



off the shelf

Newsletter of Vancouver and Gibson Public Library Workers

Exposure of Secret Privatization Plan

VANCOUVER—Teachers, school support workers, and labour leaders across B.C. are demanding answers from the provincial government in response to a secret blueprint for privatizing a great range of services in public education.

“This plan clearly aims well beyond privatizing administrative services, and targets student services as well,” said Jinny Sims, president of the B.C. Teachers’ Federation. “The further losses in terms of local autonomy and democratic control of our public schools will be dramatic if this scheme goes ahead. Teachers care about the kids we teach, and we really fear this will mean further erosion of their opportunities to learn.”

Jim Sinclair, president of the B.C. Federation of Labour, noted: “This plan emphasizes that funding has already eroded to the point that the quality of education is suffering. Look around the province. We’re struggling to clean up the mess the privateers are making in health care. Let’s not impose this failed experiment on our kids’ schools too!”

“When you have evidence of clandestine plans around a topic as explosive and damaging as privatizing public education and contracting out student support services, this government has got to come clean and tell British Columbians where they stand,” said Barry O’Neill, president of CUPE B.C.

The privatization plan was to have been at the top of the agenda for a meeting that Fraser Valley school trustees planned to hold behind closed doors late in November. Because the plan was leaked, the meeting did not take place as scheduled. Trustees were urged by the plan’s

proponents not to invite board staff to the meeting, nor to involve them in any discussions about the topic.

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Also In This Issue...

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- *Is Change Dangerous?*
- *35 Striking Filipino Workers Sustain Gunshot Wounds From State Police And Army; 14 Die.*
- *CUPE 391 member Todd Wong’s Shout-out on the 2005 Gung Haggis Fat Choy Extravaganza*
- *Cartoons And More All Inside*

...*Exposure* (from page 1

The plan calls for groups of school boards to establish "Delegated Administrative Organizations" that could contract out "accounting, finance, purchasing, payroll, personnel, student support services, information technology, transportation, capital construction, maintenance and some educational administrative functions." The DAO would operate in the private sector with little or no accountability to elected school trustees and the communities they represent.

Sinclair, Sims, and O'Neill said they want reassurances from Premier Gordon Campbell and Education Minister Tom Christensen that all aspects of public education will remain public. They all called on parents and other concerned citizens to raise the issue with their MLAs.

Source: cupe.bc.ca; Nov. 23, 2004

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Massacre of Strikers

In a violent strike dispersal in Hacienda Luisita in the Philippines on November 16, 2004, 14 people were killed, including two children aged 2 and 5 years old who died from suffocation from teargas lobbed by the police and army dispersal teams. One of the victims was allegedly strangled after being shot and his dead body hanged by the factory gate. At least 35 people were reported to have sustained gunshot wounds, 133 were arrested and detained, hundreds were wounded and another hundred still missing.

The trade unions in the Philippines are calling for a strong international protest,

demanding a full investigation of what happened, the rehiring of illegally dismissed workers, and withdrawal of criminal charges brought against the strikers.

Source: cupe.bc.ca

Is Change Dangerous?

Only if you don't agree!

The world of work is changing as all can see and we are expected to go along with that change, embrace it, and find our place in it. We are not supposed to disagree with the change, and those who speak out are quite often punished. The punishers wouldn't admit to it of course and in many cases it would be hard to prove but the evidence is there if you know where to look. Are you losing shifts, being constantly watched, being called to task for trivialities, or threatened with dismissal? If you are then ask yourself if you have openly objected to the change? Did you speak critically of the change at this or that meeting? Did you write an e-mail critical of the change? Did you sit on that committee to review the change and the negative effects it may have? There are more and more stories surfacing about punitive actions taken against workers that are standing up for their rights and trying to preserve their way of life and their careers that they have spent, in some cases decades, developing. Workers have constantly over the years been asked to stand by management to implement change. Change is good we've been told. We must change or face being rendered obsolete and outdated. We must change to satisfy our customers changing needs...even if those needs are already being met. We must change to be more productive, more accountable, and more lucrative. One

wonders if all this change is necessary or are things changing for the sake of change? In other countries workers disappear if they resist change or criticize it in any way. "You are with us or with the enemy" our leaders thunder from their lofty heights secure in their jobs and their futures, while the workers toil to facilitate the changes they demand. They toil in sweatshops in the "export processing zones" of Asia, and the "maquiladoras" in Latin America. They toil in the fields and farms across North America and at a younger and younger age. They toil in the "big box" stores for minimum wage and no benefits. They toil, as we all toil, to try to find our way through the changes, through the greed, through the new world economy, and through the shortsighted vision of our leaders. Change is a constant and we must all try to learn ways to prosper when change comes, but all change is not positive, all change is not progressive, and all change is not well thought out. Is change dangerous? Only if you don't agree!

