



# off the shelf

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

### *President's Report - 2004*

*by Peter DeGroot*

It has been an incredible year for CUPE local 391. Eleven months ago your Executive Committee spent a full day planning what we wanted to accomplish on your behalf during the coming year. At the end of that day we had established eight concrete goals. I would like to address each of these goals now, and address some of the other accomplishments made by your union committees.

Our first goal was to successfully complete the bargaining process. Through forceful negotiations under the guidance of our National Representative Jim Gorman, CUPE 391 was able to achieve one of the best contracts in recent memory. We did need to enter mediation to work through the issues around Sunday operation, and the final product was a collective agreement soundly endorsed by the membership. Dramatic improvements were made to wages, benefits and standards of work – all which will be enjoyed by every member of this union. Thanks to Marya, Ed, Audrey, Doug, and Claudia.

Improving communication, increasing member participation and strengthening committees was our second goal. Our webpage, with thanks to Stuart, has been used in new dynamic ways over the past year. Our minutes have been posted in a timely manner and relevant information such as our constitution and our collective agreement are just a click away. Our newsletter, Off The Shelf, under the editorial helm of Lorne, has continued to inform and entertain the membership. E-mails have been sent out on a regular basis to let you know what events and activities have been occurring. The surveys that you filled out last September helped us greatly in letting us know how you wanted to participate in this union and led to initiatives such as pizza at general meetings and rearranging meeting agendas in priority voting order. Committees were strengthened as we sent people for training at various labour schools over the past year through our education team of Kristy and Andrea.

Goal three was to establish a positive working relationship with our new director Paul Whitney, with the LMT and with the Board. I campaigned last year saying that I prefer to operate in a co-operative manner and to this end things may have gone slower than we might have liked. We have thorough discussions on issues brought to the table. There is a high degree of respect to this union from all members of LMT and from the Board based on the thoughtful manner in which the members of the union/management committee present themselves at all time. This is not to say that there have not been differences in opinion, arguments and heated debate, because there has been. Yet even when most passionate, your union representatives have been extremely professional. I'd like to thank Ed, Gerard, Audrey, Kristy, Andrea and Mark for their exemplary work at the union/management table.

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Re-evaluating the shop steward network and responding to this re-evaluating was our fourth goal. This is an on-going goal for our union. We sent two people for shop steward training in the autumn, and sent eighteen people to the CUPE BC Library Workers Conference in the spring. We will continue to offer opportunities to our present and future shop stewards. I would like to thank all of the members who have acted as our communication link to each worksite in their role as CUPE 391 shop steward.

Our political action committee set a goal of informing the membership of electoral reform and educating the membership on issues surrounding the up-coming election. The PAC team has had articles in Off The Shelf, attended the Think City workshops, sent out e-mails on events as they arise and let people know the vital importance of electing people who will be advocates on behalf of the public library. I owe much thanks to the entire committee.

Goal six was to focus on part-time and auxiliary issues through the executive liaison, Andrea. This committee has had a slow start and now is in full energy mode. The joint union/management committee has been struck and will be working hard over the next six months to address the list of issues that you have raised. The committee is still in need of more members, and full-time staff are welcome to join too. Again, many thanks to the staff who work so hard on this committee.

Continue to integrate Gibsons into our local 391 was our seventh goal. To this end our constitutional committee spent considerable time revising our constitution to clarify and strengthen the working relationship our locals have. Thanks to Thomas, Vivian, Peggy, Laura and Lisa for their commitment to getting a document that will stand us well for years to come.

And our eighth goal was to successfully defend the union's position on "Area Services Plan Next Phase." This was a carry over from your previous executive. As you are aware, the union created a response to LMT's report which I presented to the board on your behalf. We did not lose any members and we saw the creation of the new Public Service Managers positions – positions kept in the bargaining unit. Our work on the Area Services Plan sets a template for our response to the changes being proposed for Central Library. We are voicing our opinions, seeking legal guidance and diplomatically working our way through this far-reaching plan. I know that your next executive will continue to work on Central changes as one of their primary agenda items.

As well as these goals, there are several accomplishments that I would like to draw your attention to:

- Presence in numerous Peace Marches.
- Acknowledgement from the Pride Society for our "Big Banned Books" entry in this year's pride parade.
- Donations to the Food Bank, to The Centre and to the Stephen Lewis foundation.
- Sending flowers and support to our members in need.
- Speaking out on library issues at the CUPE national and provincial conventions.
- Creating a new "Executive Handbook" outlining the responsibilities of the executive officers.
- Getting our members ready for retirement through courses and through parties.
- Visiting every worksite either formally or informally over the past year.
- Getting our financial house in order with much work from our trustees and secretary treasurer.
- Being there to respond to your needs.

