



**OSSTF District 10
District Council
Human Rights Officer Report
January 14, 2013**



*I may disagree with what you have to say, but I shall
defend to the death your right to say it.*

- Voltaire

Human Rights...yours to protect.

Bill 115 is an excellent document to use as a starting point for a discussion of “human rights”.

All too often, issues unrelated to Lambton-Kent life are brought forward for discussion and action. Sadly, all too often nothing happens...at least in open appearances. Even if some national issues emerge that are also present at the local level, little teacher participation occurs. A good example is the *Idle No More* movement. The events in Syria should be enough to raise the voices of educators...but nothing happens.

However, Bill 115 really hit a sore spot among teachers across Ontario. Perhaps it was because “*This time it is personal*”. Although similar situations arose in British Columbia and Wisconsin, many teachers showed little interest. Even the recent Michigan vote about [and I love the wording] *The Right To Work* has not upset teachers as much as it should have.

Bill 115 brought many of the problems other people were experiencing home. Perhaps we became too complacent when others were being stripped of “workers’ rights.”

Martin Niemöller, the outspoken critic of Adolph Hitler said it best:

*First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out--
Because I was not a Socialist.*

*Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out--
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.*

*Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out--
Because I was not a Jew.*

Then they came for me--and there was no one left to speak for me.

Too often people say...*"That can't happen here...That can't happen to me."* Well...one day we had a rather loud awakening call: Bill 115. Look what happened to teachers...by a democratically elected government in the Western World...and by a political party which we duly supported.

I'm surprised at the comments made by many people outside of the teacher profession...that *"It's about time the government did that to teachers"*: wage freezes, loss of sick days, no negotiating, et al. Do they not realize...no matter in what field of employment they are...it can happen to them? Do they not understand the last line of Niemöller's poem could easily apply to them: *"Then they came for me--and there was no one left to speak for me."*?

The agenda [not the content] of Bill 115 could be setting the format across Ontario (and elsewhere) for the whole organized Labour Movement.

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