

THE MISSISSAUGA Times

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Fitting the Bill

Ontario teachers will continue to have the right to strike if the Provincial government, as expected, adopts a provincial commission's report.

In its report, the Matthews commission tinkered a little with Bill 100, the legislation governing negotiations between teachers and school boards, but didn't change its essence.

One of the few things teachers and education trustees almost unanimously agreed on about the Bill was that the right to strike was necessary. The parties are wary of the alternative methods of third party decision-making which have not worked well in other jurisdictions, often leave both parties disgruntled, and are made by individuals who are unaccountable to the local taxpayers.

It seems wiser to allow the right to strike and to control the rules, than to ban that right and provoke illegal strikes which may be more damaging. But making the negotiation process fair to the two parties, the students and the public is an onerous task.

The commission has tried to make the process fairer in a number of ways. It recommends boards have the right to lock out teachers as soon as they are in a legal position to strike, a weapon boards will probably use sparingly because of potential political consequences.

To discourage "work-to-rule" campaigns, which are often harder on students and teachers and their relationships than outright strikes, the commission has wisely suggested that boards be allowed to reduce teachers' salaries for slowdowns.

The Ontario Education Relations Commission has been given an expanded role. It now has the power to determine when an "unresolved impasse" in negotiations exists and to recommend to the Cabinet the form of settlement. Perhaps the ERC will show less reluctance to recommend an end to a strike than the government has shown in recent situations, especially in Sudbury.

But the power vested in the ERC seems to smack of the same problems of third party settlement which the commission was trying to avoid.

Unfortunately, the Matthews commission failed to deal with the dilemma of principals and vice-principals being members of teachers' federations and representatives of management in schools. In fact, its report complicated the matter by recommending vice-principals be able to strike but principals be denied that right.

No government can legislate goodwill between teachers and boards, the truly essential ingredient to good labor relations.

But those in education should heed the Matthews' commission warning that, "if (teachers') federations and boards do not find a way to reduce the impact of strikes on students, the public may soon demand drastic (and perhaps unwise) government action."

BOO-BOO! To The Mississauga Times editorial writer Imperial Oil a BOO! instead of an obvious RAH! for their generous donations to the Mississauga Hospital fundraising program.

RAH! To the Meadowvale Kinettes, who have shown some ingenuity in finding subjects for their charity work. The Kinettes wanted to donate their time and help to seniors, but couldn't find any in Meadowvale. So they found a nursing home in Port Credit and started running weekly bingos there. That's the kind of spirit that will help Mississauga become a real city.

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Railroad safety must be improved

Following is an edited brief submitted to the Mississauga Railway Accident Inquiry by Edward J. Farkas, Associate Professor, Department of Man-Environment Studies, University of Waterloo.

The problem before the inquiry is that of railway accidents. It is well known that accidents are frequent. There is potential for greater severity of each accident, because tank cars are larger, and because of certain other tank car design trends. The volume of chemicals shipped is obviously greater than years ago. Data exist and could be collected to document all these factors.

If we compare, for example, 1980 with 1920, certain additional trends are clear. During that period the tremendous growth of highway and air freight and passenger traffic put severe pressure on the railroads. One result was that maintenance suffered. Many miles of track in the United States are in bad shape. Speed limits as low as 10 miles per hour are in effect. The poor condition of track is a factor in the accident rate in the U.S.

In view of these fundamental factors, it would seem that responsible government policy would be to provide support to the railroads, by keeping present lines in operation, ensuring that needed maintenance is carried, and ensuring that resources are available to the railroads to allow operation to the highest technical standards.

In the study of any problem, an early step should be research to find out what has been done and is being done around the world on the problem. My purpose in appearing before this inquiry is to bring before it a portion of this existing information.

The U.S. Federal Register is a periodical which is published daily by the U.S. government. All U.S. regulatory and administrative agencies make use of this publication in

order to disseminate new regulations, texts of proposed regulations, notices of meetings and conferences, and other types of material. In total over 77,000 pages were published in 1979.

Among other agencies publishing in the Federal Register are the Federal Railroad Administration, and the Research and Special Programs Administration, both part of the Department of Transportation, and also the National Transportation Safety Board.

They publish railroad accident reports, and reports of investigations into causes of accidents. Reports are also published dealing with actions taken to prevent accidents and longer-range research into accident prevention.

The major part of this brief will consist of commentaries on some reports of the types mentioned above which have appeared in the last four months. This material constitutes that portion of the existing world-wide body of information on railroad accidents and their prevention that I would like to bring before this inquiry.

Oct. 4, 1979. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). p. 57243.

Announcement is made of the availability of a report describing the occupational training received by employees of certain U.S. railroads. The employees work in operations, maintenance, and inspections. Announcement is also made of the availability of a report covering 125 rail accidents which occurred in 1978. Included is a brief description of the probable cause(s) of each accident.

Oct. 11, 1979. NTSB. p. 58820.

Discussion of co-ordination among agencies responding to an accident involving dangerous materials. Refers specifically to a March, 1977, derailment involving radioactive material and an April, 1979, derailment (Crestview, Florida) involving

flammable materials.

Oct. 11, 1979. NTSB. p. 58821.

Discussion of the Crestview accident. Two tank cars of anhydrous ammonia ruptured and rocketed. Twelve other cars containing flammable and/or pressurized materials ruptured. One ammonia car ruptured due to mechanical damage inflicted by another car during the derailment. The rupture allowed all the contents to escape at once, creating a cloud of vapors that reached as far as 650 feet from the wreckage. The fragments of the car came to rest 900 feet apart.

About 20 minutes later, a second car ruptured violently due to the heat of the fire. As a result of this and similar accidents, the Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA) is carrying out research into new approaches for controlling pressurized flammable liquefied gas releases from breached tanks of bulk transport vehicles.

Oct. 11, 1979. NTSB. p. 58821.

A detailed analysis is given as to the causative factors in the Crestview accident, and research programs that are underway to prevent this type of accident in the future are described.

Nov. 1, 1979. NTSB. p. 62973.

In this report, the board notes that certain safety problems have not been solved even where the solutions were known and practical. As an example, the report discusses retrofit of the hazardous material tankcar fleet to prevent puncturing of the ends of cars during accidents by overriding of the coupler from the next car. The major safety corrections required are "shelf couplers and headshields, as well as the less urgent need for thermal insulation" to prevent thermal rupture when neighboring cars are on fire following an accident.