I could go on for a very long time about our collective accomplishments but I'll stop for now. I've given much thanks in my report but there are two other groups that I'd be remiss not to acknowledge. Your executive committee of Ed, Audrey, Gerard, Mark, Wendy, Lisa, Peggy, Kristy and Andrea have been phenomenal. They have always been there for me and this union. The other group I must thank is you, the membership. I have been so greatly moved by the support that you have given me, the smiles when I tour through worksites, the insights you freely share to help me make decisions. It truly has been joy to work for you over the past year. Thank you all for making me even more proud to be a member of CUPE local 391.

## **CUPE BC LIBRARY WORKERS CONFERENCE 2004**

### **PANEL DISCUSSION: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

#### ***2 reports from 2 CUPE 391 members***

By Daniel Conway

On Friday morning conference attendees took their seats in the Tiffany Ballroom of the fabulous Burnaby Hilton still ablaze from Bill Richardson's Thursday night opening speech. The topic of discussion was recruitment and retention challenges in libraries as seen through the eyes of Management, the Union, a Librarian who left the public library arena for academia, and a library school student.

Paul Whitney, City Librarian of our own VPL commenced the discussion by detailing the difficulties faced by this organization as many of its librarians are nearing retirement or being lured to academic institutes and financially fertile American interests.

Next up was Simon Fraser Librarian Nina Saklikar who chronicled her reasons for leaving the public library realm. She felt there was a lack of room for initiative and job security when she left VPL 10 years ago. She recommended that Unions continue to fight for wage increases and perks that enrich the quality of the job (i.e.: preservation of the 9 day fortnight).

Doug Sprenger, President of Cupe 951 – University of Victoria, submitted that regardless of the throngs of people interested in living the library worker's lifestyle, the retention of clerical workers is equally important to that of librarians due to the symbiotic relationship between the two. He underscored the need for a reasonable workload and healthy working environment to benefit all.

A rollicking flurry of debate from the floor was ignited when student, Jennifer Bradley, admitted that she is first concerned with finding a job as opposed to what conditions, perks, and security the position holds. All in attendance were reminded to never take quality wages and working conditions for granted, as they will never be received if there are not enough employees who care to fight for them. RISE UP!

By Hank Einarson

A forum on issues of recruitment and retention for libraries is bound to bring up contentious issues. During the CUPE BC Library Workers Conference, from March 11 to 13, 2004, four panelists, including VPL's Head Librarian, Paul Whitney; former VPL librarian Nina Saklikar; former Burnaby Public Library Library Assistant, Jennifer Bradley; and Doug Springer, the union president of CUPE local 951 at the University of Victoria's MacPherson Library, presented their views on these issues.

The speakers all had valuable and potentially controversial things to say about recruitment and retention.

Paul Whitney led off. He pointed out that recruitment and retention are shared responsibilities between the bargaining unit and management. He did not see recruitment problems at VPL, but he felt recruitment was very different for rural and remote libraries. His honest feeling regarding VPL, at least, was that turnover has not reached crisis levels. He also saw some classes not having enough of a turnover to offer opportunities for internal advancement.

He also pointed out that some employee groups may request better salaries, but when this is put to job classification professionals they ask about recruitment problems. When they cannot answer yes the argument is weakened. (It may be argued that maybe the question for the classification professionals is not the one which needs to be answered, but as the Chief Librarian, Whitney is seeking the best advice available.) Mr. Whitney also saw the current levels of compensation and benefits packages as being fair and competitive.

The area where Mr. Whitney saw recruitment problems was for management positions. The reasons he quoted included younger employees

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...Con't from page 3

who are more interested in life style issues, the difficulty of relocating when both partners are involved in the workforce, and the cost of relocating to the Lower Mainland. He also pointed out the importance of job security issues.

Mr. Whitney saw the importance for both the management and bargaining unit taking education and upgrading issues very seriously. He felt library workers need to be encouraged to grow on the job, encouraging opportunities to take on new challenges. According to Mr. Whitney, co-op programs and student placements allow new Librarians and Library Technicians to get acquainted with VPL.

Mr. Whitney saw the need to work with library workers with an identified career path, encouraging scholarships among other things.

On a critical note, Mr. Whitney felt that CUPE did not necessarily represent the best interests of the professional members of the union – Librarians and Library Technicians. He pointed out that in most libraries in educational institutions the Librarians generally are represented by faculty associations. For the newly minted professional a union environment, with its emphasis on global pay increases and pay equity, may not be the best way to present their interests.

