



Report of the National President

For the period

May 22nd, 2007 - October 4th, 2007

Presented at the National Executive Meeting

October 10th, 2007 - October 12th, 2007

Anthony Tilley



National Executive Meeting in May 2007

Greetings, brothers and sisters.

It is both my and privilege and responsibility to present my report to you today on my activities over the past four months, and to speak to the current status of our Component.

This has been an extremely difficult and stressful period for all of us in the National Office, and I would at this time like to thank the staff for their commitment and extra effort.

On May 22nd, 2007 Ray Strike was removed from the office of NHWU National President by the National Board of Directors of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. This act was taken in response to actions undertaken by Brother Strike during the Component representation vote between ourselves and the Canada Employment and Immigration Union.

As per the NHWU Bylaws and the PSAC Constitution, I was immediately installed as the President of NHWU and permitted to take my seat on the PSAC NBoD. Had I not agreed to do so, our Component would have been placed into immediate trusteeship by a motion already placed on the NBoD agenda.

After much discussion of the motion, it was agreed that NHWU would not be placed into trusteeship if I also accepted certain conditions and assistance from the PSAC to ensure complete compliance with agreed-to conditions. Sister Robin Benson, PSAC Regional Executive Vice-President: Prairies, and Brother Steve Jelly, Executive Assistant to the Alliance Executive Committee, were selected to provide that assistance and oversee our activities for a two-month period.

At this same PSAC meeting, it was announced that an investigation committee had been appointed by PSAC President John Gordon to look to the conduct and actions of the entire NHWU Executive Committee in regards to the representation vote. I will go into the particulars of both in greater detail in the body of my report.

Despite the above, my first four months as your National President have not been all gloom and doom. I believe that we have overcome many major hurdles. And, we have survived. Health members have stepped up to fill Local vacancies left by the departing ISP members. We have a plan to get our Component back on an even keel.

I will be making many changes toward modernizing our Component and in streamlining the way Locals interact with the National Office. Our Web site will be retooled and our proposed structure will be lean and effective. Communications

will be the key. Indeed, I have heard from many of you already, and, be assured, we are listening.

National Executive Meeting in May 2007

The final meeting of the former National Executive was held May 23- 24, 2007 on the eve of the NHWU Presidents' Conference. It was attended by all Regional Vice-Presidents, their Alternates and several Local presidents. Sister Benson and Brother Jelly also attended as NBoD representatives. This meeting basically addressed the administrative issues and ramifications surrounding the movement of our Income Security Program members and the repercussions of the loss of both these members and accompanying National Executive members.

Presidents' Conference May 2007

As to be expected, the Conference ran the range of extreme variations of emotion. Members were at various times solemn, raucous, contrite and even enthused as we moved through the various items on the agenda.

I opened Conference proceedings with a brief explanation as to the circumstances that led to the removal of our former President Ray Strike. There was very strong show of support for Brother Strike and appreciation for his contribution to our Component over the years, culminating in a standing ovation from all in attendance.

Throughout the meeting, the theme was essentially one of transition. For our ISP members, it was mainly centred on keeping their identity within the CEIU structure. Our Health and Public Health Agency members dealt with the prospect of rebuilding from the ground up.

As is the case with any Presidents' Conference we had several guest speakers from the PSAC National Office who spoke on various topics of interest – from the Public Service DI fund to the latest round of collective bargaining.

However, the main focus of all in attendance was clearly on the future. Members from each side of the house, Health and ISP, had the opportunity to offer suggestions on what they wanted to see happen for themselves within their own Locals, both those who would remain and those transferred to CEIU.

There was a tremendous outpouring of emotion and mutual support as Conference participants realized that this would be the last time many of our members would ever take to the same conference floor in debate as NHWU members.

Brother Rejean Genest's name was deservedly placed on the Life Membership Roll, the highest award offered by a Component for his years of service to the members. Thank you and congratulations, Brother.

