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Press Clippings for the period of April 26 – May 2, 2013
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English Media

April 27, 2013

Court upholds labour laws

The Saskatchewan Court of Appeal has upheld two controversial pieces of labour legislation passed by the Saskatchewan Party government.

It upheld both the Public Service Essential Services Act and the Trade Union Act Amendment Act, citing a 1987 decision of the Supreme Court of Canada that ruled freedom of association does not "comprehend" the right to strike.

But this issue is by no means resolved.

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/business/Court+upholds+labour+laws/8303929/story.html>

Ruling boosts fairer labour law

A ruling Friday by the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal that upheld the Wall government's essential services law and amendments to the Trade Union Act no doubt comes as a blow to unions in the province, but it also paves the way for fairer rules that serve the wider public interest.

Even though the ruling penned by Justice J.A. Richards all but invites a further appeal to the Supreme Court, the relatively low-key reaction by Saskatchewan Federation of Labour president Larry Hubich suggests that the province might yet end up with reasonable provisions on essential services provided by public sector employees.

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/news/Ruling+boosts+fairer+labour/8303969/story.html>

April 29, 2013

Winds of change blow through broken legal system

It's expensive, slow and unfair to poor but fixing the problems won't be easy

Like any other conference delegate early Saturday morning, B.C. Supreme Court Chief Justice Robert Bauman sat making notes at a standing-room-only panel discussion.

But he didn't crack a smile the first time guffaws erupted at Sam Muller's punch line - that the biggest hurdle to legal innovation was the complaint: "That infringes on judicial independence!"

<http://www.calgaryherald.com/news/Winds+change+blow+through+broken+legal+system/8308408/story.html>

April 30, 2013

Good time for labour olive branch

Appropriately, there was no victory lap for the Saskatchewan Party after Friday's Saskatchewan Court of Appeal decision upholding its essential services legislation.

The Court of Appeal ruled 5-0 against Court of Queen's Bench Justice Dennis Ball's assertion that the government's Essential Services Act, Bill 5, went too far and infringed on "freedom of association".

<http://www.leaderpost.com/news/Good+time+labour+olive+branch/8315353/story.html>

May 1, 2013

Conservatives' move to control negotiations at Crown corporations part of broader agenda for public service contracts

The Conservative government's move to control the mandate of contract negotiations between Crown corporations and its employees is part of its sweeping plan to make the pay and benefits of all federal workers more affordable and in line with the private sector.

In the last budget the government signalled an overhaul in way it manages its \$43 billion a year payroll, and this week unveiled legislation that would give it some of the tools to help it get there. Its plans include giving cabinet the power to oversee collective bargaining and the right to appoint a Treasury Board representative at all rounds of negotiations.

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/business/Conservatives+move+control+negotiations+Crown+corporations+part+broader+agenda+public/8323475/story.html>

Harper tightening the reins on CBC, Via Rail and Canada Post

The federal government is taking a harder line on collective bargaining, giving itself sweeping new powers to steer independent Crown corporations on their negotiations with employees over wages and benefits.

The main targets are the CBC, Canada Post and Via Rail.

The little-noticed measures were detailed for the first time in a budget bill introduced this week, and early reaction from labour groups is running from bewilderment to outrage, particularly from workers at the CBC.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/harper-tightening-the-reins-on-cbc-via-rail-and-canada-post/article11645749/>

Public Sector vs Private Sector Union Membership by Province

Statistics Canada figures on union membership confirm the story. About 30% of paid workers belong to unions, down from about 35% in the early 1990s. But these numbers are distorted by the disproportionate weight unions have in the public sector. In 1999, about 75% of Canada's public sector was unionized.

<http://www.fcpp.org/index.php>

May 2, 2013

Ottawa's new public service plans include turfing poor performers

Conservative plans for public service reform include a focus on turfing poor performers as the government girds for a fight with "union bosses" and defends proposed new powers over independent Crown corporations.