Nina Saklikar, a former VPL Librarian now at Simon Fraser, told the people at the Conference she originally expected to be at VPL for many years. Her decision to leave was presented by pointing to the elimination of positions and her fear of job loss. She also saw limited opportunity for advancement and was concerned about the direction VPL was headed, including competition from the Web. Nina questioned her lack of autonomy and felt any initiatives and sense of responsibility were not valued. She saw a need for variety in her position.

Nina was concerned with the lack of salary rises reflected in 0-0-1 agreements negotiated in the 1990's, fearing she was falling behind the cost of living. She was also concerned with the "top of salary step" schedule. At the time she was in VPL there was no long-term disability plan, nor did she see support for continuing education and

professional development.

Nina had a number of proscriptions for Union and Employer:

- 1) Get better salary raises,
- 2) Continue to fight for pay equity,
- 3) Looking to non-monetary incentives, such as the 9-day fortnight,
- 4) Ensuring the seniority list is used and known about, and
- 5) Reducing union dues.

The Union and the Employer could promote recruitment and retention by:

- Looking at ways to credit experience brought in from outside.
- Promoting employees, on merit, within their existing positions, reducing the number of competitions and interviews.
- Deal with dead-weight employees, those who are simply occupying a chair and contributing little or nothing.
- Looking at ways to encourage risk-taking, initiative and allowing employees to take on more special projects.
- Ensuring all are aware of the Library's direction.
- Allow and encourage a dialogue between competition candidates and the interviewers.
- Survey incoming and outgoing employees about the reasons for their decision.

***Employers role includes:***

- 1) *Support of continuing education and professional development,*
- 2) *Promote from within,*
- 3) *Examine the current hiring and interview process, and*
- 4) *Amalgamating various on-call positions to create a secure position.*

Con't on page 5...

...Con't from page 4

***Employees and Union members role includes:***

- 1) Promoting the institution they work for,
- 2) Taking an active role in working for their union, and
- 3) Ensuring their job is their responsibility.

Jennifer Bradley is a recently graduated librarian who worked as a Library Assistant at Burnaby Public Library. Much of her concern regarded having her previous work within BPL recognized when it came to getting hours. Her sense was that, in taking the plunge, she was left with little more than a piece of paper to acknowledge that she was now available to work as a librarian. Jennifer was pleased she had become a librarian, but questioned how BPL, and other library systems, ease the transition and recognize existing service to the organization.

Doug Springer, as a library assistant, expressed his concerns about the hours of work which are required, including the way that shift work can interfere with the demands of family life. He expressed concern that flex-time is good, but that there should always be an opportunity for two days off at one time. He felt more awareness of the need to balance family and personal life, such as supporting child and elder care. He saw more situations where Duty to Accommodate might help to alleviate pressure on the employee. Doug also felt the need to allow for leaves to encourage training and advancement.

The views expressed were quite diverse. Each speaker had concerns which will need to be addressed and acted on to assist libraries, including VPL, in meeting the needs and expectations of their employees. Both Paul and Nina raised very contentious issues, but ones which seriously need addressing.

## Win a Day off with pay!!!

Every union general meeting you attend this year enters your name into a draw for a day off with pay!! The more meetings you attend, the greater likelihood that you'll win. The draw will be at the Annual General meeting in 2005.

In solidarity,

Peter DeGroot  
President

## Let's Get Staff Morale Up Up UP.

At the staff conference I went to the second helping of fish course and was thoroughly motivated to get things going at my branch. I learned many wonderful ideas and asked permission to share them with all staff so here goes.

## Fish Philosophy Workshop Summary, 2004

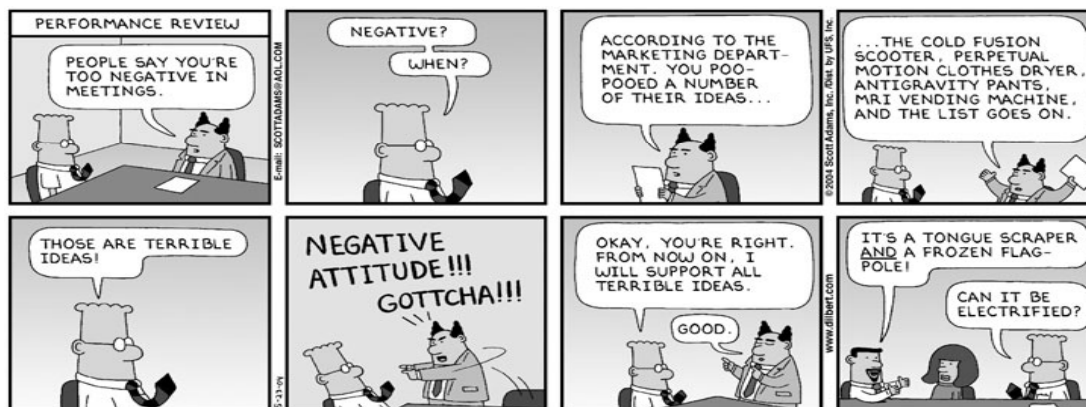
### D'Arcy's Dictums:

- Savour the stew (the spice, too!). Look at problems during your day as the spice that makes the sweet parts seem oh so much sweeter.
- Share your unique talents and interests.

