



# off the shelf

## ***Newsletter of Vancouver and Gibson Public Library Workers***



### ***Members gathered for the Ratification Vote on Nov. 30, 2003***

One hundred and sixty members of CUPE 391 showed up at an auditorium at Robson Square to overwhelmingly vote YES for ratifying the Memorandum Of Agreement between the Vancouver Public Library and CUPE 391.

*Pick up a copy of the Memorandum Of Agreement from your workplace for details*

**With a well-trained, resourceful and imaginative staff, an adequate budget and public support, a public library can become what it should be - a university of the people offering a liberal education to all comers.**

- UNESCO's original Public Library Manifesto, 1949.

*One-hundred years from now it will not matter what kind of car I drove, how big my bank account was, or what kind of house I lived in – but the world might be different because I was important in the life of a child.*

- Anonymous.

There is a perverse inverse relationship at work in our province – when it comes to fundraising, the younger the child on the brochure or bus shelter the better. When it comes to funding, the bulk of the money goes to programs for older kids and the people who work with them.

Take our education system. The best paid are high school teachers. Next are elementary school teachers. Last, by a long shot, are preschool teachers (a writer in *The Province* noted that in B.C., zookeepers are paid more than daycare and preschool workers). According to many educators I've talked with, this hierarchy extends to professional esteem. As one high school teacher sniffed at me, "It takes a great deal more expertise to teach grade ten physics than it does to teach finger-painting." (His wife, by the way, is a certified early childhood educator. Go figure.).

Of course, professionals who work with very young children are doing far more than "just finger-painting." Research overwhelmingly shows that the window of opportunity to effect the most dramatic changes in a child's life is in the preschool years. While many parents are quite capable and eager to be their child's first teacher, all can benefit from some professional help – usually found in licensed preschools and

daycares, where staff have specialized training in cultivating the intellectual and social development of the very young.

The problem is that the dividends of early childhood education are not immediately or easily seen. This is why it was relatively easy for the provincial government to slash subsidies recently for

daycares and preschools, in spite of the evidence of the future benefits to society of increased access to such programs. And here's where all of us at the public library come in, and one of the reasons why the work we do is so important. By offering well-stocked collections, fine-free children's cards, free literature-based programs, and services like "Books to Go" and daycare cards, we are

fundamental supporters of early childhood education and educators. We are making an important difference in the lives of children.

I am impressed by the support VPL staff show for children's services. The library is one of the only institutions I can think of where even the youngest child can approach any staff person and be treated with the same respect accorded an adult. For preschoolers, this identification with the library as a welcoming place with friendly faces, where people listen and take their needs seriously, will impact them for life. We can all take pride in the exemplary service we provide for kids.

**by D'Arcy  
Stainton**

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In this light, and as union members, I think it is incumbent upon us to extend our support to the largely non-unionized and poorly paid early childhood educators in this province. Consider writing your MLA – the government needs to be held accountable for its failures to address the needs of the youngest and most vulnerable members of our society, and the professionals who work with them.

Remember – when you are dealing with a screaming child, picking up books left on the floor by a flustered parent, or listening to (or singing) “The Wheels on the Bus” for the umpteenth time – take a deep breath. You are, after all, helping to change the world.



*Daniela welcoming members to meeting on Nov. 30*

***Libraries are some of the glories of the world. They are full of information, they have comfortable places to sit and read, and they are managed by people who know what they're doing and are actually pleased to help you. Almost every town has one, and I've yet to enter one that wasn't worth a visit.***

**from *A Vineyard Killing* by Philip R. Craig**

**Submitted by retired VPL Librarian, Sheila Brown**

# History of CUPE 391

by Peter DeGroot

"On February 24, 1931 a meeting was called to organize the staff of the Vancouver Public Library into an association. Miss D. Fisher, as acting chairman, called meeting to order. The following officers were elected:

President - Miss Sarah Fisher  
Secretary - Miss Isabel McTavish  
Treasurer - Miss Marjorie Sing

It was moved by Miss Robertson that we try to raise \$50 to take out a contributing membership in the America Library Association. The same matter was to be taken up at a meeting of the Library Board the first Friday in March.

