



off the shelf

Newsletter of Vancouver and Gibson Public Library Workers

Running for the Executive Committee

- Peter DeGroot

At the annual General meeting, the membership of CUPE 391 gets to vote for the various positions on the Executive. Perhaps you're considering running, but are not sure what is involved. At the very basic level, there is an expectation to attend and participate in the monthly evening meetings. Traditionally these have been on Monday nights and pizza has been served. From here, there is no limit to how involved you can become.

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Also in this issue...

- *Sex in the library*
- *What you should do about sweatshops*
- *A reprint of an article written by Corinne Sam from a previous issue of Off The Shelf*

Annual General Meeting

*11:00 AM, Sunday, April 25, 2004
Alice MacKay Room – Central Library*

The proposed agenda is as follows:

- Minutes from AGM 2003
- Elections
- Community Action Day
- Treasurer's Report
- Trustee's Report
- President's Report
- May Day information

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There are committees to be involved with, information courses to attend, conferences, conventions, and camaraderie. Participating in your union gives you new insight into how the library operates and how the union movement functions provincially and nationally. And it is a lot of fun! Take a look at the following positions and visualize your name beside one of them. Nominations are accepted right up to the Annual General meeting on April 25.

President

The president is the only full-time paid position within the union. The purpose for having a full-time president is to ensure that they are available to represent the membership 100% of their working day. The president is a leader who must communicate effectively with the membership in order to act on their behalf. The president will

delegate tasks to increase involvement in the union, but will ensure that such tasks are fulfilled.

Membership meetings:

- Sets proposed agenda
- Chairs meetings
- Casts votes in the event of a tie

Executive meetings:

- Sets proposed agenda
- Chairs meetings, or assists with chairing when training
- Leads discussions on recommendations to be taken to the membership
- Facilitates open discussion and encourages full participation in debate and duties
- Reports on the president's activities and time usage.

Committees:

- Ex-officio member of all committees
- Assists in filling vacant positions in committees

General Administration:

- Sees that activities adopted by the membership are carried out.
- Sees that CUPE policy and campaigns are carried out by the local.
- Enforces CUPE's Constitution and the local's by-laws

Salary:

- Current salary, or pay grade 21 step 5 - whichever is higher

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Hours of work:

- Compressed 35 hour work week
- Overtime is occasionally required. The president takes this as straight time back. There is no payout provision for overtime. Should overtime be consistently required, the president will seek guidance from the executive on how to reduce workload.

Vice-President

There are two vice-presidents, each holding an alternating two-year term. The vice-president will act for the president, fulfilling all the above duties, whenever the president is away. The vice-presidents also take an active role in many committees.

Recording Secretary

- Is provided with a laptop computer for their duties
- Keeps full and impartial minutes from the general meetings
- Keeps full and impartial minutes from the executive meetings.

Secretary Treasurer

- Is booked off one day every other week in order to get their duties done.
- Responsible for keeping all financial accounts of the union.
- Maintains, organizes and safeguards all financial documents.
- Provides financial reports at general and executive meetings.
- Submit financial books to the trustees at least once a year.

Members-at-large

- Participates in meetings
- Performs duties as directed by the Executive
- Generally involved in short term projects when first joining the executive.
- One member-at-large position is for representing the Gibsons workers group. The Gibsons staff elect that member-at-large.

Voices For Justice

May Day

May 1, 2004: Vancouver

Celebrate May Day with
Shari Ulrich, Bill Henderson and Ray Forbes

Bring some non-perishable
food for the CUPE BC food drive.

March: 11 a.m.

Corner of George and Hamilton

Rally: 1 p.m.

750 Hornby St., Vancouver Art Gallery

Sponsored by the B.C. Federation of Labour.

Contact: 604-430-1421, www.bcfed.com

Rest In Peace

Corinne Sam

May 28, 1964 – April 5, 2004



Corinne Sam started working in Vancouver Public Library in 1980, holding various positions in Collingwood & Marpole Branches, Science & Technology, Business, Newspapers & Magazines, and, for the last 6 1/2 years, in Special Collections.

As many of you know, she also suffered from bi-polar disease. The fact that she was able to continue working and contributing to the library, as well as having a productive life outside the library, a life which included volunteering with her local animal shelter, as well as working with troubled teens, is a testament to her strength and courage in the face of what was often a debilitating and very cruel disease.

