

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR
(Countries Outside Canada)

to the National President of the PSAC

September 21, 1997

This report is intended to cover the period of time from when I was confirmed in this position in September 1996 to date. It is important to note that I was acclaimed to the position in September 1996, there were sadly no other interested candidates at the time. There had been a vacancy in the position for approximately six months between the time of the resignation of my predecessor, Brother John Kruithof, and my confirmation by the Board in September 1996. My election to the position for a three year term took place on August 25, 1997, the initial elections in May 1997 having been nullified.

OBJECTIVES IN THE PAST YEAR

I sought office with three major objectives: to improve communication to and from the members, to increase the visibility of the region of Countries Outside Canada at all levels of the Alliance and to recruit activists for the PSAC from the region that is Countries Outside Canada. A year into the position, I am pleased to report that some important contributions towards these goals have been made. A lot of work however remains to be done for all of these goals.

Before I could get to the tasks at hand, there was a pressing need to become better acquainted with the issues. Whereas my predecessors had the advantage of having held elected office at either the Local or Component level, I was starting from the position of activist only. I was fortunate in being permitted the opportunity to participate in several PSAC training courses such as "Technological Change", "Grievance Handling", "Convention Procedures", "Public Service Staffing" in Ottawa and Hull and "Political Education Training Program" in Mississauga (all in 1996) and "National Officers Training Program in Vaudreuil" in 1997. I was also very fortunate in having excellent mentors in the past year in Sister Eunice Dubé of the National Component, Sister Heather Brooker (former National Director - Countries Outside Canada, currently serving at the Canadian High Commission in Harare, Zimbabwe) and Brother Peter Cormier (the then National Director for the National Capital Region). I would be remiss if I did not mention the support and guidance of Sister Lynn Ray of the Union of Solicitor General Employees (USGE) for special assistance during sessions of the National Board of Directors. These sisters and brother gave generously and unselfishly of their time to guide and assist me in my first year on the Board. The National President also made himself available as required despite a busy schedule and I wish to acknowledge his assistance. Many other members of the National Board of Directors, activists throughout the Alliance as well as staff members from the Ottawa and Hull Regional Offices also gave assistance. I learned first hand the true meaning of solidarity.

Networking was another important part of my educational process. In the past year, I have been able to attend a number of meetings in the National Capital Region, in part out of personal interest and to raise the profile of my region but also to become better acquainted myself with the issues.

PARTICIPATION

Here follows a list of some of the committees and activities that I have participated in, in the past year:

- Co-Chair, Collective Bargaining / General Committee of the PSAC Convention (February through May 1997, including Convention 1997)
- Labour Representative, Joint Adjustment Committee (JAC), National Capital Region (NCR) and Labour Co-Chair, Committee 1, JAC- NCR
- Alternate member, National Joint Adjustment Steering Committee (NJASC)
- Active participant, Political Action Committee (PAC - National Capital Region) and co-chair, 1997 Federal Elections Sub Committee, PAC-NCR
- Co-Chair, Regional Bargaining Conference, National Capital Region, November 1996
- Member of the Finance Sub Committee of the Solidarity Committee of the NCR
- Member of the Lesbian and Gay Support Group (LGSG) of the NCR.
- Participant at meetings (3) of Regional Leaders in the NCR as called by the National Director of the NCR.
- Guest at meeting of the Racially Visible Advisory Committee (RVAC) of the NCR
- Participant at Rights Forum, PSAC Convention, Toronto, April 1997
- Delegate to the PSAC National Women's Conference, Ottawa, November 1996

I was also been able to attend meetings and events relating to job action at the Canadian Museum of Civilisation (PSAC local), a Kingston, Ontario rally in support of the PSAC local at the Ottawa Salvation Army, rallies for the locked out workers of Bradson Security (Steelworkers Union) and events organized by the Ottawa District Labour Council (ODLC) such as the Labour Day Picnic, and meetings of their Political Action Committee as well as meetings of the Common Front meetings.