"All change is not growth, as all movement is not forward." ~Ellen Glasgow

Mark Whittam
Nov 29/2004

Committee Help Required

There is a need for some help on various union committees including:

grievance
nominating
and classification.

*If you can step up to the
challenge, the union will provide training and support.*

Peter DeGroot
for the Executive Committee

Environmental Awareness Committee

By Keith Edwards

Code Green

A new home renovation television series being made for CBC is seeking homeowners within the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) who want to make their houses more energy efficient!

The series is sponsored by B.C. Hydro, Teresan Gas, and Environment Canada, with support from VanCity and the GVRD.

To be eligible for the series, homes must be single-family dwellings built before 1985 and heated by natural gas. A government inspector will conduct an energy-use audit in each of the homes before and after the renovations. The homeowners who reduce their consumption the most will win a new hybrid car.

The four homeowners will also receive a federal government grant worth up to \$3,000 from a program urging Canadians to reduce annual greenhouse emissions.

For more information phone 604-709-8098 or at
www.codegreen.tv

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

By Hank Einarson

In the Summer edition of the staff newsletter, "Off the Shelf", I reported on the problems of recruitment and retention of library workers. The views expressed were those of Paul Whitney, the Chief Librarian, former VPL librarian Nina Saklikar, a library assistant who has gone back to get her Librarian Diploma and the head of the CUPE Local for Library Assistants for the University of Victoria.

What struck me, even in hearing about the forum is that there was only one presenter who was speaking from the perspective of Library Assistants. He was the last presenter at the March CUPE Library Workers' Conference, which may have been the luck of the draw. Yet, as a Library Assistant myself, I felt the inclusion of Library Assistants in the discussion on recruitment and retention was an afterthought.

I was also impressed by the Code of Respect which CUPE expects of all its members, which was presented at the beginning of the Conference.

With regard to recruitment, for a Library Assistant, the CUPE Code of Respect is probably the most important reason for choosing to work with and stay within a library system.

Respect means that there will not be harassment in the workplace. There will be well-understood standards and guidelines which will be in place for all worksites, respecting the differences of the communities and sizes of branches that the library system serves. Respect means that Seniors will treat all staff fairly and, to the extent possible, offer opportunities for acting experiences based on proven ability – and seniority.

Respecting seniority does not mean that only the most senior staff get opportunities for working in higher capacities. It means that once they have been trained, expressed an interest and shown they are capable of doing the work at a senior level, they will be given the opportunity to work at that level, hopefully in a variety of circumstances, to build up full expertise to move up within the Library when an opening occurs. This will mean staff have the opportunity to

work in different locations around the system, if they so desire. For some that may mean they travel to many sites. Others may choose to stay at their home location. The point being that the worker has greater opportunity to learn and use new skills and get known by many different staff members. It seems some members have quite a reputation - maybe that is because others haven't had a chance to get to know them.

One of the ways of creating that respect, which is so simple to accomplish, is to offer an easily understood seniority list, based on the number of hours worked - nothing else. When I started working at VPL I was appalled to find out that the hours I had put in as an Auxiliary were not even considered toward advancement within the library system. That situation has cleared up, to some extent, but there are still discrepancies about the time which is used toward acquiring seniority.

see RESPECT on page 6...



...RESPECT from page 5

I was also quite surprised to discover that every position which became available for more than six months went through an interview process, unless a lateral transfer was accepted by other fellow union members.