### Peter's Principles:

- It's okay to steal! Take great ideas from other worksites and use them at yours.
  - When in doubt, think..."What would Grace Jones do?"

See 'Brainstorming...' on page 7...



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By Scott Adams

...Con't from page 6

**Brainstorming results – fun things that have been done at VPL worksites:**

- When an LAI shelves a truck, they are applauded by the staff.
- Turkey bowling (with a frozen turkey – later donated to charity) (This is done at more than one branch!!!)
- Birthday partners (staff are assigned birthdays, and are responsible for arranging special things for the birthday person)
- If you want to have a birthday party and it is not a staff members birthday, celebrate a celebrity's birthday.
- Green eggs and ham breakfast at coffee or a staff meeting.
- "Kid" candy – jawbreakers, Popeye candy sticks, etc. provided for staff.
- Pools – Survivor, Oscar, Summer RC, Sports etc.
- Dress up days.
- Baby picture guessing contests.
- Bringing new babies and pets for visits at work.
- Group shelf reading
- Branch scrapbook/photo album.
- Book buddy brigade for special events (there is a book in the professional library on how to do this!)
- Bring flowers.
- Acknowledge someone's work.
- Bring in a special coffee or tea.
- Bring goodies for coffee break.
- Bring "Over the Moon" chocolates.
- Hold a favourite song guessing contest.
- Record a staff CD of their favourite songs.
- Host a smorgasbord lunch for co-workers.

HOPE you will all go back to your worksites and use at least one of these ideas at your work site to help get Morale up.

Audrey Fennema  
**LAI Champlain Heights.**

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**Q: What happens when you cross a librarian and a lawyer?**

*A: You get all the information you want, but you can't understand it.*

# Elections 2004

Hey Sisters and Brothers! The time is again upon us to decide who will lead our country for the next four years. Below we've included a whole bunch of links that talk about the issues that are important to Canadians and hopefully will help make your decision in the upcoming election an informed one. So think about the issues that are important to you, find the party that best reflects your views on those issues, and make your voice heard on June 28<sup>th</sup>!

## Links for Public Awareness and other resources

- **www.elections.ca – Official Site of Elections Canada**
- **www.politicwatch.com - Canada's Political Portal**  
Home of the "PM Picker"! Take the 2004 Vote Selector Quiz on the hot campaign issues of Canada's current federal election. The quiz is user friendly, informative and fun.
- **www.voteforachange.ca – A voter education campaign for peace and social justice.**
- **www.canadavotes2004.net – Make this election about issues**  
CanadaVotes2004 is providing Canadian voters with the opportunity to learn their candidates' position on a wide range of issues of importance to Canadians.
- **www.dwatch.ca – Democracy Watch**  
Democracy Watch works with Canadian citizens and organizations in pushing Canadian governments and businesses to empower Canadians in their roles as voters, citizens, taxpayers, consumers and shareholders.
- **www.apathyisboring.com - Apathy Is Boring is about dialogue between us and them.**  
"Yes, our intent is to get you to vote. If all of us voted, the results would be drastically different in any upcoming election.
- **www.canada25.com**  
A non-profit, non-partisan organization that brings the voices and ideas of Canadians, aged 20-35, to the nation's public policy discourse and takes action on issues of local and national significance.
- **www.betterchoice.ca**  
On this site you'll find fact sheets on the issues you care about like accessible health care, pension protection, job security, fair trade and many others. (CLC site)
- **www.cupe.bc.ca**
- **www.policyalternatives.ca - Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives**

## All Federally Registered Political Parties:

**New Democratic Party - [www.ndp.ca](http://www.ndp.ca)**

**Conservative Party - [www.conservative.ca](http://www.conservative.ca)**

**Green Party - [www.greenparty.ca](http://www.greenparty.ca)**

**Liberal Party - [www.liberal.ca](http://www.liberal.ca)**

**Canadian Action Party - [www.canadianactionparty.ca](http://www.canadianactionparty.ca)**

**Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada - [www.cpcml.ca](http://www.cpcml.ca)**

**Communist Party of Canada - [www.communist-party.ca](http://www.communist-party.ca)**

**Bloc Quebecois - [www.blocquebecois.org](http://www.blocquebecois.org)**

**Marijuana Party of Canada - [www.marijuanaparty.com](http://www.marijuanaparty.com)**

"The most common way people give up their power is by thinking that they don't have any." Alice Walker

This info brought to you by your Political Action Committee.



