

Why the difference? - Jean Bird, member of CUPE 3586

The Pembroke Observer
Sat Jun 16 2012
Column: Letters to the Editor

It is a strange time to be a union member! It seems that union members are now responsible for the current woes of the world. They must be made to "pay up or else."

Renfrew County is in a dispute with 22 of its union employees; a dispute, not a negotiation. Nonunion full-time employees have been granted a benefit called long-term and short-term disability. This provides some relief for them during both illnesses of 17 weeks or less, and also long-term catastrophic events.

When the Ontario government downloaded the workers of CUPE Local 4989 they also had a similar benefit. Their new employer, the County of Renfrew, freely bargained a collective agreement that kept this benefit. Now, two years later, CUPE 4989 is simply trying to keep a benefit that they have earned through time while their employer is trying to take away what they have already given to non-union workers. Why the difference?

These 20 women and two men provide service to numerous residents in Renfrew County. It's time for us to show our appreciation for their work and to support them. Visit the picket lines; talk to the workers. Contact your County Council member and ask them to resume negotiations that include keeping what has previously been given.

This is not about greedy people seeking huge wage increases during a time of restraint. This is about ordinary union workers seeking from their employer the same protection that has been given to their non-union co-workers.

A proud member of CUPE 3586,
Jean Bird,
Beachburg, ON