A discussion followed as to the nature of this organization whether it be purely for business or combine social. The matter was not settled. The meeting adjourned."

- the first minutes of the Vancouver Public Library Staff Association.

The Association met in the tea room regularly to establish a constitution, to examine implementing a medical service plan, to create a staff bulletin, as well as to

form a Red Cross committee to support others.

Miss Margaret Black, on behalf of Vancouver Public Library Staff Association, submitted an application to the Joint Council of Public Employees, British Columbia Division in the spring of 1944. The joint council accepted the application and the labour movement truly began for the staff of VPL on November 16, 1944. One of the first battles the incorporated group took on was preventing the confiscation and destruction of all "Nazi publications".

On May 12, 1950 Vancouver Public Library Staff Association joined the Nation Union of Public Employees (NUPE). The local union number was 391. The executive of the time who took the association to the national level were

Mrs. Olive St. Clair Raymond - President  
Betty Harris - Vice-President  
Mrs Ruth Lemon - Recording Secretary  
Doreen Mosely - Treasurer

NUPE merged with NUPSE (Public Service) in September 1963 to form the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). Our local number remained 391 as we became members of the country's largest union on September 23, 1963.

In 2002, the staff of Gibsons and District Public Library signed their first collective agreement and officially joined CUPE Local 391. The incorporation of a sub-local was a first for the organization.

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CUPE 391 remains true to the original roots of the labour movement and the goals set out by the VPL staff association. We follow our constitution, work at getting improvements in working conditions and

employee benefits, communicate with the membership, assist those in need and fight injustices. Local 391 is the largest library union in British Columbia and proud to be a member of CUPE.

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Anne Dodington and Constance Devine handing out ballots for the vote on Nov. 30

## ***Memorandum Of Agreement***

## ***Highlight:***

***An increase of 2.5% each year for the next three years,  
and an increase of 3% on April 1, 2006, for a total increase  
of 10.5 % over the life of the contract.***

# 2003 CUPE National Convention

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## *An Election Of One President , And A Tribute To Another*

by Ed Dickson

At the Canadian Union of Public Employess National Convention held in October, 2003, the delegates elected **Paul Moist** as our new National President. The Winnipeg, Manitoba resident has served on the National Executive Board as a regional Vice-President, and will do a good job for our union.

The union owes much to his predecessor, the retiring **Judy Darcy**. In twelve short years as our National President, she has moved this union forward on many fronts, and has had the unique ability to reach out to different groups within our large and diverse union, to connect on a personal level.

During Judy's twelve years as president, CUPE grew by 125, 000 members, bringing the total up to 535, 000 members, making it the largest union in Canada.

Darcy has enjoyed many victories during her tenure, but points to the halt of the privatization of Hydro One in Ontario as the most significant. "We stopped the biggest privatization in canadian history..." said Darcy. "It was a turning point in defeating the Harris/Eves government."

Judy was president of CUPE Local 1582, Metro Toronto Public Library, from 1984 to 1989. From 1988 to 1989 she served a year as First Vice-President of CUPE Ontario Division. In 1989 Judy was elected to the National Executive as National Secretary Treasurer for two years. In 1991 she was elected National President, and served with distinction for the next twelve years.

Judy is married and is the mother of one son who attends UBC. The family has bought property on one of the gulf islands, as well as home here in Vancouver.

I cannot picture Judy being idle for long or, as one Toronto Sun columnist quipped upon hearing of her retirement, "staying home to make jam in her gulf island retreat." I suspect this former library worker will be active again very soon, and I look forward to the possibility of Judy entering public life here in B.C. Heaven help whomever tries to take Judy on. Just ask the former government of Ontario.

