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PUBLISHED BY THE SYNDICAT DES COMMUNICATIONS
DE RADIO-CANADA (FNC-CSN)

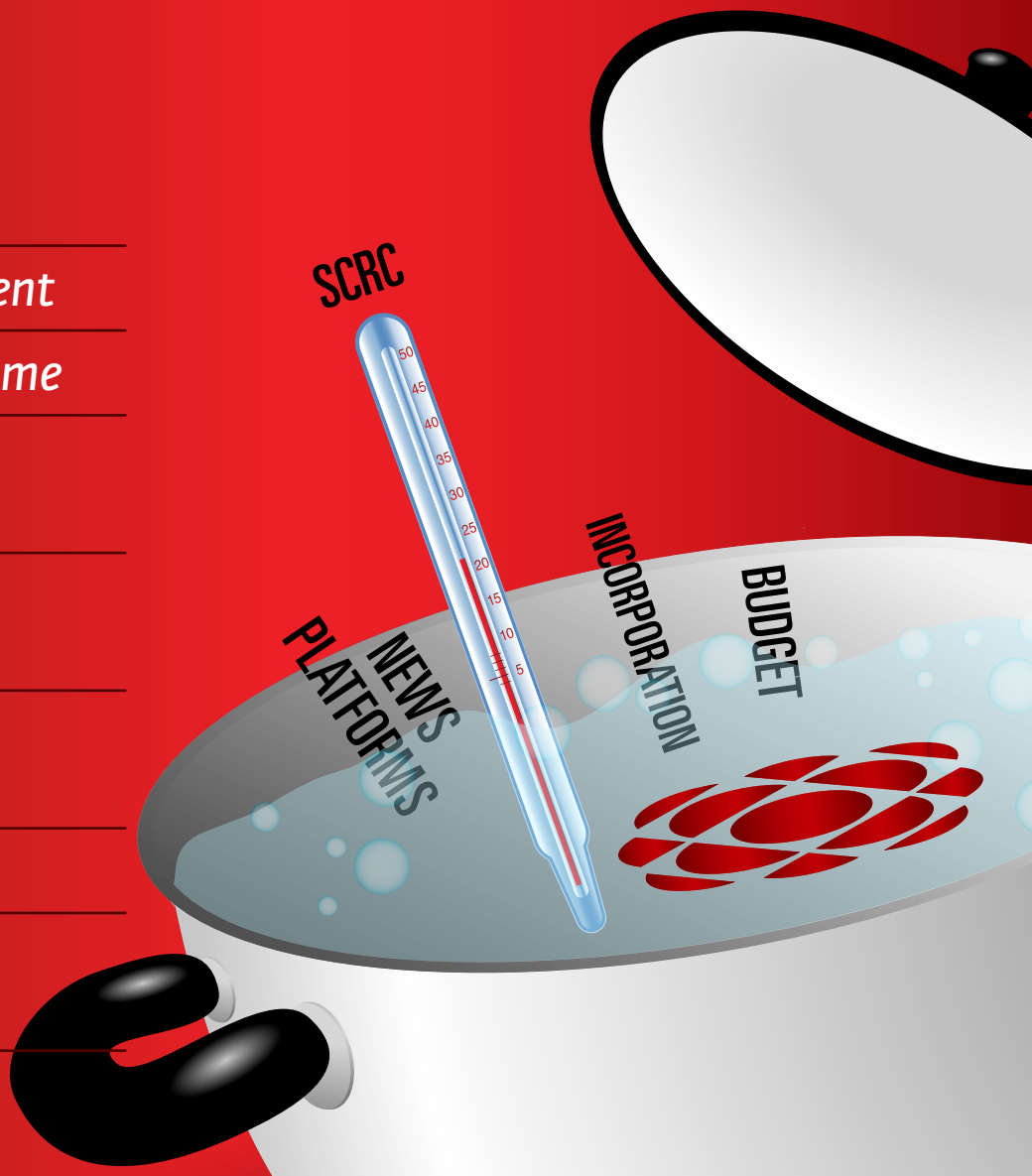
VOL. 7 NO 20 – TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2011

CANARD!



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OUTSOURCING CAPTIONING ?

On February 11, 2011, management announced that eight stenotype operator positions are being eliminated in closed captioning. Essentially, this means that closed-captioning of Canadian television and radio productions for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, which was created some 20 years ago, is now in jeopardy.

After seeing their workload tripled in an attempt to save CBC during the last four major rounds of budget cuts, employees were recently told that they would need to optimize their performance by another 37% if they wanted to compete with the private sector. Otherwise, the jobs would be contracted out to the private sector as is already the case at the CBC.

