



# STAR BULLETIN

CEP LOCAL 87-M, SONG

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## Still Wrong

Company swiftly rejects  
plan to stop outsourcing

*Quality of Star brand  
in jeopardy with loss  
of page production*

Company executives this morning rejected the Guild alternative to its plan to outsource production of The Toronto Star. This means the full range of newsroom layoffs of editors and designers will proceed, along with the other layoffs in the library and among editorial assistants.

In some ways even more alarming, we have grave fears for what this move will mean to the quality and brand name of our newspaper. The company will now send the layout, production and much of the editing of almost every page we produce to PageMasters, the low-paid start-up subsidiary of Canadian Press, which the Star partly owns.

It turns out the company has been working on this plan for four years. Instead of our highly skilled, veteran corps of designers and editors — the people who set the tone for our paper every day, the best in the business — we are now to join such diminished newspaper chains as Post Media and the Sun's Quebecor in contracting this crucial work to a junior outfit that pays half what we do. And we'll be giving this other outfit far more pages than any other paper has done; the company plan is to keep just page A1 in-house. No other quality paper has dared to outsource so much of its print lifeblood.

New computer banks and renovation plans have already arrived at PageMasters' cramped King St. location. PageMasters has for a month been training the first wave of editors and designers who will be handling the Star pages. These are not veteran editors; some are recent community college graduates. To compare these folks to our superb veteran crew — to claim, as the company does, that the results will be just as good as what we've accomplished over the years — is absurd and, frankly, insulting.

Our industry-leading ability to turn our paper around on a dime, to turn such breaking news drama as our award-winning coverage of the Danzig St. block party mass shootings into

next-day newspaper gold, will be severely compromised. We just won't be as nimble, as creative, as fast and as smart as we've always been. This is a clear and present danger to our brand.

As for our alternative plan to save jobs and the pages, we found and presented just last Friday a proposal that would have saved the company, at a conservative minimum, \$1.46 million in reduced costs, as opposed to maximum company plan cost reductions of \$1.12 million. Our proposals included an end to night differential, the move of four Page Editors from full- to part-time status, and rigorous use of flex-hour arrangements that apply only to Page Editors. We also identified another \$383,000 in unaccounted company plan costs associated with dealing with PageMasters and another \$862,000 in one-time savings through reduced VSP payments.

The company basically said the increased efficiencies we found — because we know the workflow best — don't count, because it has ideas that will save additional money, too. The company said it doesn't believe we can do the job with the number of people we said could do it — this of a Guild alternative team that runs the page desk and controls its scheduling. The company said that since, in its view, the known elements of the two plans are "a wash," meaning roughly equal, that it wants all the risk of variable costs — future page or section reductions, that kind of thing — to be carried by PageMasters. We challenged that notion, to no avail.

Finally, the company told us it has made a "philosophical decision" that editing, page design and layout isn't something we need to own anymore. Given the critical role our editors and designers have always played in building the Star brand, we just don't get that one.

Bottom line? Today's decision has been planned and moved forward ever since the Star, Globe and Mail and La Presse bought Canadian Press.

Ahead lies a major reorganization of the newsroom that will turn every department here on its head, at the peak of summer vacation and with suddenly depleted staff. Good luck with that.

Oh yeah, bargaining negotiations: They resume Monday May 6. Stay tuned.

*Stuart Laidlaw, Star unit chair, and your Guild stewards*