***A safe, efficient and satisfying workplace will provide employees with:***

- ***A variety of tasks in their job***
- ***The ability to participate in making decisions regarding their job***
- ***Knowledge of good body mechanics***
- ***Training in the correct use of equipment***
- ***Supervision and training that emphasizes safe working habits***
- ***Programs for early recognition and rehabilitation of injuries***

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***Support a livable wage for workers harvesting coffee in underdeveloped countries by encouraging your favourite coffee outlets to purchase only Fair Trade Certified coffee beans.***

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## **Environmental Awareness Report**

*by Keith Edwards*

### **A few quick facts about the dangers of salmon farming:**

**Disease:** High concentrations of fish in open net cage pens provide the perfect conditions for breeding disease. The density of fish within a farm can cause disease to rapidly spread throughout the farm and potentially to wild salmon populations.

**Antibiotics:** Farmed salmon tested for antibiotic residue have been found to have higher levels than other farm animals. When people eat farmed salmon these residues can be passed on to them.

**Waste:** There are currently over 85 open net cage fish farms operating in the coastal waters of British Columbia. The average salmon farm produces raw sewage roughly equal to a city of 500,000 people.

Despite the facts, the salmon farming industry is refusing to change their practices. Consequently, the Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR) has been attempting to negotiate with grocery store chains and restaurants for over a year. The goal is to encourage a transition that will phase out the sale of farmed salmon to the public until the salmon farming industry reforms its practices. Many retailers, including some health and natural food stores, are refusing to listen to the facts.

### **Take action now at**

<http://www.wildcanada.net/farmedanddangerous/fax.asp> and send a letter to Safeway and Whole Foods, a sample of the stores that insist on selling farmed salmon. Tell them your concerns about farmed salmon and demand that they, and their suppliers, offer safe alternatives.

For more information check out  
<http://www.farmedanddangerous.org>

## **Taxes**

**By Gerard Batty  
Secretary-Treasurer CUPE 391**

Taxation – it is a word that conveys to most Canadians a sense of powerless frustration, endless anxiety, and limitless anger. In short, taxes are almost synonymous with swear words in our present society where citizens say the ‘F’ word as frequently, viciously, and casually as they mention the ‘T’ word – taxes. But the Canadian people have every right to show a lack of devotion to something that is time and again ‘promised’ as a benefit and in the best interest of some or all of the people. The sad reality is government at all levels, from federal to municipal, have mismanaged the very hard-earned revenues earned by its citizens and have lived too long accustomed to the concept of ‘easy money’ and spending recklessly. The result – a 3.5 trillion dollar debt – that’s approximately \$115,000 per citizen which works out to about \$250,000 per taxpayer owed as debt for no fault of their own other than to follow the rules of the land and to respect the governments’ running of our affairs. Ladies and gentlemen we have been betrayed! This onerous debt which we must pay for, but did not create, now costs the nation 33% of the total value of all goods and services produced in a year (GDP) – and that’s just to pay the interest! How much worse will it be when interest rates rise again! Don’t think superior productivity will somehow save us from a rapid decline in living standards either. Before the ‘so-called’ previous period of economic growth from 1997-2001 the total debt was 3.0 trillion – and yet today it stands at 3.5 trillion. This means that even during the ‘good’ times the nation’s debt grew about 100+ billion dollars a year. The governments, rather than change its irresponsible ways turns to its favourite scapegoat – the people. Governments increase taxes that already exist, while devising new taxes to expropriate even more from its people – and all this is under the all-encompassing promise that it is for our benefit – not theirs. Here is a partial list of taxes Canadians pay:

- 1) environmental taxes**
- 2) telecommunication surcharge taxes**
- 3) utility taxes**
- 4) sin taxes**
- 5) road taxes**
- 6) travel taxes**
- 7) school taxes**
- 8) gas tax**
- 9) property taxes**
- 10) PST**
- 11) GST**
- 12) payroll taxes.**