So far, in the interviews I have been involved with, I have seen more emphasis on how the person being interviewed fits with the personality of the Senior rather than the ability of the person being interviewed to do the job - and do it well! Seniors have a difficult job to do - they are probably not sufficiently compensated for the judgment they are expected to use - yet they are members of our Local. They need to offer opportunities to members who have shown they are capable of doing the work. Our reputations should only go as far as our ability to do the work. As union members, we all have an obligation to be honest and forthright in the ways we work in a given situation. If the work is more difficult than we thought it would be, we need to pass that information along to allow the Senior or Branch Head to make a suitable adjustment.

I have also been struck by the impact of partial replacement for full-time staff who are either sick, on vacation, or being offered an opportunity for a short secondment within the same Branch or Division. Who gets the majority of opportunities for working in higher capacity? As a Union maybe we need to revisit the issue of full-timers having to work a full shift to get paid at a higher capacity.

Retention is very related to job satisfaction. Retention, especially for Library Assistants, means that staff who make a commitment to remain with the organization over time are given opportunities to advance within the organization and receive proper and appropriate training, if desired.

Retention includes ensuring all staff are respected and treated fairly. When problems of work performance are noted, they are dealt with as such. Each of us have individual personalities, but we are not at work to show how unique our personality is. We are at work to show how our collective efforts will provide a valuable service to the borrowing public.

Tired of Being Sick of the B.C. Liberal Government?

Join the Union's Political Action Committee!

Our mandate is to educate the membership on political issues and get them mobilized for next May's provincial election and next November's municipal elections.

If you are interested in being part of this dynamic committee please e-mail Mark Whittam at markwhi@vpl.ca.

We will be meeting soon to formulate an action plan for next Mays election

Let's make sure that on May 17/2005 we elect a government that speaks for all British Columbians.

Peace,
Mark

The Naked Truth

Integral: essential to completeness, composed of parts that make up a whole.

Naked: plain, unadorned (the truth), not aided by artificial means, uncovered.

For the past year or so I've spent much of my online time visiting a cool website called **Integral Naked**. The website features dialogs with leading-edge thinkers on diverse topics ranging from art to altered states, from business to personal growth, from education to meditation, from politics to ecology, from sexuality to spirituality – basically any topic you can imagine, and more. In addition there are short video clips featuring miniature lectures on specific topics, music videos and experimental art pieces (including an amazing multimedia tour through Alex Grey's Sacred Mirrors series), and “pointing out instructions” to help you realize aspects of your own deepest nature. There is also a forum where people engage in lively discussions of every topic imaginable.

New material is added each week, and everything is archived – hundreds of dialogs and videos are now available. A glance at the range of topic titles will give an idea of the diversity of material to be found there:

“Enlightenment Through Relationship,” “Psychosis or Mystical State?,” “Broken Open: An Integral View On How Crisis Can Help Us Grow,” “Sex, Identity, Spirituality: God in Gay Culture,” “The Many Meanings of *The Matrix*,” “Art, Spirit, Psychedelics,” “Engaging the Heart of Conscious Business” and many more.

See NAKED TRUTH on page 8...



Fo' shizzle Dizzle...I'm on the track with the big Bronx Dizzo
(*Absolutely, I'm dancing well with my VPL coworkers*)

Submitted by Ash..., er, Andre, of the Bronx Branch Crew

It's Friday. For many employees of Vancouver Public Library, this means the end of a long week pushin' books. For some others, pushin' books happens seven days a week more often than you'd like to believe. Whatever your situation, if you work for VPL you're pushin' books. By pushin' books I don't exclusively mean pushing trucks. Oh, no. I mean pushin' books, from pushin' them over the counter to patrons, to pushin' them through the various stages of acquisitions or mending, to the librarians pushin' the product on the public.

So it's Friday; it's time to hang up your pusher hat. You're ready to tuck those RSI-preventing (placebo) gloves in your back pocket for a couple days. The week is over and the last thing on earth you'd want to do is spend even a second more with your coworkers, right?

Wrong!

On a Friday night not so long ago, a handful of coworkers from a location somewhere in the city (let's call it the Bronx branch, for sake of atmosphere) made plans to do something different after lockup. They were not going to disappear into the security of their individual homes, to tunnel away from the ensuing rain and cold of Fall. No! Even the desire to wrap up in a blanket and dissolve into the current good book was held at bay for this one night.

It wasn't a payday Friday, though. An over consumption of beer had to wait. This crew was determined to exercise in a manner different from the "grab-lift to mouth-drink-repeat" aerobics. This crew was going to do a different thang! This crew was going dancing! With thinned wallets in hand, this crew did the impossible. This crew went hip-hop.