The dismantling has begun, as positions of stenotypists still working for CBC are eliminated. Reclassification of caption editors as respeakers, using voice recognition technology, as is the case virtually everywhere in television these days, runs the risk of undermining working conditions, since multi-skilling has now become a requirement in these positions.

The consequences of this transition are significant. According to Information Productions Management/Knowledge and Talent Productions, however, these cuts were essential. Management claim that we need to safeguard our mandate with deaf and hard-of-hearing members of our audience, which represents 10% of the population, not to mention the increasing number of TV viewers who read our captioning in order to deepen their knowledge of French. All for less than 1% of the production budget!

Also worthy of mention is the fact that, in order to renew our license in September 2011, the CRTC requires that 100% of our French-language broadcast schedule, including advertising, be closed captioned. Although quality has always been CBC's strength, if caption editors are constantly being asked not to spend too much time on corrections, which is how things are done in the private sector, we could end up with a team of skilled artisans running themselves ragged churning out captions just to compete with the likes of Canal V or Astral Media. The Union is not letting up on this and we continue to do everything we can to defend the rights of our members in closed captioning. There have already been several meetings and there are more to come. Our guideposts are the collective agreement and the principles of union action.

SCRC-CBC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Establishing new labour relations rules is certainly easier said than done. Despite our testy labour relations with the employer for years now, the agreement we reached after our retreat in November has taken us in an interesting direction.

In recent weeks, the Union and the Corporation have made it a point to meet with employees, Union members and management in every city (Sept-Îles and Rouyn-Noranda are scheduled for March) to explain the vision that has emerged from this agreement. The vision is based on respect and communication and Union involvement before important decisions are made regarding the organization of work.

Although there has been some scepticism, the vast majority of people consulted during this series of visits acknowledged the Union and management for their willingness to dialogue. Debates have revolved around several

issues, including integration of the Centre d'affectation, de planification et d'expertise (CAPE) in Montréal, integration in the regions, the plan to re-open the station in Eastern Quebec and work overload. These are all very important, for every single one of us.

Of course, all roses have thorns. In some cases, the discussions have been more painstaking. The hardest part will be to make CBC executives understand that dialogue is preferable to going to court or grievance arbitration. Unfortunately, in the past few days, we found ourselves before the Federal Court and the Quebec Court of Appeal to debate issues that we suggested be resolved otherwise, either through mediation in the case of pay equity or at the table where the pension fund is concerned. The old demons from the past have reappeared. Is there cause for concern? Yes! Should we lose heart? No!

“Difficulties are meant to rouse, not discourage.” - William Ellery Channing

PAY EQUITY FOR THE UMPTEENTH TIME

After 11 years of waiting and relatively unsuccessful appeals to the Canadian Human Rights Commission, we were finally hoping that we had reached the stage where discussion was possible.

Indeed, Labour Relations signed a mediation agreement with the SCRC in front of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. This agreement provided that 'exploratory' discussions would begin on March 1 in order to solve the grievance that pertained specifically to researchers and production employees, including female assistants, media librarians and librarians.

Given this breakthrough, the Union was prepared to set aside its appeal to the Federal Court, asking for a review of the Canadian Human Rights Commission's previous decision. However, the employer decided otherwise and announced that the legal proceedings would go ahead and that the mediation window would be extremely small. Disappointment... and to think we had just signed a partnership agreement to take our relationship out of the courtroom...

TEMPS : APPRAISAL, PLEASE !

The probation period for a temp is 260 days. This right to priority callback starts a little earlier, after a temp has worked 195 days. Seniority is then the determining factor in the callback ranking. However, up until the 260-day threshold, a term employee can be struck off strength.

An appraisal halfway through the probationary period was introduced in the 2004 collective agreement to make the process more civilized. Section 18.6 has not changed one iota since, but, oddly enough, there are very few line supervisors whose numbers seem to be growing exponentially who actually do the appraisal, which is supposed to be given to the employee in writing.

SCRC EVENT OF THE YEAR...

APRIL 9 IN MONTRÉAL, AT CENTRE ST-PIERRE.
WATCH FOR DETAILS IN THE MAIL !

WHAT ABOUT THIS FIVE-YEAR PLAN (DRIVING TOWARDS 2015) ?

What to make of the five-year plan...? On one hand, it talks about greater presence in the regions, an expected shift back towards culture, moving away from American series and developing new digital platforms... All promising directions.

On the other hand, management say that they will not be requesting any additional monies from the federal government. This runs counter to the Union's position: we have been asking for stable, increased multi-year funding for a long time.