ISP Transition

During the first two months of my tenure, much of my time, and a large portion of our National Office resources, have been taken up with ongoing discussions with the leadership of CEIU and PSAC. I am happy to report most of what had been discussed with the participants at the Presidents' Conference in regards to the move of ISP members to CEIU has been successfully negotiated with the CEIU leadership. All but two of our Locals retained their own structure under the CEIU banner and all but one or two opted to retain their same executive officers. All Local funds were transferred with the Locals. In the case of combined Health/ISP Locals, all monies were equitably divided between the two entities.

The CEIU president has already visited most of the newly-acquired Locals to personally deliver their new charter. We have been assured that all former ISP Locals will have the very same opportunities to have delegates attend the CEIU Convention as any other Local in that Component. ISP members have been granted one seat on the CEIU Executive Committee until the next CEIU Convention to ensure a seamless transition and to articulate the issues that were of the greatest concerns for their members. I was invited to attend the CEIU Executive Committee meeting in September, and had an opportunity to explain the SDA -II complaint in detail to that group.

Due to the complexity and length of this ongoing complaint, NHWU will retain the responsibility for the SDA-II grievance, and will work in close cooperation with the CEIU until a conclusion is reached. However, any new grievances resulting from the recent CR-5 work description distribution to SDA II's will be handled by CEIU.

Efforts to ensure the retention of the NHWU's RVP structure for ISP members until they had fulfilled their entire mandate proved unsuccessful. The CEIU's structure simply does not allow a separate entity working in parallel to their existing one.

The agreed-to official transfer date to move members was July 1, 2007. However, due to the complexity of the task and in order for NHWU to ensure that all our Locals' funds and structures were secure, the actual move occurred on August 1.

On behalf of NHWU, I would like to wish our former members all the best. It is with deep regret that we acknowledge the loss of these brothers and sisters, many of whom helped our Component greatly over our 40-year history.

Restructuring Activities ('I'm Building My Union')

A restructuring model for our remaining Health and Public Health Agency members was the other major theme of last May's Presidents' Conference. While much National Office energy was devoted to the successful transfer of our ISP members from NHWU to CEIU, we in no way neglected the many issues faced by our remaining members.

The most urgent problem was the loss of much of our Local leadership within combined Health/ISP Locals. The past three months have seen the National Office and I focused on rebuilding those Locals and reinforcing some others that had been largely inactive. I am very pleased to report that we are further into completion of our original goals than we had predicted.

To date, all but two of our Locals that were decimated by the loss of ISP members have replaced their executives and are functioning well, albeit with relatively newer members who will require and are eager to receive union training. There remain a few Locals, such as Newfoundland and Calgary, which will require more attention. That said, we are getting close to a successful resolution in those areas. I would like to single out and thank Brian Smith for his assistance with the Calgary Local.

I have had the opportunity to attend the installation of some of these new executives and have been impressed with what I have seen. I have also personally spoken to many members in an effort to obtain their views on what should constitute our 'new and improved' NHWU.

All the while, I have been in constant consultation with the PSAC leadership in order to assure them that we are remaining on track and are in compliance with Alliance guidelines in the actions we are taking to rebuild our Component. Despite the relatively short timelines, and the massive amount of work that has to be completed, we are on target to get everything into line by our Convention deadlines.

I will also like to acknowledge the tremendous amount of co-operation I am receiving from the Health department, both nationally and regionally. The employer has recognized the need to keep effective lines of communication and redress open and functioning between management and our Local members. This constructive position has allowed us both time and space during our restructuring process.

The theme of our restructuring is *'I'm Building My Union'*. This is more than a slogan. It is a deliberate emphasis on the 'I' – the fact that each NHWU member now has the opportunity to have their say on the future shape and activities of their Component. Since we launched this rebuilding project in September, I have met or spoken with many members. They have given me much to think about and have stated many times the need to do things differently than we have in the past.

For my part, I have said that “everything is on the table” – from the composition of our National Executive to our union’s name and visual identity. We need a new leadership structure, a new regional focus and a new mandate to operate. The May Presidents’ Conference set the tone and initial direction. Many others have offered their input and suggestions. The work is proceeding well. Yet, more needs to be done.