BUDGET

The annual budget for the calendar year for this position is fixed at \$10,200.00, up \$200.00 from the previous calendar year. Approximately one tenth, less than \$1100.00 has been spent from September 1996 to date. Given my initial nine month appointment to the position, it would not have been appropriate to have made significant financial expenditures. I was also fortunate in that through my employment with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), I had excellent albeit temporary access to e-mail, telephone, fax and mail privileges. The negotiation of an agreement covering union leave with pay with my employer for specific activities reduced costs to the Alliance over my predecessors for my participation in those activities. Further, a planned trip to Brussels for an educational seminar in the spring of 1997 did not materialize. That event has been tentatively postponed until late fall 1997. These savings permit a considerable portion of the balance of the funds to be remitted to the Alliance Center for reallocation.

ISSUES IN THE REGION OF OUTSIDE CANADA

Pay Equity

Pay Equity, only with the Foreign Service Directives, were the two major issues of concern to the members of PSAC in the region of Countries Outside Canada. A total of seven in house pay equity sessions were held for members during this time. Only one was held with the assistance of Alliance facilitators, the balance on our own. For members unable to attend the in house sessions, there was a need to develop a communications strategy to get the message out. Mailouts of information on pay equity (by mail and by fax), e-mail messages to all employees and personalized messages were used. Feedback was very enthusiastic, some members commenting on feeling part of the union for the first time in a long time. This is an issue where members are willing to give of their time to actively participate and this must be encouraged. The PSAC web site has become a very popular and welcome way of accessing information by members. It must be noted that not all members in our region have ready access to the Internet and their needs have to be addressed in different ways. As a member of PAC, I have participated in six rallies and demonstrations in the NCR in the past year in support of pay equity.

Foreign Service Directives

The triennial review of the Foreign Service Directives was delayed some 18 months. The Employer commissioned a fundamental "review" of the Foreign Service Directives. The bargaining agents were not granted appropriate partnership standing by the Review Committee. The Committee Chair showed contempt and disdain for members of the PSAC and the other bargaining agents during the review process. His eventual findings were seriously flawed as a result.

When the triennial review process was finally underway, Treasury Board sought a two track approach given the Revenue Canada interpretations on several FSD benefits. It was my privilege to serve as a member of the negotiating team on the employee side for Track 1 (the tax compliance issues of the 1997 round of negotiations). In June 1997, there was agreement between the sides on Track 1 issues. Agreement was delayed considerably by Treasury Board's initial insistence that there be a net reduction in the costs of benefits during Track 1. Track 2 of the negotiations are scheduled to resume on October 7, 1997. It is expected that Treasury Board will return to the charge and again seek reductions in benefits. I look forward to the challenge this stage of the negotiations represents.

I am pleased to report that I enjoyed an excellent working relationship with the members of the other bargaining agents (PAFSO, PIPS and IBEW) during Track 1 of the negotiations. There was a strong sense of solidarity and common ground was readily identified. Treasury Board had deliberately excluded the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade from the first round and I was thus the only person at the table with any personal first hand knowledge and overseas experience with the Foreign Service Directives. I was able to bring an important and positive contribution to the success of the negotiations as a result.

During the past year, the Foreign Service Directive Committee (FSDC) at the National Joint Council met on two occasions to review outstanding FSD grievances. I represented the PSAC on both occasions. It afforded an excellent exposure to the work and process of the National Joint Council. Further meetings are scheduled for the fall of 1997.

Collective Bargaining

Interest in collective bargaining is only building now as attention shifts to the activities of the bargaining units currently at the table. I foresee a need for in house information sessions and improved communication with the members on this matter in the coming months. Whereas members are very interested in learning of the outcome of the current round of negotiations, I detect a general apathy of actual involvement. My participation as co-chair at the Regional Bargaining Conference for the National Capital Region in the fall of 1996 as well as co-chair of the Collective Bargaining / General Committee of the PSAC Convention in February 1997 provided a firm grounding of the issues as well as excellent access to a network of key players.