In fact, CBC/Radio-Canada is actually counting on increased advertising revenue. Way to provoke private television! Basically, they are saying 'We'll do more with less' ... The Big Boss admits that he is short about \$39 million a year, simply because the government does not index current spending and no longer funds pay increases.

Furthermore, he needs \$33 million more to carry through with his plans... A good chunk of our new commitments (especially in the regions) come from a Local Programming Improvement Fund (LPIF), whose long term existence is far from guaranteed.

The slogan for this five-year plan is Everyone. Every Way. 'Everyone' except staff, that is! There is nothing in the plan for employees, other than the prospect of job loss. The proof lies in the recent elimination of positions in closed captioning. The several dozen people who are retiring will provide another opportunity for CBC: they will not replace us and others will be expected to cover our workload.

What is the future for our public broadcaster? At 75 years of age, CBC/Radio-Canada is looking old and wrinkled... and the 2015 plan contains no miraculous anti-ageing remedies.

TOWARDS VIABLE FUNDING FOR CBC

Since last November, the Syndicat des communications de Radio-Canada has endeavoured to gather your views on the issue of funding. This is part of our campaign for quality public service (Tous au coeur d'un service public de qualité). Many of you have answered our call. Visits to sections and regions with our spokesperson, Jean Dussault, are ongoing. We will be convening a big meeting in March so that we can put our action plan into motion.

10 GOOD REASONS TO DEFEND PUBLIC FUNDING FOR CBC

The public broadcaster does not compete with private broadcasters.

CBC/Radio-Canada costs Canadian 9 cents a day, each, which is less than one coffee a week.

The budget for the CBC/Radio-Canada is \$1.1 billion. It has been the same since 1997.

CBC/Radio-Canada is one of the most poorly funded public broadcasters of all the OECD countries.

The public broadcaster eliminated 800 positions in 2009 and plans to cut 100 more in 2011. We cannot continually do more with less.

We are lacking the means and the resources to offer the service our listeners, viewers and Internet users really deserve.

CBC/Radio-Canada belongs to the public and must be accessible to everyone.

The public broadcaster is essential to the preservation of a diversity of expression and a democratic space free of influence.

CBC/Radio-Canada must be able to assert itself on new digital platforms without sacrificing its radio and television.

We are at the heart of quality public service, and, so, it is ours to look after.

INTEGRATION AT THE CDI: THE LATEST ON CONVERGENCE

"The way we present information, the changes we've made in the Corporation in the past two years in order to reorganize news on both networks, have allowed us to work quickly with all platforms, to centralize decision-making about news that everyone needs to know."

[Translation] From: *Briser les silos: une entrevue avec Hubert T. Lacroix*

Spring 2010. The winds of convergence sweep across the CDI, making assignments multiplatform, and fully integrated. This was the employer's way of improving productivity in the newsrooms. By management's own admission, however, the primary objective has been to transform news, duplicated or copied onto its numerous broadcasting platforms, into a promotional tool for the CBC/Radio-Canada brand. The story becomes the content, the content turns into a product and news programs, like public affairs shows, become the clients. This is the new assignment model.

From the outset, members of the Union have expressed concern about an approach that runs the obvious risk of homogenizing news on TV, radio and the Internet (Radio-Canada.ca).

Many of us have witnessed the loss of medium specificity. The General Meeting in April 2010 adopted a resolution to preserve one assignment per medium and presented it to management, who agreed to hear the Union's complaints. We took part in this exercise in good faith in the hope of preserving the personality of each medium and mitigating the irritants that have stemmed from the CDI reorganization.

Brand first

LDiscussions have been especially difficult. Management has a habit of downplaying any problems generated by this model. To validate and support its case, the Union conducted two series of consultations in the fall, one with assignment editors and line-up editors and a second round with reporters*.

Respondents stated loud and clear that they want to go back to assignments that are specific to each of our media. The most common criticisms related to planning, follow-through with news stories and communication. Although management acknowledges the communication problems, going back to medium-specific assignments is out of the question for them. They are not budging an inch on this. The CBC/Radio-Canada brand will be expressed as uniformity, not as diversity and plurality

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Survey respondents are also very concerned about management control of editorial content. They criticized the increased management intervention in journalistic practices. The Union intends to revisit this crucial issue, which is key to our jurisdiction and to the profession of journalism. Grievances may also be brought.

Since CAPE was implemented, work overload and lack of time have become recurring problems for assignment editors. Our investigations revealed a loss of the meaning of work and deterioration in conditions of practice. Some have even gone as far as to suggest that journalistic standards and practices are threatened.