## Index Libris Prohibitorum –

### Index of Forbidden Books for Children

The Boy Who Died From Eating All His Vegetables  
Curious George and the High-Voltage Fence  
Daddy Drinks Because You Cry  
Dad's New Wife Robert  
Eggs, Toilet Paper, and Your School  
Fun Four-letter Words to Know and Share  
The Kids' Guide to Hitchhiking  
The Little Sissy Who Snitched  
The Magic World Inside the Abandoned Refrigerator  
The Man in the Moon Is Actually Satan  
Places Where Mommy and Daddy Hide Neat Things  
Pop! Goes The Hamster...And Other Great Microwave Games  
The Pop-Up Book of Human Anatomy  
Some Kittens Can Fly  
Strangers Have the Best Candy  
Things Rich Kids Have, But You Never will  
Whining, Kicking, and Crying to Get Your Way  
Why Can't Mr. Fork and Ms. Electrical Outlet Be Friends?  
You Were an Accident  
Your Nightmares Are Real  
You're Different, and That's Bad

(source: Steven Olderr, Webmaster, Anglican Library Society)

*submitted by Peggy Watkins*

### General Meeting Dates

2004 / 2005

#### **Thursday June 24, 2004**

Alma VanDusen Room at Central Library – 6pm start

#### **Wednesday September 22, 2004**

Peter Kaye Room at Central Library – 6pm start

#### **Tuesday November 9, 2004**

Meeting room at Oakridge Branch – 6pm start

#### **Monday January 17, 2005**

Peter Kaye Room at Central Library – 5pm start

#### **Wednesday March 16, 2005**

Peter Kaye Room at Central Library – 6pm start

#### **Annual General Meeting**

#### **Sunday April 24, 2005**

Alice MacKay Room at Central Library – 11am start

Plan on attending!!

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## Letters

Dear Peter,

I want to convey my sincere appreciation for the contribution CUPE 391 made to the success of the May Day event in Vancouver.

CUPE BC collected 2 tons of food for the Greater Vancouver Food Bank. This includes the generous donations from our local.

In addition, the assistance provided early Saturday morning in setting up the rally at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre ensured a festive atmosphere for all those in attendance.

The cooperation of our Shipping staff in receiving Food Bank supplies should also be recognized.

I am very proud to be a member of this local. I received feedback from my colleagues in the CUPE Regional Office on the preparation and plans our local had for Community Action Day. Our presence on HEU picket lines was noticed and appreciated.

Thank you and keep up the good work!

Heather Inglis

## **Executive Goals 2004 – 2005**

by Peter DeGroot

At the start of every term in office, the union Executive Committee spends a full day in orientation and planning sessions. The objective of the day is to come up with goals to address during the coming year, and to have initial discussions regarding how to achieve these goals. On June 8, 2004 the Executive Committee endorsed six achievable goals. They are presented below in no particular order as they have equal importance.

- **Respond to system changes at Central Library and Branches.**
  - As the Library Management Team continues to plan for changes at Central Library, the union will take appropriate measures to ensure that the Collective Agreement is adhered to, and the concerns of employees are heard.
- **Support Gibsons and District Public Library (GDPL) staff through their bargaining year.**
  - The contract for Gibsons expires on December 31, 2004 and so the GDPL bargaining committee will begin surveying their membership about what issues are of most importance. Gibsons, like VPL, has a labour friendly board so all parties are hoping for smooth contract negotiations.
- **Enhance shop steward network and committees through improved communication, resources and education opportunities.**
  - The hard work and dedication of our shop stewards and committee members make our union as successful as it is. The executive will assist these groups as much as possible so that 2004/2004 will be our best year ever!
- **Maintain and improve working relationship with the Library Management Team and the Library Board of trustees.**
  - The union does not work in isolation. Many of our activities are done in conjunction with the LMT and the Board. Several joint ventures are underway including the VPL/391 scholarship, the self-funded leave plan and the part-time/auxiliary review.
- **Engage members in political process and encourage all to vote in the Federal and Provincial elections.**
  - We have seen the positive benefit to having elected a labour friendly city council at the municipal election. The union is keen to see the positive impact of electing federal and provincial governments who will address our concerns.
- **Continue to build participation in the union.**
  - It is going to be a productive and fun year for CUPE 391. Watch for new initiatives over the coming months making it easy for you to be involved in the work of your union.