Other issues

I have been actively involved in providing assistance of a group of some 150 rotational clerks (Crs), one third of whom are facing possible surplus notice in the coming months. Here my work in the NCR JAC and the NJASC has been of assistance. Whereas I no longer serve as an active

member of the Rotational CR Consultative Committee at DFAIT, I have maintained ties in order to keep abreast of developments in this matter. The issue of conversion of rotational (Canada based) positions for PSAC members to non unionized, low waged, reduced benefits, locally engaged positions continues to be of concern. An important resolution was passed at the PSAC Convention 1997 in support of PSAC members facing loss of employment or reduced employability. Downsizing and Alternative Service Delivery will continue to dominate the agenda for both rotational and non rotational members.

Regionalization

Testimony of the influence of the Countries Outside Canada region was shown in the ready acceptance of my participation in the work being done in the National Capital Region. The Outside Canada region has been twinned with the NCR under the new regional structure adopted at Convention 1997. I look forward to working with the Regional Executive Vice President of the NCR, Brother John Baglow, and my fellow members of the NCR regional structural working group to build the framework for this new region.

UNION LEAVE WITH PAY

I am pleased to report that I was able to obtain an acknowledgment from my Employer that any time off work to participate in the negotiations for the Foreign Service Directives (FSDs), meetings of the Foreign Service Directives Committee (FSDC), and meetings of the Joint Adjustment Committee (JAC) of the National Capital Region (NCR) and the National Joint Adjustment Steering Committee (NJASC) would be considered union leave with pay. Further, my immediate supervisors showed great flexibility in accommodating temporary absences for other meetings and functions. I detect a willingness on the part of senior management to cooperate with the Alliance. Paradoxically, there does not appear to be the same spirit of cooperation at more junior levels of management at DFAIT.

FOOTNOTE

I am saddened to report that I encountered opposition bordering on personal harassment in my capacity as National Director in the past year. The opposition came not from disgruntled members but from some present and past members of the executive of Local 70125. I cannot understand why these individuals worked to hinder rather than help me in my role. I remain mystified by their attitude towards me. Fortunately, many other members of the Local 70125 have rallied in support of my work and the detractors have been largely discounted.

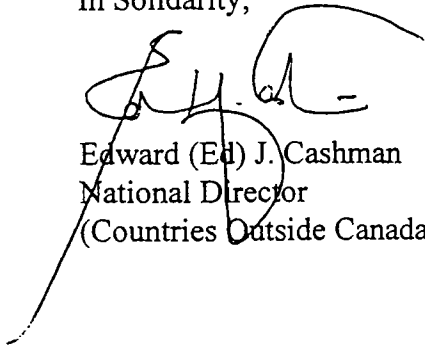
OBJECTIVES IN THE COMING YEAR

Given the immense distance factor, there is a continued need for improved and ongoing communication with members, with a particular emphasis for those serving outside Canada. There is also demonstrated need to continue the outreach to members of other government departments (other than DFAIT) who are serving outside Canada. Whereas they remain a member of their own local while on assignment overseas, they do have special needs and concerns not readily available within the confines of their local. I intend to work with the CIDA and CIC locals to ensure that all PSAC members received the support and assistance they require while on assignment overseas, regardless of their home department. There is a need for direct and deeper involvement of members in the regions of Countries Outside Canada and the National Capital Region. I am pleased to report that several members have come forward in the past year seeking to become more personally involved in the Alliance at all levels such as the Political Action Committee, the Regional Women's Committees, the Lesbian and Gay Support Group and the Racially Visible Advisory Committee of the NCR. I am proud that my position has an Alternate for the first time in a number of years. Margaret Jones was elected to the position of Alternate to the Regional Vice President for Countries Outside Canada in August 1997 and I look forward to working with her on a continual basis during our respective terms.

There remains a need to continuing my union education. I have identified several Alliance education courses that I intend to take in the coming months.

On reflection, the past year has been an incredibly rewarding time. The position involves a lot of hard work but there is great personal satisfaction knowing that one can make a direct impact to improve working conditions for the members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

In Solidarity,



Edward (Ed) J. Cashman
National Director
(Countries Outside Canada)