trades. "But the difference is not surprising to people who know about our ongoing partnership with employers who support very demanding union apprentice programs." *Maritime/AFL-CIO/CALM*



Wait times

A 1999 Alberta Consumers' Association study found that in Calgary (where all cataract surgery is done in private clinics) patients faced an average wait of 16 to 24 weeks before they got their surgery. In Edmonton (with fewer surgeons and 80 per cent of surgeries performed at public hospitals) wait times averaged five to seven weeks. *SunSpots/SUN/CALM*

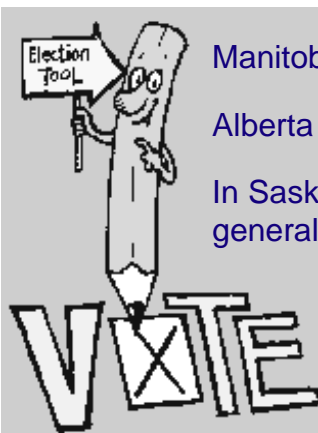
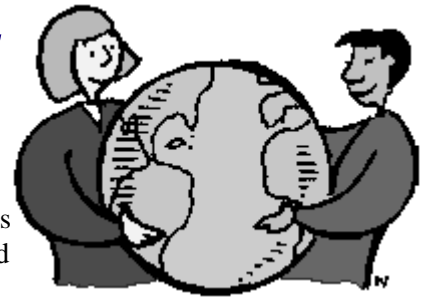
Liquor Board deregulation

Starting in 1993, the Alberta government made major changes in the

control, taxing, and distribution of liquor products. These changes included privatizing and deregulating alcohol sales.

A 2003 study - *Sobering Result: The Alberta Liquor Retailing Industry Ten Years after Privatization* by Calgary economist Greg Flanagan - came to these conclusions:

- The number of liquor stores has more than tripled from 310 to 983. There are more stores in rural small towns, and stores are open longer and later hours.
- While jobs have increased from approximately 1,300 to 4,000, wages have fallen from over \$14 per hour (in current dollars), plus a benefit package and civil-service pension, to approximately \$7 per hour.
- Unlike in other provinces, liquor consumption has increased (along with the potential risks of increasing social problems).
- Although the retail cost of alcohol has increased, the tax revenues to the Alberta government have fallen by \$500 million or more over the last ten years.
- The Alberta government has lost effective control of the liquor industry, as chain stores such as Safeway, the Real Canadian Superstore, the Calgary Cooperative Association Ltd., IGA gain greater control as their market share increases.
- It is harder to sell alcohol in a socially responsible way when the retailers need to make a profit. Restricting or preventing sales to under-age or high-risk individuals is not compatible with the profit motive. As a result, the public has to pick up the cost of more police services.



Manitoba did it first.

Alberta will surely follow.

In Saskatchewan a provincial general election is underway.

Exercise your rights by getting out to vote on November 5th.

Saskatchewan Premier Lorne Calvert has called a provincial general election for November 5th.

Be informed! Evaluate the political parties' platforms, advertisements and election materials, and ask the candidates about where they stand on issues.

Ask the candidates

Here are some questions you might want to ask the candidates in your constituency:

- Do you support a **publicly-funded home care system** for those in need (like many seniors)?
- Do you support a pharmacare program that would provide **prescription drug coverage** to all Saskatchewan families?
- Will you be committed to stopping the privatization of **health care services** and institutions?
- Are you in favour of publicly funded and controlled **education** at all levels?
- Are you committed to keeping correctional and young offender facilities in public hands?
- Will you oppose any steps toward the further privatization of **liquor sales** in Saskatchewan?
- Are you prepared to allocate more resources to preserve our provincial parks?
- Saskatchewan's crown corporations add hundreds of millions of dollars a year to the provincial treasury - money that is used to pay for services like schools, hospitals and roads, while providing among the lowest utility rates in North America.
Are you committed to keeping our **crown corporations** and public services in public hands?
- Do you believe that the **minimum wage** should be a living wage?

- When major employers and players in the provincial economy are at risk will you support provincial government intervention to **preserve jobs** and services relied upon by Saskatchewan residents or will you leave it to the "market" to decide our fate?

- Do you believe in **labour laws** that make it harder for people to join unions?

These are a few of the questions candidates can be asked. No doubt there are many more. Try some on for size and get informed.