*In the feudal era the exploited peasantry had to pay 20-50% of what they produced to their respective controlling lordships. Today, the average Canadian pays that much or more in taxes. Look at your own situation. If at the end of the month you have just enough food, clothing and shelter to survive on with little else – then my friend congratulations you are a slave!*

**“ In general, the art of government consists of taking as much money as possible from one class of citizens to give to the other”**

**- Voltaire, Philosopher, Historian**

So do not be so naïve as to think that most of the taxes you pay actually goes towards the public good. The reality is that with each passing year less and less of what we pay in taxes goes towards the public good but instead goes towards the past, present, and future spending sprees of a select few. There are only a few taxes that as ‘slaves’ we can manipulate to our advantage. In the next issue of ‘Off The Shelf’ I will reveal some strategies we can all follow to reduce the taxes or ‘plunder’ we all pay to the feudal masters of our present day.



## **CUPE NATIONAL CONVENTION**

### **An Outsider's Point of View**

**by Elaine Dickson**

I had the wonderful opportunity to go to Quebec City, while my husband, Ed Dickson, attended the CUPE National Convention on behalf of CUPE 391. So I took a weeks vacation time, saved my pennies and bought a ticket to Quebec City.

I call myself an "outsider," but Ed has been involved in this union since shortly after he joined the library in 1994. He has been involved in other unions for most of his working life. He is actually a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation CUPE member, as his father and grandfather both worked for the city as well. I have never worked in a union environment so my views are slightly different from his, makes life interesting,

With his work in the union, I have met Peter DeGroot and Heather Inglis previously, but never had the opportunity to meet Kristy Hennings. I must let you know that none of them ever made me feel like an outsider, they listened to my views and I was always included in any discussions that they had regarding what had transpired during that day's activities.

We flew out of Vancouver early on Saturday morning with Kristy. Our flight was direct to Montreal, and then we had to transfer to another plane to get to Quebec City, a small Dash 8 that rattled on take-off. We all arrived safe and sound, and waited for Heather, who arrived 5 minutes later via Toronto. We all crammed into a little taxi for a "memorable" ride into Quebec City. I guess when you are on a flat rate, you better make as many as you can.

We arrived at the Hotel Loews de la Concorde, in the early evening. Peter DeGroot, your fearless leader, had already checked in. So we all unpacked and met later in his room. The convention was set to start on Monday morning but your 4 representatives were already talking

strategy. Even during dinner, they were talking about the upcoming week and they all seemed

very excited about what they were facing in the upcoming week. They all knew, prior to attending, that this was the year a new president was to be elected. Judy Darcy was stepping down after 12 years as the National President.

Sunday morning started early for them all with a Library Workers Sectoral Meeting, registration and translator pick ups, then a few hours of free time before they were back to the Conference Centre for a CUPE BC Caucus. A late dinner, more strategy and then plans to meet again early the next morning, for coffee and a muffin.

Every day started the same for the 4 representatives you sent, coffee and something to eat, at the Second Cup that was across the street from the hotel, no heavy expensive breakfast for them. They met at 8:00 each morning, and didn't return to the hotel until after 6:00 each evening. The conference was scheduled to occur from 9:00 am until 6:00 pm, and they were there for the WHOLE time.

We knew prior to me going, that we would not have much time, if any, for sightseeing together, but I used my time to see a part of the country I have not seen before. For anyone who has never been to Quebec City, take the opportunity – it is beautiful. Something I found out while I was there, pedestrians DO NOT have the right of way and the drivers do not wait for you, you had better be able to run!

