Teacher Disciplined for Leaving Work to Participate in Protest Without Permission



A school district issued a letter of discipline to a long-tenured, highly regarded music teacher for leaving work to participate in a public protest against budget cuts on school grounds. The union grieved but the Ontario arbitrator held that the school had just cause to discipline. The teacher's claim that the Principle gave him permission to take part in the protest lacked credibility. Nor was the protest over school budget cuts protected activity under the Chart. The simple fact is that the teacher left work during paid time without permission, took school property with him—steel pans that he banged during the protest—and deserved the moderate, measured and restrained letter of discipline he got from his bosses [*Toronto District School Board v CUPE, Local 4400*, 2020 CanLII 98762 (ON LA), December 14, 2020].