Treasury Board President Tony Clement triggered strong reaction this week after telling The Globe and Mail that new cabinet powers over Crown corporations will be used to "key in on" spending at Canada Post, the CBC and Via Rail. But the minister also outlined plans for changes within traditional government departments that he said can be implemented outside of the collective bargaining process.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawas-new-public-service-plans-include-turfing-poor-performers/article11671798/>

Province insists union pay millions for ‘cost they put on taxpayers’

As the Tory government vowed to go after the AUPE to recoup millions of dollars incurred in a wildcat strike, union leaders banded together to warn the province it could “poison the well” for future labour negotiations.

Premier Alison Redford said it cost about \$1.3 million a day to contract police officers, RCMP and other service providers to fill in for striking workers during the five-day walkout.

The province has also filed a separate application to stop the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees from collecting union dues from members for up to six months, a legal remedy under provincial legislation.

<http://www.calgaryherald.com/news/alberta/Province+insists+union+millions+cost+they+taxpayers/8324469/story.html>

Union defends not filing grievance on behalf of SFL employee

The union representing an employee with the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL) who claims she was bullied and harassed by her boss Larry Hubich defended its decision on Wednesday not to file a harassment grievance on her behalf.

Heath Smith, the shop steward with the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) local 4828, told the Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board that Cara Banks, an executive assistant with the SFL and the union's president, failed to follow the process outlined in the union's collective agreement when she sent her grievance directly to the SFL's executive council rather than go through the union.

<http://www.leaderpost.com/business/Union+defends+filing+grievance+behalf+employee/8324822/story.html>

Why Tories would be willing to fight election over civil service showdown

Government is betting it can win over the private-sector middle class by taking on the public-sector middle class.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/globe-politics-insider/why-tories-would-be-willing-to-fight-election-over-civil-service-showdown/article11674672/>

Feds threatening journalist independence of CBC under new power over wages, benefits, collective bargaining, say critics

The government is threatening the journalistic independence of the CBC with legislation that will give Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his Cabinet power over CBC collective bargaining with unions representing several thousand news and current affairs personnel, MPs and critics say.

The government move, which will give Cabinet control over all aspects of contract settlements with its employees, comes as five of the CBC's six collective agreements are set to expire prior to the 2015 federal election and the other, which expired last September, is under negotiation.

<http://www.hilltimes.com/news/politics/2013/05/01/feds-threatening-journalist-independence-of-cbc-under-new-power-over-wages/34568>

CBC wants meeting with feds on Harper Cabinet's new powers over CBC's collective bargaining

A Hill Times review of annual reports from nearly one-third of Canada's federal Crown corporations and union contract terms for three of the biggest—the CBC, Canada Post and Via Rail—raises questions about the timing and intent of legislation that will give Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his Cabinet unprecedented control over Crown corporation collective bargaining.

<http://www.hilltimes.com/news/politics/2013/05/02/cbc-wants-meeting-with-feds-on-their-new-powers-over-collective-bargaining-in/34571>

Revamping public-sector job performance system may threaten job security

The Conservative government's plan to revamp its employee job-performance structure could threaten one of the cornerstones of working in the public service, job security.

The Globe and Mail reports Treasury Board President Tony Clement wants to strengthen the "performance management" system used to assess employees.

<http://ca.news.yahoo.com/blogs/dailybrew/revamping-public-sector-job-performance-system-may-threaten-181556392.html>

Médias Francophones

2 mai, 2013

Ingérence politique des conservateurs à Radio-Canada?

Les critiques s'accumulent contre la volonté d'Ottawa de s'insérer dans les négociations des conventions collectives entre ses sociétés d'État et leurs employés. Les défenseurs de Radio-Canada/CBC s'inquiètent particulièrement d'une éventuelle ingérence politique dans les affaires du diffuseur public.

<http://www.ledevoir.com/societe/medias/377168/ingerence-politique-des-conservateurs-a-radio-canada>