She will be missed in a myriad of ways by everyone in Special Collections, not least for the discipline and pride which she put into her work, something that she has transferred to all of us.

See article written by Corinne for the 2002 summer issue of Off The Shelf on page

Mike Guy

June 21, 1961 – April, 2004



Mike was a well liked security guard at the Carnegie Community Center who was always ready to assist staff and patrons of the Carnegie Reading Room. An avid reader and free spirit, Mike could often be found browsing the Reading Room's book collection, talking philosophically with staff and patrons, and reciting by memory passages from Waiting For Godot to some of our literature loving patrons.

He passed away suddenly in his room at the Metropole Hotel. Cause of death has not been released at the time of this writing.

The Divine Image

**To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
All pray in their distress:
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.**

**For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
Is God, our father dear;
And Mercy, Pity, PeaCE, AND love,
Is Man, his child and care.**

**For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity, a human face:
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.**

**Then every man of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine,
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.**

**And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew.
Where Mercy, Love, & Pity dwell,
There God is dwelling too.**

William Blake

In Memory Of Corinne Sam

In response to requests made my staff to have a previous article written by Corinne for Off The Shelf re-printed, I've included it in this issue.

I love the library, and did even more so when I was sixteen years old, stopping at Eaton's for a huge muffin before I walked to Central, slipping in the dingy side entrance, my VPL tag securely pinned to my blouse. I'd look forward to another Saturday shift even though it was almost completely shelving. I found something satisfying in making the books disappear from the trucks, happily pushing my endurance to arrive sweaty and rosy faced at closing time. Work was a positive challenge, something I loved and believed in.

Several years of part-time ignorance passed and soon I was full-time – my very first permanent job. Slowly and steadily I worked my way up, proud of my achievements and eager to learn my new responsibilities. I had the impression that I was earning the respect of the people whom I respected and this spurred me to work ever harder.

Yes, there were difficulties along the way; painful stumbling blocks which remain in my heart today. But in the last several years my job has meant very little as my pride seeps away. Lack of appreciation is like an epidemic in the library. Nobody is getting it so nobody is giving it. My morale is at an all time low. I hear rumblings of other LA Is, IIs, and IIIs. What is happening to our jobs? What are we expected to do now? Did anyone ask for our input?

LA Is and IIs are being asked to do less – less desk time, less responsibilities, less self respect. Meanwhile, some LA IIs are going to become LA IIIs and will be expected to do more. Were they asked is that was what they wanted? Are they going to get the training and support which VPL is notorious for not providing?

How do the LA IIIs feel about an LA II suddenly being pronounced an LA III. Could this possibly diminish their own hard won promotion? Is there any meaning to the job posting process?

On top of it all is a continued lack of communication. Supervisors and LMT are not being open. "Mini" meetings spring up here and there but what happened to the open meeting with all the division clericals or all the division staff being informed of changes? Easier to keep us off balance if we all cannot share in the same information.

Undoubtedly libraries are in tumultuous times and staff must face many changes, some unpleasant. But don't we deserve to be treated with respect, recognition and appreciation? After all, we are the people who have brought us to this point and we are the ones who will move us forward.

So I suppose it comes down to a question of morale. Or is it morals?

Corinne Sam
Special Collections
Summer, 2002

Sex in the library?

March 23, 2004 – from CUPE.BC

BURNABY – Sex in libraries was not what CUPE members expected to hear about when about 100 of them attended CUPE BC's sixth library workers' conference in mid-March. That's how CBC radio personality Bill Richardson grabbed their attention saying, "libraries have



been an initiation to sex for a lot of people."

He quickly noted that the "closest I came to the reproductive process in a library was photocopying."

The former children's librarian read from his stories, including one on the second gulf war. He also took a humorous look at the automation of card cataloguing in which hundreds of activists chain themselves to a catalogue.

On a serious note, Richardson said politicians look for statistics on book circulation. "They don't see the unbidden, unexpected experiences that can change people's lives"

Richardson's new CBC radio show, *Bunny Watson*, is about libraries.

CUPE BC president Barry O'Neill applauded the library committee for launching "We open minds", a new public awareness and advocacy campaign.

"Not that many years ago libraries, like hospitals and courthouses, were institutions," he said. "They were places in our communities that have always been there and would continue to serve us for generations to come, or so we thought.