In order for these goals to be met, the executive will be asking you to become more active in your union. Why not pledge at least an hour of your time this year to participate in a union ever?

## "LIFE WAS NOT MEANT TO BE PERFECT"

A Water bearer in China had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole which he carried across his neck.

One of the pots had a crack in it, while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water.

At the end of the long walk from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. For a full two years this went on daily, with the bearer delivering only one and a half pots full of water to his house.

Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, perfect for which it was made. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it had been made to do.

After 2 years of what it perceived to be a bitter failure, it spoke to the water bearer one day by the stream.

"I am ashamed of myself, and because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house."

The bearer said to the pot, "Did you notice that

there were flowers growing only on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side?"

That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back, you've watered them.

For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house"

Moral: Each of us has our own unique flaws. We're all cracked pots.

But it's the cracks and flaws we each have that make our lives together so very interesting and rewarding. You've just got to take each person for what they are, and look for the good in them.

Blessings to all my crackpot friends.

Submitted by Audrey Fennema, Author Unkown

Audrey M. Fennema  
LAI Champlain Heights Branch  
Union Vice President

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*Get out and vote!!!*

Polls are open 7am - 7pm on Monday,  
June 28th.

# WUZZUP? - AN ELECTION

Before you decide who to vote for, which party serves your needs, – read this and THINK HARD:

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## The Story of Mouseland as told by Tommy Douglas, 1944

It's the story of a place called Mouseland. Mouseland was a place where all the little mice lived and played, were born and died. And they lived much the same as you and I do. They even had a parliament. And every four years they had an election. Used to walk to the polls and cast their ballots. Some of them even got a ride to the polls. And got a ride for the next four years afterwards too. Just like you and me. And every time on election day all the little mice used to go to the ballot box and they used to elect a government. A government made up of big, fat, black cats.

Now if you think it strange that mice should elect a government made up of cats, you just look at the history of Canada for the last 90 years and maybe you'll see that they weren't any stupider than we are.

Now I'm not saying anything against the cats. They were nice fellows. They conducted their government with dignity. They passed good laws -- that is, laws that were good for cats. But the laws that were good for cats weren't very good for mice. One of the laws said that mouse holes had to be big enough so a cat could get his paw in. Another law said that mice could only travel at certain speeds -- so that a cat could get his breakfast without too much effort.

**All the laws were good laws. For cats. But, oh, they were hard on the mice.** And life was getting harder and harder. And when the mice couldn't put up with it any more, they decided that something had to be done about it. So they went en masse to the polls. They voted the black cats out. They put in the white cats.

Now the white cats had put up a terrific campaign. They said: "All that Mouseland needs is more vision." They said: "The trouble with Mouseland is those round mouse holes we got. If you put us in we'll establish square mouse holes." And they did. And the square mouse holes were twice as big as the round mouse holes, and now the cat could get both paws in. And life was tougher than ever.

And when they couldn't take that anymore, they voted the white cats out and put the black ones in again. Then they went back to the white cats. Then to the black cats. They even tried half black and half white cats. And they called that coalition. They even got one government made up of cats with spots on them: they were cats that tried to make a noise like a mouse but ate like a cat. You see, my friends, the trouble wasn't with the colour of the cat. The trouble was that they were cats. And because they were cats, they naturally looked after cats instead of mice.

Presently there came along one little mouse who had an idea. My friends, watch out for the little fellow with an idea. And he said to the other mice, "Look fellows, why do we keep electing a government made up of cats? Why don't we elect a government made up of mice?" "OH," they said, "he's a Bolshevik. Lock him up!" So they put him in jail.

But I want to remind you: That you can lock up a mouse or a man  
but you can't lock up an idea.      --Tommy Douglas, *New Democrat*, 1944

*Submitted by Heather Inglis*

## *Report on the CUPE B.C. Convention*

By Peggy Watkins

### *Meeting Barry O'Neil, speaker at microphone five, and other adventures at the CUPE B.C. convention*

On Wednesday, April 21st at 5:00pm, I stepped into a new world, my first union convention. What I discovered was energy and enthusiasm, comedy and camaraderie, ideas and inspiration.

#### *Here are some of the highlights:*

\* Opening night and the stage is set: a swanky hotel, a buzz of excitement and throngs of fellow union activists. The highlight of the evening's remarks was a welcome greeting by a first nations representative who made us laugh and feel energized by his warm words.

\* Resolutions were discussed and voted on. Resolutions are motions which allow the members to debate issues and chart the course for the future of the union. The members who spoke on the resolutions spoke with conviction and passion.