Oh, the laughs that were had. Oh, the moves that were broke. Oh, the sight that'd make you choke.

I think the initial idea was meant to be a joke. A month before this fantastic non-payday Friday, a little idea snuck its sideways ballcapped head through the door. He niggled and he rapped and hell, he got his way. Before we knew what was happening, Missy was on the computer checking locations and times where we could bond as a group outside the workplace. One of us spoke up, "But isn't the time spent shelving books and cleaning up after patrons and babysitting patron's kids bind us enough?"

No. Oh, no. Hip hop was found, the location: downtown.

There was bonding of an even greater magnitude in store for us. A bunch of average VPLers were destined to tackle the hip hop dance scene as a rocksteady crew.

See FO' SHIZZLE on page 9...

...NAKED TRUTH from page 7

Integral Naked is the first major project of the Integral Institute, started several years ago by spiritual philosopher Ken Wilber, with the aim of healing the fragmented world we live in - as well as the fragmented selves who live in it. **The integral approach explores body, mind and spirit in self, culture and nature, embracing everything in a comprehensive framework with the aim of facilitating personal and global evolution.** There is something for everyone here, and I encourage you to check it out! Relevant websites:

www.integralnaked.org

www.integralinstitute.org

-arthur gillard (arthugil@vpl.ca)

...FO' SHIZZLE from page 8

Soon, the internal mail went dope-crazy. Any FBI-wannabe from VPL should have busted us before we busted a move. We were talking the lingo like nobody's business. Of course, most of us thought this was a load of fun; how fun is it to toy with the idea of something outrageous, while knowing everyone is going to back out in the end? Because this is what happens, isn't it? Ideas are discussed, plans are made, but when you're talking about organizing a group of people who have nothing more in common than the workplace, you're best to place your money on the outcome being a flop.

Nope. Well, at least not this time.

As the weeks elapsed, and the day drew nearer, those who put their names in to participate actually confirmed. (Injecting a brief editorial here, I must say it was at this point at which I became shocked. The fear came later).

That Friday night came, and replays of MC Hammer jiggling across the screen motivated me into the trip downtown. That said, once the address of the dance studio stood before me, I'd be lying if I said I wouldn't have slipped into one of the neighbouring meat market bars if I wasn't wearing my baggy everything. Instead of standing out like an inflated horse in an emaciated chicken coop, I took a breath and entered the studio.

Inside, I realized standing out was what I was going to do tonight after all. The tight-even-when-empty reception of this studio contained a couple of the Bronx crew. As the rest of us arrived, the same look hit each and every one of us. Dre and his girl, Eve and her pal, Salt, Young, Missy and her posse, even Nas and the little one. Any previous attempt to fake ourselves into confidence was ripped out of our chests. Finishing up their evening in what was to become our sweat-box was a group of ballerinas. I'm sure these girls (and one or two guys) weren't even that good on the scale of worldwide ballerina-er-ing. But when you have never been to a dance studio in your life, seeing those mini-flying twirls happen by two dozen humans that are not you makes you want to cry.

See FO' SHIZZLE on page 10...

Gung Haggis Fat Choy

*CUPE 391 Member Toddish
McWong's Robbie Burns
Chinese New Year Dinner*

Last year, this wacky multicultural dinner theatre spectacular inspired a Vancouver CBC TV special, titled Gung Haggis Fat Choy that received two Leo nominations. Over two nights, 550 people were served, a significant increase from the 390 that attended in one night in 2003, and 200 that attended in 2002.

Gung Haggis Fat Choy has changed venue to the **Floata Restaurant in Vancouver's Chinatown**, and will expect **700 people for the January 30th 2005 dinner**.

Todd's dinner is now attracting BIG names. Featured co-host will be CBC Radio's **Shelagh Rogers** who hosts Radio 1's flagship show "Sounds Like Canada, and whom interviewed Todd in January 2003. Shelagh has a special affection for GHFC, as it was at the September 2003 "CBC Welcome to Vancouver" reception for Shelagh and the Sounds Like Canada crew, when they moved shop from Toronto to Vancouver, that Todd first present haggis wun tun - a world's first. Also co-hosting will be **Tom Chin from Vancouver Asian Canadian Theatre** - a good friend of Todd's and very funny guy.

