



ACTRA

**CHOOSE
A ROLE**


MEMBER


INDUSTRY


PUBLIC

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 **BACK**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear colleagues, fellow ACTRA members:

Monday, January 15, 2007 - We enter the second week of the first strike in ACTRA's history. Talks are going on behind the scenes. Sensible people are doing their best to craft a deal and to stabilize the industry, but the negotiators for the trade associations of the producers are taking us to Superior Court in Ontario to argue that ACTRA has no right to strike, and to contest our status as a trade union. They want to claim that they made ACTRA fold.



This is certainly not something to celebrate and there's a lot of cause for apprehension. Speaking personally, I'm not happy we had to go this far in our fully committed attempt to get a fair IPA deal, and I never planned to be in the Chair for ACTRA's first-ever strike. But that is the grand sum of my own unease. I can tell you that everyone involved in these negotiations, from the members of our awe-inspiring committee, the entire National Council, all the essential staff involved from ACTRA's Toronto and Montreal Branches and from our National office, our world-class head negotiator and our legal counsel have had their own moments of anxiety. We are human; we recognize the responsibility resting upon us. We have to live up to the trust of all our members. Yet I can tell you that when we look back over some very difficult days we are all fully behind our actions.

Everything and I mean everything about what we are doing is right. That, in spite of the fact that the lawyer for the associations stooped so low in December as to taunt our chief envoy with the challenge to, "Go ahead, take them out, I know you want a strike!" On our side we kept saying we wanted to negotiate, and we made a last ditch attempt for five straight days and through the final night of January 7. Over those days we made some real progress in the difficult areas of fact-based or lifestyle production, we made huge steps to encourage homegrown Canadian lower-budget production while keeping fees and future rights guaranteed for our members and we crafted better rights for our differently-abled performers.

What brought us to an impasse was the following. When the producers dropped their ludicrous and offensive initial demands for rollbacks of up to 25% for most of the work produced under the contract and they started admitting that our proposals for general increases and other basic improvements were fair talking points, we became optimistic. Then, in the final hours, they insisted that everything we still hoped to resolve was reachable IF we would give up some small things: the rights to proper payment for work made for new media and the rights for use of any work (even that done under all predecessor contracts!) to be distributed without limit on the internet through any means of display including, as we suspected, television-accessed internet movies and series, coincidentally (?) announced by Apple the very next day.

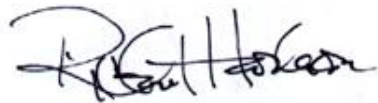
We realized long ago that the 25% discounts demanded in October had been a ruse to put us off the scent of what was really going on. What came down in the pre-dawn hours of January 8 was a ransom demand. If we wanted any general increase, any better working conditions or improved access to audition opportunities that they had agreed were essential to a professional workplace, any better protections for the security of our minors and background performers and any recognition that ACTRA members are not second rate performers on a set - then we had to offer the "flexibility" of giving up on creating some regulations to protect our rights in the unregulated world-wide domain of the internet. It was a ransom demand. And we could not proceed.

In our response to the producers' Final Offer we countered, as we said in early days, that new media and Internet uses are a new untested frontier for all performers and producers. We offered to take part in a joint committee with the associations, sharing the costs of expert consultants, to undertake a one-year study into how to lay groundwork in our contract for this new leading edge of production. We suggested putting that huge project off to one side while we finalized the complex deal that included all else. That was a very fair compromise offer and it was flatly rejected. They wanted their terms or no deal. That ultimatum followed unequivocal statements from two very respected and honourable people representing the most powerful entertainment conglomerates in the world that their companies would not work in Canada without the flexibility that they needed for unlimited versioning for digital outlets. That is a large universe of distribution. Sooner or later it could be everything.

So we heard the threats, we understood the ransom demand, we consulted with complete frankness amongst our whole committee and staff advisers, and we said we could go no further. We said we were ready to negotiate again at any time. And we announced our valiant strike. Our intent still is to get a deal and to keep this industry a fair place for everyone.

To be continued...

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Hardacre', written in a cursive style.

Richard Hardacre
National President
ACTRA