



Ken Neumann
National Director/ Directeur national

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STEELWORKERS STAND BEHIND STRIKING CANADIAN ACTORS: *ACTRA NEGOTIATIONS PLUMMET*

TORONTO – United Steelworkers' (USW) National Director Ken Neumann said Tuesday that the first strike in 64 years by Canada's film and television performers would not have begun if independent producers recognized the value they get from Canadian performers.

"Some producers have already come to their senses and signed interim agreements with the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA,) which allows current productions to continue," said Neumann. "But the Canadian Film and Television Production Association (CFTPA) is reacting by threatening to take ACTRA to court, not only calling the agreements illegal, but even calling into question ACTRA's right to represent actors."

USW and ACTRA have a formalized strategic alliance that includes working together on public policy, organizing, education and mutual support in the case of labour disputes. The alliance was signed at the USW International Convention in April, 2005.

Neumann said CFTPA's actions call into question its commitment to ensuring that current productions are able to complete their schedules.

"The CFTPA's position is about as destructive as it gets," he said. "Producers can demand all the tax incentives and preferential conditions they want, but without actors there isn't going to be a show. These workers must be paid fairly for their talent and skills."

With a major sticking point being use of performances in such new media as the
United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union
Syndicat international des travailleurs unis de la métallurgie, du papier et de la foresterie, du caoutchouc,
de la fabrication, de l'énergie, des services et industries connexes

800-234 av. Eglinton Ave. E., Toronto ON Canada M4P 1K7 - 416-487-1571 - 416-482-5548 (Fax/Télec.) - www.usw.ca

internet, the two sides were unable to reach agreement on how residuals would work.

“The future of our careers is based on how payment is made down the line,” said veteran Canadian actor Eric Peterson. “Performances are like styrofoam. They last forever – on film, on DVD and now the internet. We don’t work for free in movies or on television, and we won’t work for free on the internet.”

Neumann said Steelworkers will support ACTRA in any way they can for as long as the dispute continues.

“If there are picket lines we will be there. This is about Canadian culture and Canadian workers’ rights. It’s as simple as that.”

In Canada, the USW represents more than 280,000 men and women working in every sector of the economy. (www.actra.ca; www.usw.ca)

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CONTACT: Ken Neumann 416.487.1571; 416.558.2510