"But the crunch for libraries could very well come in the next fiscal year. There has never been a better time to stand up and remind your communities, elected politicians, appointed boards and the public about the value of libraries."

Helping O'Neill launch the "We open minds" campaign was former CUPE national president Judy Darcy, once a University of Toronto library worker.

She urged participants to organize, noting that 10,000 library workers remain outside unions in Canada. She also pressed them to involve more young people and members of equity-seeking groups. She stressed the need to be vigilant about supporting more women leaders in the union.



"Yes, you do open minds, hearts and souls," said Darcy, alluding to the conference theme, "What non-union library worker could resist us after reading the stories in your campaign literature?"

She ended by announcing her run for the New Democratic Party nomination in the Fairview riding. If she wins the nomination, she will face Liberal Finance Minister Gary Collins in the May 2005 provincial election.

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A Path to Poverty

Source: CUPE.BC website - Sept. 11, 2003

A report written by the Social Planning and Research Council of B.C., for the B.C. Federation Of Labour, reveals the disturbing causes and effects of Liberal policies. The report - *A Path to Poverty: A Review of Child and Family Poverty Conditions in British Columbia* - documents how low-income families will be pushed even deeper into poverty in the coming years.

Key findings:

Rising Unemployment - Unemployment has increased from 6.7 percent in May 2001 to 8.5 percent currently. The rate in many rural communities is often double that in the Lower Mainland.

Declining Wages - BC Progress Board reports real average hourly wages declined last year.

Lower Minimum Wage - BC government effectively cut the minimum wage to \$6/hour, down from \$8/hour, changes that reduce earnings, and do nothing for youth and unemployment.

Reduced Standards – Employment Standards Act now allows employers to schedule workers for shorter shifts, 2-hour shifts, a move that lowers annual earnings.

Lower Unionization – Labour law changes make it tougher to form or join unions, a change that undermines collective bargaining and fair wage settlements.

Child Labour – The BC Liberals are proposing to make it easier for employers to hire children between the ages of 12 and 15, a change that the report believes will lead to significant abuse.

Lower Income Supports – The BC government has dramatically cut income supports for low-income families and individuals, compounding the hardships of these families and individuals.

The report recommends the BC government enact the following short-term measures:

1. Move from increased reliance on fees for revenue and return to a more progressive income tax system based on ability to pay;
2. Repeal the deleterious changes to the Employment Standards Act, particularly the \$6 training wage, Section 34 on minimum daily hours by returning to a minimum four-hour callout and Section 37 on average hours of work. Do not pass Bill 37 and the changes to Section 9 on the requirements for hiring children 12-15 years of age;
3. Reverse the move to lower-pay, contracted-out services, particularly for healthcare support workers;
4. Develop a high quality regulated childcare system that is accessible and affordable for all families; and
5. Recognize the hardships that have been caused by reductions in the amounts of income assistance to persons and families and, at a minimum, restore the already inadequate rates prior to the reductions. Repeal the changes in eligibility criteria, specifically the three-week wait period, the two-year independence rule, and the time limits.

The Social Planning and Research Council of BC produced the report for the B.C. Federation of Labour.

Liberals Cancel Contract With Democracy

It's time to side with our communities

By BARRY O'NEILL (president of CUPE BC)

It's time to strike back.

The provincial government has cancelled its contract with democracy. Under the Liberals, community consultation has become a thing of the past.

We have rallied, marched, and lobbied but this government is not listening. Now is the time for us to take serious action. Its time to step up the fight.

This government is forcing a confrontation we do not want, but we owe it to our communities, our kids, and the next generation of workers to stand up to this unprecedented attack.

I am calling on all CUPE members to participate in a province-wide first day of action on a date to be announced soon. If we do not act now, we will be forced to sacrifice all of our gains in creating fair workplaces and strong communities.

Some have already lost their livelihoods. Health care is being privatized. Our social services are under attack. Our K-12 sector is about to be hammered by the new legislation. University, college, and library workers have all struggled under the Liberals death-by-a-thousand cuts. Pharmacare premiums have gone up. \$6 an hour is the new minimum wage. Tuition fees have more than doubled. Our skilled trades are being disassembled and apprenticeship programs broken up. The list goes on.

