

Chinese Epoch Times nabs newspaper thief

Perpetrator claims he is justified in throwing piles of papers in the garbage because they are free

By ANDREA HAYLEY
Epoch Times Staff

Staff from the Chinese Epoch Times newspaper in Vancouver have been working overtime in recent weeks conducting stakeouts to catch vandals and newspaper thieves who appear to be bent on damaging their business.

This week a man was caught on camera removing stacks of newspapers from a box and throwing them in a nearby garbage bin. Last week, staff recorded a man on video taking entire bundles of newspapers home.

Chinese Epoch Times staff believes the paper is being targeted because some people don't like their independence and uncensored approach.

Founded in 2000, the Chinese Epoch Times is an independent Chinese media that, unlike many other media, does not shy away from topics sensitive to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Running their business has not been easy. Seen by the CCP and its supporters as a detractor, it has been a challenge for the Chinese Epoch Times to win advertising revenue from Chinese clients who worry about raising the ire of the Party. Despite a lack of real repercussions, Chinese are generally very sensitive to a perceived need to toe the party line.

And the Chinese Epoch Times, which is affiliated with English language and 15 other language editions globally, does not toe any economic or political lines. The Epoch Times prides itself on being broadminded, reporting fairly, and upholding human rights and freedoms should the need arise.

It was out of the desire to protect people's right to read the Chinese Epoch Times that Vancouver general manager Christina Liao asked her staff to keep watch on a box at Victoria Street and 41st Avenue for vandals and thieves. In one week alone, staff members were forced to replace one box four times due to vandalism.

On March 11, Chinese Epoch Times distributor Ms. Sun witnessed a man removing piles of newspapers and throwing them in a garbage bin. Ms. Sun quickly took a picture and confronted the thief, saying, "Stop stealing newspapers"



A man stands near the Chinese Epoch Times newspaper box before taking piles of papers and throwing them in the garbage bin to the left of the picture. FANY QIU/THE EPOCH TIMES



Constable Brendan Ellis retrieves some Chinese Epoch Times newspapers from the garbage bin. FANY QIU/THE EPOCH TIMES

as she approached.

To her surprise the individual punched at her camera, damaging it, before fleeing. Ms. Sun followed the man into a nearby store where she called 911 and was able to talk to a Chinese-speaking police officer. She said that once the perpetrator realized she was speaking to the police, he swiped at the phone, knocking it to the ground.

After Constable Brendan Ellis, who had been dispatched by 911, appeared on the scene, the assailant fled out the back door but was caught and questioned by the officer.

The man argued that he was not doing anything wrong since the Chinese Epoch Times is a free newspaper. But the newspaper's management says taking over 35 of its newspapers and throwing them

in the garbage is not reasonable, even if the paper is free.

Cases of newspaper theft and vandalism of Chinese Epoch Times newspaper boxes have been reported in most major cities in North America, including Montreal, Toronto, and New York. In a case in Los Angeles in February 2005, police arrested a man for removing over 1,000 newspapers daily from boxes.

Prior to his arrest the man, identified as Mr. Lum, attempted to run over a Chinese Epoch Times cameraman with his pick-up truck. A dramatic 10-minute armed standoff with police ensued before the man was arrested.

In California it is unlawful for anyone to remove, take, or appropriate more than 25 copies of the current issue of a free or a compli-

mentary newspaper if done with the intent to deprive others of the opportunity to read or enjoy the newspaper.

The perpetrator in Vancouver was issued a stern warning—should he commit a crime against the Chinese Epoch Times in the future, the newspaper would lay charges.

"The man involved was spoken to and understood that he could be charged with an offence if he commits a crime against The Epoch Times," said Constable Lindsey Houghton, Vancouver police media relations officer, in an e-mail.

Ms. Liao says her office often receives tips from readers and members of the community regarding people who have been seen either vandalizing boxes, using the paper for purposes other than reading, and/or stealing papers.

She believes it is very important for those involved in damaging her business and the rights of their readers and advertisers to receive a warning. "The most important thing for us is that we want them to stop," she said.

Ms. Liao also thanked the police and public for their assistance and hopes they can help the Chinese Epoch Times to prevent further incidents.

"The Epoch Times is valuable," she says. "Only in The Epoch Times can people find the valuable info related to everyone in China ... they do business there. They want to know what is really going on."

"Most people believe that people have a right to read the newspaper," she said.

First Nations University faces its demise

By MATTHEW LITTLE
Epoch Times Staff

PARLIAMENT HILL, Ottawa—First Nations University of Canada faces an uncertain future after the federal government maintained its decision to cut funding following years of governance problems that have plagued the institution.

Indian and Northern Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl said after years of promises and "hopes and prayers for things to change," the federal government can no longer send taxpayers' money to fund Canada's only Aboriginal-owned university.