**One of the resolutions dealt with drug treatment issues.** A member spoke of his own personal experiences with drug addiction. He spoke of how drug abuse had devastated his own family and how it had affected the lives and families of co-workers. His openness, compassion and courage was very inspiring.

Other resolutions dealt with women's issues, including pay equity and funding for women's centres, aboriginal issues, privatization of health care, support for HEU members and CUPE strikers in Newfoundland and Labrador, the strategic plan for library services, young workers issues, child care, pension and WCB issues and many more.

\*There were many interesting and inspiring guest speakers. Stephen Lewis provided an update on his foundation's work in Africa. His foundation is providing support to small, grassroots organizations who help people and families who are effected by the AIDS crisis. His talk was moving and inspiring.

*CUPE locals across Canada are providing the Stephen Lewis Foundation with valuable support and contributions.*

\* Friday night, some of us attended a fun and interesting reception hosted by the Political Action Committee. It was a chance to rub shoulders with other union activists, politicians and political candidates and hone our mingling skills (under the tutelage of Peter). I even spoke to city counsellor Anne Roberts about a local issue happening in my neighbourhood. Thanks for the tips, Peter!

\* With two full days of conventioning and lessons learned from Peter, Saturday morning I was ready to try a little networking of my own. I had arrived a few minutes early and had noticed Barry O'Neil (CUPE B.C. President) had arrived. I thought to myself, "okay, sometime today I am going to introduce myself to him." Then after about one second pause, I thought, "I am going to do that right now!" And I did. I like to start at the top!

\* "Speaker at microphone five." I had heard many people rise to speak at the microphones on the convention floor. The question was could I summon the nerve to do it myself. I hate speaking into microphones and hate being videotaped and this involved both. Finally, on Saturday, I steeled myself, stood at the mic and faced my fears. I made my comments very brief so I could do it and sit back down quickly, but I did it! (I am hoping the next time will be easier.)

The convention was an interesting and empowering experience. In my notes, I have a few suggestions for making the conventions even better.

(I promised to email them to my new friend Barry.) But it was definitely an experience I would heartily recommend!

## *B.C. Politics*

The Gordon Campbell Liberals plan to sell off the Medical Services Plan and PharmaCare to either IBM or Maximus – both American multinational corporations – by August 31.

The government will give an American-owned corporation access to private records on every British Columbian. This includes health treatment, pharmacy, income tax, mental health and criminal records, as well as records from the ministries of Children and Family Development and Human Resources.

A New York expert on the new USA Patriot Act says this could even give the FBI access to our private medical record.

The Patriot Act allows the FBI to demand corporations secretly hand over medical records

and other personal information of innocent people.

And legal precedents suggest even if the information is held by a Canadian subsidiary, the American parent company could be required to hand it over.

Our personal medical information should not be made available to private corporations that don't answer to our privacy laws. It should remain in the care of public employees who are bound by an oath of office to keep it confidential.

For more information, and to sign the petition against this, go to:  
<http://www.petitiononline.com/publicpc/>

Source: BCGEU  
(Submitted by Mary-Ann Cantillon)

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## So You're Getting Ready to Retire!

By Peter DeGroot

Congratulations! The countdown is on! As you prepare to retire from Vancouver Public Library, your union is there to help you out.

CUPE has retirement planning seminars several times each year. These seminars are designed to help out staff with financial planning, and time planning once they enter the "life of leisure". Staff who are within five years of retirement are eligible to attend. As many CUPE 391 members expressed interest in the last announcement, the Executive is seeking to host our own retirement planning seminar in the coming year. Watch for the announcement with details in the coming months.

Retiring staff are also entitled to a party and a gift! The party can be in one of two formats. The union will host one giant party annually for everyone retiring that year. Or, if a more personal approach is your liking, then the union will contribute \$75.00 to a worksite party. Funds for gifts range from \$25 to \$175 depending on how long the employee has been a member of CUPE 391. Most often there is a worksite party planner who will receive the cheque from the union, and then provide the union with the appropriate receipts after the event. Full details on how the funds are distributed are found in our constitution under "expenditures" ([www.cupe391.ca/Constitution](http://www.cupe391.ca/Constitution))

If you have questions about retirement preparation, give the union a call at 604-322-4879.