I had the opportunity one day to take a sightseeing trip out to the countryside. Well, knowing that there was no way I could get Ed to come with me (never even asked him), imagine my surprise when the van pulled up to the Convention Centre. Three other ladies arrived to take the tour as well. Thinking they must be spouses as well, I asked, and was very

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did you see today?" I knew that they wouldn't have the opportunity to see the city, so I made

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surprised to hear that only one of them was a spouse of a delegate. The other 2 were representing their Alberta locals, one being a vice president and the other a newly elected president. They are attending this conference on behalf of their union, and the union has paid for all their costs. As far as I am concerned, if you want to sightsee, take an extra day before or after the conference, on your own time. You are being paid for your time there so you are on UNION TIME.

I can tell you that your chosen representatives never engaged in anything like this. They were there before 9:00 am every morning and were probably about the last to leave every night. On the odd day when I met Ed for lunch, many people left the building before I saw any of the 4 of them and they were always anxious to get back after lunch. Comments were made to them from other delegates, that they were impressed that all 4 were there, all the time, ready to represent their local to the best of their ability.

Even after the daytime events, there were other events happening that all of them attended. Pink Triangle, Equity Conference, Youth Conference, and noontime March on National Assembly (somehow I got roped into this one too), CUPE BC/Alberta Social and the Tribute to Judy Darcy. I was able to attend the Equity conference which was very interesting, despite not having a translator, and the Tribute to Judy Darcy.

I heard her speak during the march on the National Assembly, where CUPE was taking opposition to changes that Jean Charest was considering. I now understand why she is so well thought of by all the CUPE members. She has recently moved to the Lower Mainland and if she decides to go into provincial politics, keep an eye out for her, she will go far.

Most evenings, we all met for dinner, Quebec has some wonderful food. I think they were living the experiences of the city through me. It was always "What did you do today?" or "What

sure that I had lots to share. Six rolls of film later and many tourist booklets, it was a trip I will never forget. I met many new people, was exposed to things I have never experienced and I learned a lot about union workings.

Be proud of the executive that you have elected, they worked hard on your behalf. This was not a vacation for any of them; the whole time was about the National Convention. I know in the past, that comments have been made regarding what happens at Conventions, and despite the pact that they all made at the beginning of the adventure; I have not told any secrets. They worked and worked hard. Every day was a 9 – 10 hour day, not including any evening events.

Thank you, Peter, Kristy, Heather and Ed too. I had a wonderful time and a vacation that I really needed. Even though I am an "outsider", you never made me feel like one. You work hard and are very conscience of the job that you have been elected to do. Keep up the good work!

See you in Winnipeg!? Winnipeg, eh, will have to think about that one.

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***CUPE BC is interested in doing  
some organizing with First  
Nation individuals.***

***A conference will be held in spring  
2004 for those who sign up to be  
involved in this new CUPE BC  
initiative.***

***Contact [cupe391@vpl.ca](mailto:cupe391@vpl.ca) or  
604-322-4879 for more information.***

## **HIV/AIDS a pandemic in Africa**

"So extensive is this crisis," said Stephen Lewis, UN Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS, "that recent famines have resulted from the deaths of thousands of farmers and farm workers who have died from AIDS."

In his message to CUPE delegate Lewis told of addressing one crowd of several hundred people in which countless orphaned children were being nursed by grandmothers because the "middle aged have been wiped out" by this crisis.

"The virus targets woment," Lewis explained. "In a group of 10 million infected people, aged between 15 and 45, 67 per cent are women and girls."

He had praise for Canada's recent decision to allow the export of generic AIDS drugs to Africa, describing it as a "spasm of rationality". These drugs are three to five times cheaper than brand name drugs used by people living with the virus.

CUPE members and locals pledge to raise \$500,000 towards the recently established Stephen Lewis Foundation aimed at defeating this African pandemic.

CUPE local 391 would like to make a donation to this foundation with the endorsement of the executive committee and the membership.

- This article was forwarded by Peter DeGroot from the **CUPE National Convention Newsletter**



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Happy  
Holidays

**Thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue of Off The Shelf.**

Your humble editor:  
Lorne MacDonald