

January 14, 2008

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Assault on your Wallet**Taking your money**

The financial impact of the company's bid to shift its costs onto you is remarkable. After years of us helping our paper by accepting inflation-only raises and higher costs on benefits, the company is attempting a breathtaking raid on our pocketbooks. We've done the math, and checked it more than twice. It's very scary. At the end of the day, the least affected of us will suffer an annual financial loss of at least 5%. In most cases, the loss will be much more.

Real-world examples

Here are some results of our calculations of how deeply the company agenda will damage real employees in real jobs. We've used real 2006 income and benefits information of real employees, and projected the impact of the company's agenda. Our model assumes every employee will be sick 6 days a year. We based our model's assumptions on the conservative side; we fear the actual impact will be even higher.

- Classified sales rep (regular hours): 4.9% loss
- Ad co-ordinator (day shifts, little OT): 5% loss
- Copy editor (some Sundays): 7% loss
- Payroll co-ordinator: 8% loss
- Electronic imaging technician (some Sundays): 11.3% loss
- Reporter-photographer (regular hours): 13.8% loss
- Reporter (hockey beat): 14.3% loss
- Columnist: 17.3% loss
- Reporter-photographer (regular Sundays): 29.6% loss

The takeaways

We've shared some of these in our previous bulletin, #13, which focused on Editorial. But here's the list of attempted takeaways that will affect every employee in every department. Take a deep breath:

- **Sick pay:** The first three days you are off sick will be unpaid. If you are sick longer, including on short term disability, you will only get 75% of your pay, instead of the present 100%. If you are absent for a different health reason, the same cycle starts again: First three days completely unpaid, etc.
- **Drugs:** A \$200 deductible, which means you have to spend that \$200 before any drug costs are covered.
- **Group Health:** The company now pays most of your premiums (for full-timers). We pay \$4 weekly. The company now wants you to pay 40% of its premium cost, or \$18.19/week for family coverage.
- **Dental:** We now pay 25% of the company premium; they want us to pay 40%. Single coverage would go from \$2.19 to \$5.59 weekly; family coverage would go from \$14.85 to \$23.04 weekly.
- **Pensions:** No base year upgrade. No pension for new hires -- this means the Star's own contribution costs for the pension plan will increase.
- **Biweekly pay:** No more weekly pay.
- **Downloading:** Any future health taxes or such government moves will be paid by employees only.



- **Split shifts:** Your work day could include a 3-hour unpaid break, or several shorter ones.
- **Sunday pay:** Gone. Period.
- **Overtime:** Double time gone.
- **Overtime:** Per-shift overtime gone. Instead we'll have weekly overtime. Days you don't actually work – a holiday, a sick day – won't count toward your weekly hours. This means you could work a 12-hour shift, say, and not be paid any overtime at all. And get this: The first 5 hours of overtime a week will be paid at straight time, not time and a half. You'd only get time and a half for hours beyond 40 hours a week.
- **Schedules:** Posted 2 weeks in advance, not 4. Penalty for changing shifts without notice cut to 1 hour's pay.
- **Night shift premium:** Will only apply to those scheduled to work past 8 p.m.
- **Merit pay:** The company will be able to reduce or eliminate existing merit pay.
- **New hires:** No Star pension. Seniority will no longer determine the order of layoffs; "aptitude" would – as determined by the company. No schedule penalties or shift differentials. Could be forced to work staggered shifts, of different lengths and start times, in the same week. Shorter lunch breaks. New hires in these jobs -- as Librarians, Editorial Assistant, Advertising Switchboard and 3 jobs in Finance -- would have dramatically lower salaries than existing staff.

Strike vote

Calling all members: Our strike vote meeting begins Wed. Jan. 16 at 5 p.m. at the Westin Harbour Castle, across the street from 1 Yonge.

Guild Bargaining Committee

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