I have drafted a comprehensive structure model as a proposal for the National Executive. This model is based on several of those already in use by mid-size Components of the PSAC. I have also drawn up a Convention delegate formula, based on both a local and regional computation, which takes into account membership size and geographical complexities. This week, our National Executive will review these plans and revise them where necessary.

The National Office has already begun to redraft our bylaws and regulations to conform to this new structure, if and when it has been ratified by our Locals. Gary Trivett, our Executive Assistant to the President, has been working on the changes for some time and is nearing completion of the proposed changes, which first must be sent to the PSAC to ensure compliance with the PSAC’s own regulations. I thank Gary for this major contribution to our rebuilding process.

I firmly believe that we are on the right track. Other changes should be implemented as we begin to redefine our new identity. For example, Convention committees should be convened weeks prior to this pivotal event, and not the day before, as is now the case. This will serve to allow for a more thorough debate on resolutions coming to Convention. National ad hoc committees should contain members from Local executives to ensure more grass-roots participation.

Speaking of grass roots participation I have also started to ensure NHWU is represented at PSAC-sponsored conferences – such as the Woman’s and Equity Conferences – in a deliberate effort to involve a greater number of newer activists and first-time delegates from across the regions.

These measures were based on excellent suggestions from the membership to get more members involved in these activities.

Current Financial Status

NHWU is in solid financial condition. As has always been the case, we will continue to operate in a fiscally- responsible manner, albeit we will have to expend considerable resources around training and restructuring. There are obviously a number of important, necessary changes. Rest assured the NHWU has the capital to accomplish those changes.

We have just completed our audit for this year and are awaiting the release of the report; however, we do not expect any unforeseen complications. An initial review of our budget has been undertaken and it appears our revenue should be sufficient to meet our operating expenses, so dues will remain constant for the immediate future. We will be undergoing a comprehensive budgetary review once we have finalized our structure and revitalization process at next year's Convention.

NBoD Investigation Committee

In May 2007, John Gordon, PSAC President, announced that a discipline committee of the NBoD had been convened to investigate allegations that I and other members of the National Executive had violated the PSAC constitution and had committed infractions that, if proven, would lead to our immediate expulsion from office and the placing of the NHWU in trusteeship. These allegations were to have revolved around legal action taken against the PSAC.

The members of the discipline committee were John MacLennan, Yvan Thauvette and Patty Ducharme. I first met with the committee on the May 14 to give initial testimony. I went on to meet officially with her and the committee on three other occasions. Over two months, I supplied the committee with records, files and minutes of every meeting of the NHWU executive on an almost weekly basis. I complied with every request for clarification on the material that was asked of me. I found the committee to be fair in their overall treatment of me personally and reasonable in the questions that were put forward.

On October 4, 2007 I received the findings of the committee via their report to the Alliance Executive Committee. The members of the National Executive and I were completely exonerated of any wrongdoing in actions undertaken over the course of the member allocation vote between the NHWU and CEIU. The matter is now closed, and the discipline committee disbanded.

NBOD Assistance to the NHWU

As previously mentioned, on May 22 a motion was put before the PSAC National Board of Directors to place NHWU into trusteeship after the removal of its then-President Ray Strike. After intense discussion, the motion was amended by Sister Betty Bannon, President of the Union of Taxation Employees. She urged that trusteeship be abandoned in favour of a compromise that would allow me to

remain in complete control of our Component if I would agree to three immediate conditions:

1. Terminate the fund set aside for legal action.
2. Request an audit of all NHWU activities and assets.
3. Immediately terminate the access of former President Strike to all Component resources and activities.

Sister Robin Benson and Brother Steve Jelly were mandated to provide assistance and guidance to me over the next several months. There was also the stipulation that should Sister Benson and Brother Jelly not receive the full cooperation of the NHWU, our Component would immediately be placed into trusteeship. The motion had an official timeline of two months. Since we had nothing to hide or fear from this type of arrangement, I deemed this an acceptable compromise and I immediately undertook to respect its conditions.