Busy third quarter for GSU

(Continued from page 1.)

claimed by two SWP Maintenance Services employees (following the company's September 2002 downsizing) was heard on September 18 and 19. A decision is pending.

Several GSU members' grievances involving layoff, denial of sick leave, failure to accommodate and denial of severance pay were successfully resolved during the third quarter in advance of scheduled arbitration hearings.

While it is always good to settle a dispute without the uncertainty and expense of arbitration, it is GSU's experience that grievance settlements so often occur just before an arbitration hearing but after all of the work preparing for the case has been done. Last minute settlements of grievances could be reduced in numbers if employers would adhere to the grievance procedures and actually try to find solutions

before the cases are sent to arbitration.

In addition to the foregoing, agreement renewal bargaining sessions covering SWP and AgPro Grain employees (Moose Jaw/Saskatoon) were held during the third quarter. Lawrence Maier advises that no settlements have been reached and the slowness of bargaining will be discussed at GSU Local meetings being planned for November.

Bargaining for a first union agreement covering Heartland Feeds employees in North Battleford is underway. Dale Markling reports that progress has been slow, but expects it will pick up speed this autumn.

Staff Rep Adriane Paavo was busy for much of the last three months developing round two of the Employee Advisory Training Program and a course on union organizing. It is anticipated that these initiatives will swing into gear this fall.



SWP to sell Bruno feedmill

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool has reached an agreement to sell the former Heartland feed mill in Bruno to a community group from the area.



GSU represents the former Heartland employees and has a certification order covering the Bruno feed mill.

Back in April, SWP announced its plan to close the Bruno feed mill and to sell the assets. As result of the employer's decision, employees experienced permanent layoff on April 18 and 25. GSU has a grievance in the works regarding the nature of the layoff and the matter in which the employer carried-out its decision.

On September 29, GSU General Secretary Hugh Wagner met with a group of union members from the Bruno feed mill. The purpose of the meeting was to survey the situation and address issues arising in relation to a possible restart under new ownership. Following the union membership meeting, Wagner and bargaining unit chair Doug Krentz met with a representative of the community group negotiating to purchase the feed mill from SWP.

"Both Doug and I informed the union members and the community group that GSU is willing to cooperate and do its part to get the mill up and running for the benefit of the community and the affected employees," said Wagner.

Under the successor rights provisions of the Canada Labour Code, the new owners will be covered by GSU's certification order and collective agreement which comes open for agreement renewal bargaining on Nov. 30. Ironically, Nov. 30 is the same day that the anticipated sale of the mill is to take effect.

"Earlier this year, someone tried to encourage union members to decertify GSU in return for promise

of jobs in a re-opened mill," Wagner said. "Fortunately, wiser heads prevailed and recognized there is no real gain to be made by responding to that kind of illegal promise. Doug Krentz is to be congratulated for his solid defense

of employees rights and standing up for GSU as well as the community."



It's annual meeting time

From November 3rd to early December, GSU's 16 Locals in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba will hold annual union meetings.

Notices setting out the dates, times and locations of the meetings were mailed to each member beginning October 20th.

The annual meetings are another opportunity for every member to participate in the one and only organization devoted exclusively to making work and the workplace a better deal for working men and women. Each meeting will receive updates on agreement renewal bargaining with employers as well as current workplace issues, general union business and election of Local officers for a one year term.

In keeping with GSU practice, members attending each meeting

will have an opportunity to vote on continuing the additional union dues paid into the GSU Defense Fund. Whether the additional Defense Fund dues will continue for another year or will cease on December 31st is based on a tabulation of the combined vote of all the Local meetings.

If you haven't received a meeting notice check the GSU web site and call the GSU Office to verify your mailing address. GSU members can call the GSU office toll free by dialing 1.866.522.6686.

**It's your Union.
Make the most of it.**

Bargaining notes

Bargaining in Units 7.5C (Heartland), Unit 4 (AgPro Saskatoon), and Unit 5 (AgPro Moose Jaw) has been delayed and rescheduled after the departure of the Company's chief spokesperson.

The next bargaining sessions are:

- Unit 7.5C (Heartland, North Battleford) - Nov. 20 and 21.
- Unit 4 (AgPro Saskatoon) - Nov. 24 and 25.
- Unit 5 (AgPro Moose Jaw) - Nov. 12 and 13.

Additional information and updates are available under "Local Issues" on GSU's web page - www.gsu.ca