

The APS National Council

This coming weekend, October 25 and 26, delegates from all regions of the country will be meeting in the Toronto area for the annual gathering of representatives arriving from all locations where APS is present.

The decision makers of our Association are preparing to undertake a major discussion on the orientation of APS. Solidified with a five year agreement for its working conditions and a ten year deal on the costs of marginal benefits, the Association of Professionals and Supervisors of the CBC will now tackle the question of the professional status of its members at the upcoming National Council. Two very different sources of inspiration will lead the way: the new openings in our collective agreement and the debates before the Canadian Industrial Relations Board.

The CIRB

Two different unions in the two Networks of the Corporation have been bitterly contesting for eight years now the very definition of our association by claiming APS positions under the allegation that they belong more to the universe of technicians rather than professionals. This inter-union attack has incurred tremendous costs for APS as well for the Guild and CUPE.

However, there exists a revealing imbalance concerning the means at the disposal of each party. The two claimants figure amongst the richest organizations in the country, while APS is an independent union composed only of employees from the CBC. CUPE is the biggest union in Canada with a half million members (500 000) while the Guild is a branch of the Communications Workers of America which numbers seven hundred thousand members (700 000) in North America. The two giants have united their efforts to claim, each on its side, a major portion of the APS membership which is made up of a modest 700 members. To date, APS has succeeded in bringing down the total number of claims from some 500 to approximately 200 for both Networks (approximately 125 in the English Network and 70 in the French Network). In both files, the moment of truth is fast approaching to face a case-by-case formal Hearing before the Board. That option, as costly as it is, has always been supported by APS which has taken the stand to defend the professional status of each and every one of its members.

This is the option that needs to be reviewed now that we are on the eve of the showdown before the Board. The National Council will coincide with the end of the mediation efforts prescribed by the Board in both Networks to attempt a peaceful settlement to the dispute. The last mediation meeting will be held in Toronto on October 24 while the National Council will meet on October 25. The question to be debated at the National Council will deal with the long term commitment of our union. Are we ready to maintain our actual identity, and at what cost?

The new agreement

The professional status of our members will also encounter modifications as the result of latest negotiations with the employer. Contrary to the CIRB case however, those changes involve up-grades to our status. Two major events await our members in the immediate future: the revision of jobs and the performance evaluation system.

The employer has accepted to proceed to a major revision of its job description system and the corresponding job evaluation system. This is a giant undertaking in which APS will play an important role. The definition of that role as well as our participation in the Revision Committee will be at the heart of discussions as well as questions related to its organization. Our agreement has opened the way to a strong participation in this endeavour; we now need to map the way to reach it.

For the performance evaluation question, discussions will be simpler; we will need to examine the implications of changes to the system which will now bare the title of Performance Management. On a larger scale, the whole process of job status will be reviewed. Under pilot projects and then progressive integration, there will be the advent of a new approach to be called Talent Management in which APS has accepted to participate. On top of performance systems, the approach tackles the whole question of career planning at the CBC. A stronger link will be established between performance, training and career planning. A link that t barely exists at the present time. APS has been fighting since it's founding to have a say in career planning for its members. This new project is opening this very same avenue, we need now to determine our level of involvement within the possibilities given to us by our collective agreement.

The National Council is an important forum for the orientation of our organization. Representatives from all regions of the country meet to exchange on the issues close to the hearts of Professional and Supervisors who make up our universe. This year's Toronto area meeting will also see two other events as our traditions provide for. The Annual General Assembly of Members as well as a meeting of the National Executive Council. The National Council will be held on Saturday while the two other events will take place on the Sunday. The Members' meeting will deal with resolutions submitted to the voting members of the Association while the Executive Committee will hold one of its two compulsory face-to-face meetings. Our rules effectively provide for such meeting as the other reunions are held through telephone conferences.