## **R. S. I. ( Resilient Suffering Individuals)**

By CUPE 391 member

I've had four accepted W.C.B. claims over the past decade. Three of them resulted in significant time loss which was covered by W.C.B. The point when I took time off was when the r.s.i. flared up badly and my sleep was being disrupted due to arm pain . This was even after I had used sensible 1<sup>st</sup> Aid treatment. Getting it early and seeing my doctor to be referred to massage therapy, physiotherapy or just plain old rest seemed logical. Seeking alternative healthcare can be useful also. It all depends on the individual and what works best for their body. Even after doing all of that I have learned to do my best in keeping it in check. Even at times it can be very challenging due to symptoms being triggered by workload. What also is frustrating is when my doctor listens to my pain complaints and replies ' well lots of people your age have aches and pains. Here is a prescription to help you cope. Of course not having the best on the spot reply I end up feeling defeated. Instead, after that comment I needed to say that people half my age have filled out WCB forms with similar pain as mine.

### **What has helped me is :**

- Ibuprofen (Advil)
  - cold/ice packs
  - soaking arms in hot ( well as hot as you can stand it) water for 3 minutes, then in cold ( or as long as you can stand it) water, repeat three times , always ending in hot.
  - while standing, flop down in a forward position with knees slightly bent. Hang your arm and pretend you're a rag doll. Can sway arms gently. Not only does the blood flow to your arms but it flows to the brain as well!
  - gentle stretching
  - using a T.E.N.S. ( covered on extended health)
  - Lakota (a topical pain relieving roll-on, at natural health stores.
  - gentle weight lifting , starting slowly then building up with more reps. and then more weight. I've got a 2 lb. weight in the car I use at red lights, the wrist exercises are good ones to do in a car. Bringing a weight or two to work and leaving it on your desk or staff room is a good reminder to do a few reps. while reading memos.
- With the weightlifting it takes a minimum of 3 months before seeing any results. A lot of the RSI pain is due to tight muscles. With strengthening the muscles the tightness slowly goes away. But it takes continual consistent maintenance.
- good sense of humour.
  - Plenty of rest.
  - pain medication from your doctor.
  - wrist supports, elbow supports (New Edge is a good brand) is covered by extended health but doctor's note saying it's needed is necessary or get it covered by WCB if they've accepted your claim.

I found that by not always listening to my body ( where did my head get to?) I then trigger my symptoms by stretching too hard, using too heavy a weight, or doing too many reps., or working too hard, ( thinking the library won't be standing if I don't finish something by the end of the day, or thinking a boss will bring out their whip if I don't finish something that day ( ha, ha ) or because it makes me feel good? Whatever the inane reason is ! It's a lot about taking care of our bodies. Rethinking completely ( challenging at times if one's head is off and about) on how we move our bodies and how we do our jobs. A good physiotherapist told me to actually move my whole body when debonking and checking out books, not just my arms. We need to use our muscles more in our torso. Good old abs. chest muscles, upper and lower back muscles.

Con't on next page...

...R.S.I. con't

Also what I do sometimes is

- massage arms at work
- inform supervisor that I'm going to do 1<sup>st</sup> aid treatment on my arms (soaking), write it in the 1<sup>st</sup> aid log and do it on work time. ( 5-10mins.)
- if really busy just putting my arm under a cold water tap for a minute can be a quick preventive short term relief solution.
- or try a different job in VPL.
- Do those abdominal and upper back exercises.
- ask members on rsi, O.H.& S. committes for suggestions and support or anyone else you might know.
- dream about a regular fitness time. Swimming, gym, snowshoeing, kayaking, hiking, bicycling and others.
- Worst case scenario , which I know of one staff member needing to do this and that is getting that operation done on the arms. I believe it's where the muscle/tendon tightness is solved by surgically lessening the tightness. I'm sure there's more involved that I don't know about.

If you're busy in your personal life with whatever responsibilities that take over ( elderly parent care, sick relative, raising children and others) and find little time to take proper care or your r.s.i. then it's necessary to take time off work ( it helps if f.t. or a reg.pt.timer), fill out the w.c.b. form , see your doctor and get proper treatment and rest. For auxilliary or some full time and reg. part-time staff who don't want to fill out too many claims because you want to keep your job (also that problematical issue of eating, being clothed and a place to sleep) then you get the wonderful title ( I'm working on the medals ) that says:

Resilient Suffering Individual (r.s.i.) or –

Re-adjusting Shattered Individual

Realizing Steady Introspection

Rallying Sceptical Individual

Resisting Sadistic Iguana

Respectful Spunky Individual

Or just a

Reading, Satisfied Individual

Or make up your own using letters R.S.I.

In solidarity

C.U.P.E. 391 member

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### *CUPE 391 Executive:*

President - Peter DeGroot

Vice-President - Audrey Fennema

Secretary Treasurer - Gerard Batty

Recording Secretary - Gina Gaudet

Member-at-large - Kristy Hennings, Mark Whittam, Anne Kyler, Peggy Watkins

Member-at-large (Gibsons) - Laura Houle

Treasurers - Doug Klohn, D'Arcy Stainton

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