

## Free Press Update – Week of January 15, 2017

All of us working at the Winnipeg Free Press are keenly aware of the financial troubles the newspaper industry in general and the FP, in particular, is experiencing.

We have seen colleagues and friends laid off or leave for other career opportunities. Workers are not replaced, the product is thinner, and the news hole smaller.

FP senior management has approached the Union three times in the past year to talk about a “new relationship” or a “made-in-Manitoba” solution to the very real problem of drastically reduced advertising revenues. What the meetings inevitably boiled down to were the wishes of management to reduce our wages

and benefits permanently.

They even threatened to eliminate the carrier work force a year ago by contracting out (has not happened).

What management failed to do all three times was tell the union clearly what it wanted. Management wants the union to commit to “talking” without stating what their clear intentions are. Only after much prodding each time did it become clear the Company wanted to reduce costs and that permanent wage reductions were the way to do it.

The Union has rejected this approach to date. We believe we made concessions in the last round of bargaining in 2013 that were significant, including all new hires earning 19% less than incumbents, reduced sick time for new hires,

greatly increased pension contributions, a minor wage increase and no increase at all to carrier profit. Because of declining revenue and circulation, our ad sales reps and carriers have actually suffered a reduction in income.

The Company and its ownership have tried to bypass the Local by going directly to the national Unifor leadership to push its new relationship proposal. That plan didn't work. Unifor National told the Free Press to deal with the Local in Winnipeg.

Alone among newspaper owners, FP Newspapers has refused to offer buyouts any greater than 20 weeks. Where other owners offer incentives as great as 78 weeks, the FP buyout is no better than being laid off.

Publisher Bob Cox has announced town halls to be held this Thursday where he will discuss “A New Deal – Let's Talk About The Future”. Listen carefully to what Mr. Cox has to say. Take notes.

The Local is concerned that once again the FP is trying to bypass the lawful representation of the workers at the FP by your union and appeal to you directly. It is another example of how management never gets that “**you**” are “**the union.**”

We still have about 18 months remaining before the current collective agreements expire. We are prepared, as we did last round of bargaining, to begin negotiations early. We are not prepared to create profit by reducing wages, benefits and pension.

**Aldo Santin,**  
**President**