"It is just a myriad of things, there is no one specific incident," said Strahl when asked if there was some fundamental issue the government was waiting to see addressed.

Liberal House leader Ralph Goodale says the lack of funding is a tragedy for aboriginal students attending the university because many will end their post-secondary education rather than continue on in another university where there would not be the same cultural sensitivity.

Goodale holds that a new plan for the university to hand over control of its finances to the University of Regina and its appointment of a new, smaller and non-political board of governors address the key concerns the government had.

"It seems to me that that is a very credible plan."

FNUC, which has campuses in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Al-

bert, has been plagued by problems including missing scholarship funds and an overly large board of governors that racked up lavish expenses. The university was put on probation by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada in 2007 following the firing of several staff members.

Many problems at FNUC have stemmed from political intervention by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) which owns the university. Recently elected to helm the federation, Guy Lonechild has worked to correct those problems and told reporters last week he doesn't know what else the government wants him to do so that funding can be reinstated.

The federal and Saskatchewan governments both announced they were cutting their funding of the institution last month, though Rob Norris, Saskatchewan's minister of advanced education, recently put the province's \$5.1 million in funding back on the table and hoped Ottawa would do the same with its \$7.2 million.

But Strahl said it was just too little too late.

With the future of FNUC uncertain, Saskatchewan is looking at other ways to fund students to attend other universities and Norris has said the province's \$5.1 million is nothing to scoff at. FNUC could get proposal-driven funding from the federal government, though such funding makes it difficult to run a university because it must be applied for annually.

Rowdy parliament could keep talent away, warns MP

PARLIAMENT CONTINUED FROM P1

"If they are ignored, they will leave and not run and all you have is a group of people fighting with each other where politics trumps public policy."

Martin might be one of the most outspoken on the topic, describing some MPs as "petulant pre-pubescent children," but others have also raised the issue. One of the most informed on the issue is NDP MP Joe Comartin.

Comartin says question period has been particularly bad for about 20 or 30 years with successive governments doing a great deal more obfuscating than answering.

"Here, the standard joke is it is question period, not answer period."

He says the decorum in Canada is a far below that in England, Australia, and New Zealand, our closest political cousins, which have a very similar parliamentary system but vastly different political cultures.

"In those three legislatures, they actually do get answers," he says.

Television helped shape up those parliaments, Comartin explains, because they added rules to curb the worst behaviour of MPs. Unfortunately, despite a special committee that made similar recommendations here in the 80s, nothing was changed.

"It was always bad, as it was in those other legislatures. But when they knew TV was coming in, they changed their rules so their populace wouldn't see them misbehaving, and it worked."

"We just never passed the same kind of legislation that I think would have had the same effect here."

In those parliaments, MPs actually seem to respect each other, he says.

"The exchanges that go on there are one professional person to another."

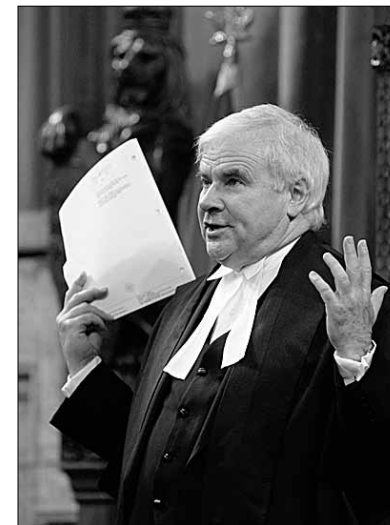
Another marked difference is that while MPs in Canada may shout insults and allegations during an opposing member's comments, in those parliaments such conduct is dressed down by the Speaker of the House, who acts as a referee for debates. Canada's Speakers typically take a hands-off approach, a problem Comartin campaigned on when he challenged current Speaker Peter Milliken for the position.

While the Conservatives have taken a lot of heat for partisanship in the House, Comartin says the Liberals were just as bad when they were in power.

But while Milliken may take a hands-off approach, Comartin says the Speaker has also urged the committee responsible for setting the rules of Parliament to work on stronger regulations to guide his hand in debates.

"He has urged us to do it and we have not picked up on those urgings," says Comartin.

But Martin doesn't quite agree with his NDP colleague. He believes a large part of the problem has to do with the way the media focus on the



Speaker of the House of Commons Peter Milliken speaks in Parliament, March 13, 2008. REUTERS/CHRIS WATTIE

clash of the day rather than the substantive matters that are the real work of Parliament.

He believes if the media focused more on the MPs proposing good ideas and ignored the attack dogs that grab headlines, such behaviour would begin to fade away.

"Our public is not being served well by Parliament and this spiral of negativity continues to descend."