Another space for discussion

The members we surveyed report that they have less and less time to discuss the content of their stories. In response to our request, management agreed to organize a daily meeting between assignment editors and reporters from TV and radio. This new forum has the potential to give employees back their voice in the editorial decision-making process. The proof will be in the pudding. Over the months, the experience of integrated assignments has clearly shown that television imposes its choice and even its treatment of a subject on the other media. Sometimes, repeats are even strongly suggested, as is the case for Internet and Digital Services (IDS). IDS is also functioning under the model that uses features and stories from television.

Management has finally acknowledged these problems. We were told that it is up to radio desk editors, among others, to be more vigilant and to ensure that there is some different content. In management's eyes, it is basically up to the people in place to develop strategies to deal with the challenges generated by a deficient model.

SCRC EVENT OF THE YEAR...

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Inadequate corrective action

Just as a multiplatform assignment system was implemented without any real Union consultation, the ways of resolving the model's shortcomings will also be imposed.

The corrective action that management took was not enough to uphold the principles the Union has put forward in recent months at meetings between the Union committee and management, which is to maintain the personality of each of the media and to respect professional autonomy.

With this new partnership agreement in place, we were expecting to see a willingness to find some common solutions. Throughout these meetings, the Union committee has wanted to maintain an open dialogue around this. We must have allowed ourselves to get a little over confident.

A report on the committee's activities will be tabled at the next Union Council meeting to determine the next steps in the integration issue. It will also be discussed at the General Meeting on April 9.

*The results of these consultations are available from the Union on request.

THE GOLDEN WEB

At CBC/Radio-Canada, the Web is the medium of the future. It's the new Klondike. Everybody wants to be there, and to be seen there, in their own way.

Unlike radio and TV, where time is counted, the Web is a limitless space. Popular belief has it that putting whatever you like on the Internet is child's play. Not so.

It is the faithful Internet journalists who put others' content online. The requests just keep pouring in, from everywhere, with no increase in staff.

In principle, news is now integrated into radio, television and Internet, but in actual fact, Web journalists do not have the same bosses as everyone else.

Internet and Digital Services (IDS) have a lot of work ahead of themselves. They have created an editorial office: one management position and four Web editors to manage the home page for Radio-Canada.ca. They will apparently be doing data journalism.

For journalists, it's the pressure of around-the-clock news...using glacially slow tools. Journalists are not consulted about how their work is presented on the Web site. All the decisions are made on high, in the tower.

AN AGREEMENT TO PREVENT UNDERPAID FREELANCE WORK

Last November, your Union and the Corporation signed a letter of agreement about overseas assignments. The objective was to prevent young, temporary journalists negotiating working conditions with management that are below the standard set in the collective agreement and the Corporation's policy on travel for assignments abroad.

Some of you have expressed reservations or concerns about the letter of agreement signed on November 19, 2010. Rest assured that the Union's only goal is to protect journalists who are called to work overseas.

Drawing up the settlement for these grievances was quite an arduous process since both parties agreed to retain the ability for employees who are outside the country for personal reasons to go on-air if they witness a newsworthy event or want to offer a freelance piece to a current or public affairs program.

To be clear, then, the agreement reached between the parties does not preclude temps from doing freelance work while travelling abroad. What it does is prevent CBC journalists from negotiating overseas assignments with management at freelance rates prior to leaving the country.

NEWS IN BRIEF :

UPCOMING ELECTIONS... IN THE INTERNET ERA

The next elections for the Union Executive are scheduled in April this year. For the first time, members will be able to vote online.

In the coming weeks, you will receive a document explaining the voting procedures. Recently, the Union Council took part in a simulation exercise in which they voted in real time. The results of this experience were conclusive.

An independent firm will oversee the voting process. Electronic balloting will significantly reduce election costs and be more efficient.

QUÉBEC CITY :

Two TV shows are back, thanks to the Local Programming Improvement Fund (LPIF). Last summer's darling, *Les chefs (2)*, will be filmed in Québec City and broadcast on the network. A local program, *Classe sportive*, will be on the air again this coming fall. It focuses on school sports and will also be available on the Internet.

RIMOUSKI :

Plans to open a TV station in the eastern part of the province are taking shape: CJBR will be leaving St-Jean-Baptiste Street and moving to a brand new location downtown. It will be the first multimedia centre that is entirely HD. It will also be a three-headed station because while television production will be focussed in Rimouski, with teams dispersed throughout the area, radio production will be shared by Rimouski, Matane and Sept-Îles. And, in this instance, the Union is satisfied with the discussions regarding integration.



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