Some of you may think you can escape unharmed. But many of our employers are planning to use anti-labour legislation to force concessions from you. Weakened Workers Compensation laws, a downgraded Employment Standards Act, a weaker Labour Code will make that possible. They will tell your bargaining committee that the

law is on their side with Bill 29 and Bill 94. Some will say you should be happy to have a job.

In some cases local governments have lost their authority to treat employees with respect and dignity. This government has given itself the ultimate veto by law with Bill 75. If we do not stand up now, there will be nothing left to stand up for in the future.

Our communities made this province strong and it will be community action that will keep it strong. In the Okanagan, community action saved a highway. We need to do the same in the rest of the province. If our union needs to lead the way, we should step up to the challenge.

We must work harder than ever to ensure our kids get the same chances we had and that our parents live with dignity. Our task is not easy, however history shows nothing worth having ever comes easily. It is time to use our collective strength as workers to make B.C. a place where no one is left behind. Its time to strike back. Its time to choose sides. It is time to take the side of our communities, our families, and our future.

Source: www.cupe.bc.ca

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'British Columbia looks more like a Remax commercial these days than a province.'

- B.C. Federation of Labour president Jim Sinclair in his address to the NDP leadership convention, Nov. 24, 2003.

You Can Do Something About Sweatshops And Child Labour!

By Peggy Watkins

What you should know:

What is a sweatshop?

Sweatshops around the world (including here in North America) are established to provide cheap clothing and other goods for US, Canadian and European consumers. They pay extremely low wages and have very poor and dangerous working conditions and long working hours. Workers are harassed, fired, beaten or even killed for trying to unionize. These sweatshops also often employ children. They are usually established in places where there is a lack of environmental and labour regulations.

Did you know...

- Workers in El Salvador earn about 24 cents for each NBA jersey they produce, which then sell for \$140 in the U.S.
- More than two-thirds of workers in Latin America making products for Nike say they are not paid enough to put away savings or support others.
- Workers in China have been known to die after marathon shifts, and workers even have a name for such incidents: *guolaosi*, which means "overwork death."
- Workers in Mexico making jeans for Gap and Guess say they are sometimes forced to work all-night shifts, and are prevented from leaving the factory by armed guards.
- In China, some workers making clothing for Disney receive as little as 16 cents per hour.
- In countries like China and Vietnam, independent unions are outlawed, while in places such as Mexico and Indonesia government officials often cooperate with factory management as they try to crush union organizing drives. Chinese workers who try to organize unions are frequently jailed. In Mexico, Nicaragua, and Indonesia striking workers have been attacked and beaten.

Info from

www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/sweatshops/

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What you can do. . .

- Join the **Play Fair At The Olympics** campaign

Write to Roots Canada (Canada's official Olympic uniform supplier) and tell the company to raise the bar on labour standards. Demand that the company adopt a credible code of conduct and a transparent factory monitoring system.

Please Read more at www.maquilasolidarity.org/campaigns/olympics/index.htm

- Support the Vancouver City Council's Fair Trade Initiative.

The COPE-led city council has moved forward with a new fair-trade purchasing policy to ensure all items purchased by the city are manufactured or grown in accordance with established international codes of conduct regarding wages, workplace health and safety, forced labour, child labour and freedom of association.

Email city council and let them know you support this initiative.
mayorandcouncil@city.vancouver.bc.ca

- Fight Bill 37 and the return of Child Labour to B.C.

Think sweatshops and child labour can't happen in B.C.? Think again. . .

In October 2003, the B.C. Liberal government passed Bill 37 which stripped away employment protection for children. This gives B.C. the youngest work-start age in North America with no permits required. Now children as young as twelve can be employed up to 35 hours per week with a note from one parent or guardian, 20 hours per week when school is in session.

Find out more on the BCTF website: <http://www.bctf.ca/ChildLabour/>

Where you can go to find out more. . .

Here's some websites to get you started.

<http://www.maquilasolidarity.org/>

<http://www.maketradefair.com/en/index.htm>

<http://www.fairolympics.org/en/>

<http://www.cleanclothes.org/>

<http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/sweatshops/>

<http://www.sweatshops.org/>

<http://www.sweatshopwatch.org/>

<http://www.nosweatapparel.com/index.html>

Thanks again to all who submitted articles and tidbits of information.

Future submissions to Off The Shelf can be sent to Lorne MacDonald via:

- E-mail (lornemac@vpl.ca)
- Disk or paper copy (to Carnegie Reading Room)
- In person