The assistance has been ongoing and non-intrusive, and has proved very useful in helping me get acclimated to the office of National President. I have met with Sister Benson and Brother Jelly several times over the last few months. The most recent occasion was only a week ago, when we discussed my proposed structure and the manner in which I proposed to proceed.

SDA Job Grievance

As I previously stated, this long-term grievance will remain with NHWU until a final decision has been rendered. I have been working on this 12-year odyssey since the portfolio was handed to me almost two years ago. It was inactive at the time. However, with the help of many ISP members across the country, we brought this issue back to the front burners of not only the department but almost every government official who had an e-mail address or read their own mail.

The department erred in the handling of this file, and they continue to do. On July 4, we won a significant partial victory when the department announced that 1,100 of the original 1,800 SDAs would receive their reclassification with an accumulated total retroactive pay out of over 48-million dollars. This was the biggest single win by a Component in PSAC history, and it was the NHWU that finally pulled it off through determination and sheer will. We feel we have an excellent case for the remaining 700 members, and we will press on.

National Office Staffing

The National Office has an effective team, with a good combination of seasoned employees and eager newcomers. That said, there remain some vacancies that must be filled as soon as possible. I have already placed our membership clerk, who had been with us the past two years, into indeterminate status. However, we do have some other concerns.

We must hire at least one other service officer, as we officially have only one, and need to finalize the position of Executive Assistant. At present, the EA position is staffed on an acting basis and the incumbent is actually doing both his own duties and that of a service officer. I will be moving to finalize that appointment at this meeting. We will also need to discuss the requirement for a second administrative clerk.

Since taking office, I have had to settle two outstanding issues involving two former National Office employees. I am pleased to report that we have come to acceptable terms with both parties.

Office Modernization

The need to keep processes and technology up-to-date is the hallmark of a good organization. I have completed an evaluation of our office and the need to modernize is evident in some areas. I have spoken with our bank and we will move to computerized banking in the near future. This will include direct deposit as well as other features to increase our efficiency. Our technology must be upgraded. In general, we are already engaged in a continuous house-cleaning process.

National Office Refit

Our office last underwent any serious overhaul some 40 years ago. Next December 14, the National Office will temporarily relocate to nearby Isabella Street. All telephone, fax, e-mail and regular mail service will simultaneously be moved to provide for seamless service. To people outside the PSAC building, it will be as we had never moved.

Notwithstanding the general condition of our current facilities, our National Office has recently been exposed to a minor health risk in the form of mold. In keeping with the general restructuring of the entire building, almost all of the PSAC Components housed at 233 Gilmour Street have undergone or are undergoing some office remodelling. We have agreed to do the same. While there will be a cost, it will fall well within our operating budget.

Labour-Management Consultation

To date, I have attended 12 meetings with various national and regional management representatives over the past four months. In general, the experience has been both productive and cordial. A number of issues have been discussed, and we have obtained general agreement on most. Matters such as providing space and time for Local and executive meetings during working hours, preparation time for members to organize grievances, and paid leave for union business were all raised. We have also held initial talks on an agreement that would allow for all 2nd and 3rd level grievances to be handled at the national level,

thereby easing the workload on Local representatives. While labour management consultation is always at best a 'work in progress' we continue to maintain a solid open-door policy at all levels of our organization.

Summary

This concludes my first report as President of NHWU. As many of you know, I did not seek the position of National President. Nonetheless, I am committed to doing the best job possible in the time I have been allotted.

I feel things are progressing very well. While there has been significant change, much more will have to occur over the next year. You are all part of that change.

One immediate change will be the posting of the President's report on our Web site. This provides the fastest way for members to access this information. I also intend to initiate a monthly update on what is happening within the NHWU and in the various regions. We have the technology to get our information out more quickly and efficiently, so we should make full use of it. To that end, over the next few months, our Web site will be adding additions to make it more interactive.

We speak so often in the NHWU about 'the good of the members'. Well, no-one knows what's better than the members themselves. So, as your National President, I conclude my report by saying: Let's hear from you!