

## **TEAM-IFPTE LOCAL 161 THE PICKET LINE**

Picket lines are instruments of social pressure. They apply pressure to the employer to reach an agreement by making it difficult for the employer to conduct business as usual. The goal is to get back to work with a fair agreement in as short a time as possible.

They also express the collective contempt of the striking or locked out employees for those who would cross their picket line and do their work. The object is to make them feel the weight of social ostracism every time they enter the premises. Picketers may not employ physical violence, but they may certainly exert social pressure. The picket line is a barrier and a sign of the resolve of the affected employees. It is a matter of faith and morals and an obligation of conscience not to breach the picket line.

### **PICKETING: PURPOSE AND STRATEGY**

An effective picket line restricts access to a work site during a work disruption. It is the most important tactic used to pressure the employer and to promote camaraderie among members. Picketing involves the actual patrolling of employees at or near the employer's place of business during a strike or lockout.

Pickets normally demonstrate only in the vicinity of those premises that are being picketed. They should be on the move and not obstructing any members of the public endeavouring to go about their business.

Picketing is organized for several reasons:

- It slows down work and applies pressure on the employer
- It gets all members involved
- It shows resolve to the employer
- It demonstrates to the public the group's discontent
- It informs clients or suppliers of the existence of a strike or lockout
- It increases visibility
- It provides information to non-group members
- It discourages other people from going in to do our work
- It discourages dissident members of the group from working

Picketing is a strategic exercise. The time and place of picketing must be carefully chosen. The style of picketing depends on the strike action. The Strategic Action and Strike Committees determine the appropriate tactics.

## **RIGHTS OF PICKETERS**

Pickers may:

- walk around with a placard
- speak with people going through the picket line
- walk en masse in front of the access points to a property, as long as they keep on moving and do not obstruct
- make noise, speak to individuals, (but be careful not to cross the line to a disturbance or assault)
- communicate by means of the media, flyers, buttons, pickets, as long as they are not defamatory

Pickers may not:

- trespass on employer property without consent
- watch or beset a house or place, if it is not for the communication of information
- create a nuisance
- intimidate or take violent action or otherwise cause a disturbance
- act in a mischievous fashion by destroying or damaging property
- interrupt lawful enjoyment of property
- obstruct access to property
- obstruct a peace officer

## **RULES OF PICKETING**

- 1.** Do not consume anything that will impair your ability to carry out your picket line duties effectively.
- 2.** Report to your Picket Captain at the beginning and end of your assigned shift.
- 3.** Dress casually but neatly.
- 4.** Carry a picket sign and/or hand out information leaflets.
- 5.** Do not obstruct the general public from using public property such as sidewalks or roadways.
- 6.** Always be courteous when talking to the general public and focus on one or two main issues.
- 7.** Anyone attempting to cross the picket line must be informed of the strike/lockout and asked politely to respect the picket line.
- 8.** Picketers should not engage in an argument or debate concerning the strike/lockout with the person trying to cross the line. Employees covered by an essential services agreement and other non-striking/locked out employees should be informed of their right to request a management escort through the line, and asked to honour the line until they have that escort.
- 9.** If individuals insist on crossing, they must not be restrained. However, picketers should try to identify them, the firm they represent and their vehicle license number. This information should be passed on to the Picket Captain.
- 10.** Picketers should refer any questions to the Picket Captain, particularly (and especially) questions from the media.
- 11.** All problems should be reported to the Picket Captain.