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No more wimpy chips: the trouble with strikes

Anyone who has read my opinion pieces over the last three years will know that I am not a big fan of strikes. It's not that the employees don't deserve what they are asking for, that has to be decided on a case by case basis, but no one group should have the power to arbitrarily inconvenience hundreds of thousands of people.

In general I feel that greater effort should be put into avoiding strikes. Binding arbitration should be used more often, particularly when the organization in question is likely to disrupt a great number of lives, i.e. the Post Office.

Now, having said that, once a strike occurs and has been concluded there truly is a responsibility of both the employees and the employers to apologize to the con-

sumer, and let them know that it is business as usual. A company or group of employees that does not do that is taking the consumer for granted and really have no business in any consumer oriented occupation.

Point in case. There have been two widespread and halting strikes in the last three months that have really affected Haligonians. One is the Air Canada pilots strike and the other is the Metro Transit strike. Both strikes affected hundreds of thousands of people, and both were transportation oriented providing a basis for comparison.

Now I must confess that I have initial sympathy for the Air Canada pilots, mainly because they are highly trained and skilled individuals who operate immensely

complicated pieces of machinery. They took pay cuts and lost parity to assist the once troubled airline to get its books in order. Now that Air Canada is in the black they felt that they should be paid in range of their American counterparts, fair enough. But what really got me was that when the strike ended the pilots showed genuine sorrow and regret for the inconvenience they had caused, swish - two points.

All that aside, what really struck me was how the two companies and sets of employees responded to the aftermath of the strike.

The day the strike ended Metro Transit increased fares. Not a good start. Being a frequent rider of Metro Transit, I did not see any particular effort to make the driv-

ers more friendly or open to the riders. Strike Two.

However, the piece de resistance came yesterday. I had just received off the bus with a particularly surly driver and was waiting to cross the street. The driver pulled away from the stop, in the same lane, and stopped at the red light eight feet away. A little old lady ran to catch the bus, waving her Metropass. She got to the door in plenty of time, the light wasn't even close to changing. She was out of breath and looked like she was about to have a stroke. She knocked on the door and showed her pass. The driver looked straight at her, grinned and slowly shook his head. The light changed and the bus pulled away with a very distressed elderly person standing on the corner. Strike

three, yer out, asshole; I only wished I had received his name.

Air Canada, on the other hand will be offering reduced fares for the next month and a half, and will generally be kissing your ass in the hopes you will fly Air Canada again. I refuse to judge that airline too harshly. It has taken ten years for Air Canada to switch from a cushy crown corporation who could lose money hand over fist without anyone caring, to a competitive aggressive player in an already overcrowded industry.

Maybe if Metro Transit became a public company with shareholders, they might give a ship about their clientele.

DAN CLARK

The impeachable President

What a relief to Americans everywhere. I'm glad that the investigation is over. Which one? You mean you didn't hear that Osama bin Laden has been arrested in Afghanistan?

Of course not, we're all too busy being distracted by sex. The report emerging from the independent counsel Ken Starr has charged Bill Clinton with eleven impeachable offenses, including perjury and witness tampering. While they might not seem like a tremendous malfeasance, they are crimes which circumvent the constitution Clinton vowed to uphold.

His legal problems stem from his attempts to cover up his affair in his Paula Jones deposition, not from the affair itself. We should ask ourselves if he should. After all, if we can fire a blonde bomber pilot for adultery, and then lying about it, why not our commander-in-chief?

The American public appears to be supporting their president. A CNN/Time poll has Clinton at roughly 60% approval (Sept. 5). The mood coming out of the States now is that they would have forgiven his extramarital transgressions, but not lying about it. Even his August 17th televised address was criticized for its "legalese" text, not to mention that he accused Ken Starr of prolonging the investigation. But if Clinton had come forward in the first place, the investigation wouldn't have dragged this further seven months.

The adultery has also distracted everyone from the more serious charges that the president faces. There is still the issue of illegal campaign contributions, which has Clinton accepting Chinese donations and then granting China satellite export licences. There's also the infamous Whitewater land deal,

Filegate, Travelgate, Troopergate, and any other 'gate you can think of.

It's interesting that people choose to compare the Lewinsky affair to the Watergate break-in, because the cases are more similar than impeachment proceedings. Richard Nixon was also charged with lying to the public about the Watergate affair after he stated publicly he did not know about it and

to fall into, I remember as early as November of last year how he was being criticized on every network for his "caretaker" President attitude, with shots of him golfing with all his lawyer buddies.

Oh sure, he has no qualms about accepting credit for other peoples' accomplishments. Why, look at campaign finance reform (credit to Sen. John McCain), taking on Big Tobacco (again, McCain), a balanced budget in five years (Republican Congress, while he was saying it could be done in seven to nine years), and peace in Ireland (I won't even touch that).

He does, however, have a knack for apologizing, but apologizing now is too late. Clinton must resign now, although even only two years of Al Gore will be bitter medicine to swallow. (Even he has an impending counsel investigation into his fundraising methods.) A president should embody only the highest standards of human decency and law-abiding. But wait, aren't I in on Hillary's "vast right-wing conspiracy"? Ask the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, both traditionally leftist newspapers and both editorializing that he should resign.

I'm sorry, Mr. President. I was never a really big fan of any of your policies, and I even defended you a couple of times, but you have finally truly let me down. "The President serves no purpose completing his term. He should do the honourable thing and resign." The quote was from 1974 regarding Nixon, and was made by William Jefferson Clinton himself.

only asked for an investigation.

It turned out he did know, and asked certain witnesses to lie about what exactly happened. Tapes had him organizing the cover-up. Even at that time, the American public was dubious as to whether or not these were impeachable offenses. However, since the scandal was so embarrassing to the U.S. on the world stage, Nixon did the honourable thing and resigned.

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ALAN LEBLANC



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In Japan, it's rude to give money.



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