He noted a visit by a British Parliamentarian to Canada who was appalled by what he saw in our Parliament.

Martin says MPs need to put more effort into finding ways to work with each other, coming up with good ideas to address the country's ills and less effort into attacking each other and finding ways to bring the other side down.

"Without that, he says, debate will continue to spiral downward and fewer of Canada's brightest minds will be willing to enter public office. And without those bright minds and constructive debate, fewer and fewer Canadians will turn out to exercise their right to vote—a right Canadians have given their lives to defend.

"That is the big tragedy."

And with all that negativity, Martin says people with ideas don't get the attention they deserve—either from the media or their own party. Rather than rewarding the politicians with the good ideas, party leaders are often more inclined to reward those that toe the party line and lead the attack against their opposing politicians.

"We support and reward bad behaviour," he says.

CORRECTION

The article "Tainted additive could trigger huge food recall" in the March 11-17 edition mistakenly stated that President's Choice Honey Mustard Southwest Ranch Veggie Dip had been recalled. In fact it was President's Choice Honey Mustard flavour Pretzel Nuggets that was recalled.

Disabled workers await decision on Nortel deal

NORTEL CONTINUED FROM P1

That amount, he adds, would go a long way toward "addressing our issues" with the disabled workers Health and Welfare Trust, which has a shortfall of \$100 million—money that was supposed to pay for disabled employees' future income and medical needs.

Burns says when he bought his long-term disability plan through the Health and Welfare Trust he wasn't aware that it was a form of "self-insurance" paid by Nortel itself rather than an outside company.

"So when Nortel goes bankrupt the first shock we find is that our pensions have been rejected, and second is that the long-term disability insurance is not really insurance, it's self-insurance, and when Nortel goes bankrupt so does our insurance."

Those who paid into the trust were supposed to be covered until age 65.

Former technology highflyer Nortel filed for bankruptcy protection in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, last January. In June, the company announced it would discontinue operations and since then, most of the company has been sold.

Anne Clark-Stewart, a Nortel pensioner who was formerly on LTD, says that although she was aware that her LTD benefits were self-funded, many other employees were not.

"In recent years, Nortel had been

quite clear in all of its benefits documents that the LTD benefits were self-insured, but many people were under the mistaken notion that it was a fully funded insurance as they paid a premium to have it topped up from 50 percent to 70 percent of base pay."

'[Nortel's] moral responsibility is what is in question, but unfortunately the law is silent when it comes to the morality of providing disability benefits.'

— Anne Clark-Stewart

Clark-Stewart, a spokesperson with Nortel Retirees and Former Employees Protection Canada, says Nortel set up the health and welfare trust according to the legislation in place at the time and provided coverage as legally required.

"Their moral responsibility is what is in question, but unfortunately the

law is silent when it comes to the morality of providing disability benefits," she says.

Of major concern to all groups, adds Clark-Stewart, is a "loan" for \$36M that Nortel made from the trust. They want that paid back in full, not at a discounted rate once the assets are distributed.

Financial analyst Diane Urquhart, a member of the group's legal team, says LTD employees shouldn't be asked to give up their right to the money that is missing from the Health and Welfare Trust.

"This idea that they waive their right to access that difference of what's not in the fund is a serious matter," she says, adding that it's "absurd" that the LTD employees are being asked to settle for just 8 percent of what is owed.

The 12,600 pensioners involved are on the whole satisfied with the proposed deal, as are most of the disabled employees, according to Sue Kennedy, the court-appointed representative for the approximately 400 Nortel employees on LTD.

Kennedy said in a statement that the group that opposes the settlement does not represent the wishes of the vast majority of LTD employees.

She said that if the agreement is not approved in court on March 3, there will be several negative consequences, including losing the \$12 million allocated to disabled employ-

ees in the settlement.

The Liberals, New Democrats, and the Green Party have all called for changes to Canada's bankruptcy laws so that former employees of failed companies like Nortel don't lose their pensions and disability benefits when the company goes under.

LTD employee Connie Walsh says that back in the glory days of the 1990s, Nortel was "an amazing company to work for." She says she's "dumbfounded" over the way the company is now treating its most vulnerable employees.

"It goes against all human instinct to prey on the disabled and the elderly—the weak of society."

After spinal tumour surgery, a post-surgical stroke, and paralysis, Burns is left with severe chronic pain. His medicine costs \$3,000 per month.

"I do not have the option to stop taking these drugs or even to stop paying for them," he told the court on March 3.

Unless the court rejects the proposed settlement, he is not sure what the future holds.

"If this deal goes through I'll have to give notice on my apartment—I can't afford to live here," he says.

"They want us to go into social housing and that kind of stuff, but I've always been self-supporting, I've always looked after myself, and I've always done something to make sure this didn't happen...."