Featured musical guests will include **bagpiper Joe McDonald** and his ethno-fusion band Brave Waves - featured in the CBC special, **Opera Soprano Heather Pawsey**, contemporary **hip hop singer LaLa**, also featured in the CBC special singing Auld Lang Syne, **Governor General's Award for Poetry winner Fred Wah**, **Vincent and Cameron Collins - Highland Dancing brothers**, + many more surprise guests...

Todd was also be featured on CBC TV's The National, in conversation

...FO' SHIZZLE from page 9

Although I was entirely prepared to suggest heading down the road to the nearest pub, I entered the room with the crew and the rest of the Beginner's Hip Hop class. I must have forgotten my better judgment when I had to concentrate on the shakes coming out of my knees. Once inside, I saw the wall to wall mirrors. Self-awareness kick in the teeth number two.

At this point, there seems no reason to ever consider an evening such as this when you could be alone at home. I agree. Yet read on.

Before I knew what was happening, a perky little (in stature, not in energy, voice, or positivity) woman in baggy white pants, a white tank top and a bandana came into the room. She remarked at the number of people here tonight. It was true; it was our crew that easily added another quarter onto the attendance. For a few moments, we joked about how we'd rock the class, we'd run it over Bronx-branch-style, we'd show them all up. Were we destined to get recruited by this woman who called dance her life?

Then we started "the warm-up." Oh, god. Reality-check hit to the heart number three. After five minutes, I looked around at our gang in disbelief. Some of us couldn't contain a few chuckles of fear and disbelief. This "beginner's class" was like cutting the final selection of dancers for "Fame!"

Then, the routine. You may have seen early 1990's videos of Janet Jackson and her entourage. Really, almost any early 1990's hip hop video is still the drawing board for hip hop dance today. So I continued to believe the reflection in front of me was that of an alternate me – one my instructor or agent displays for me to get me to work harder, while taunting me. "You'll look like this loser," he'd scream, "dancing like a fool, sweating like a chump, if you don't work harder!" So on I jumped and bounced and attempted to mimic what our bandana-ed teacher displayed.

Soon, I figured out why hip hopper's jeans have always been below their butts. It's the dancing, man! It gets so hot in here there's nowhere for that weighted denim to go but down. Then, after a while, as my jeans sank, I began to feel like an In Living Color dancer. I wanted to yell out, "V – P – L !" in short loud

See FO' SHIZZLE on page 11...

Index Libericis 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

...FO' SHIZZLE from page 10

bursts to the rhythm of the music the way breakdancers chant, "Go homeboy, go homeboy, go..." when a circle forms around the effortlessly flipping and spinning dancer. But I kept my mouth shut. All for the better. I fear grunts of pain may have been what would have actually been uttered.

Yet here I was, halfway through an hour-long drill that would make the cruelest army sergeant proud and I was laughing. The hysteria caught on. At our side of the room, among the beginning beginner's beginners group that we consisted of, all of us in our own way were bouncing around in hysterics. We were attempting to mimic the grace and pounce of the lithe instructor by throwing limbs here and stepping back there. In truth, we were like foreigners trying to fit in by complementing the chef with a resounding burp. But each time we stopped to take a breath we'd look at one another and see we all shared the same face: pitiful, exhausted, drenched, and euphoric. On our side of the studio, the night was not about image. Nor was it about trying too hard. Hell, most of us gave up on that after the "warm-up." No, instead of forcing a bonding moment, we suffered together and came out laughing. Bronx employees, both full-time and part-time, laughed hard enough together that non-payday Friday

night that the next day we balanced out our aching legs and backs with equally painful guts.

The hour had passed and we shuffled our exhausted carcasses onto the streets of Vancouver. Although the night was still young, most of us parted in separate directions. An hour of sweating to the music of The Roots with VPL coworkers didn't keep me from thinking about Alex Haley all night. Or that one of The Roots albums is titled "Things Fall Apart." That image of me, my blanket, and my book was sweeter than ever. Ah, literature. Tonight, I more than earned it. And it became all that sweeter when I knew that Missy, Dre, Young, Salt, Eve, and Nas would all be feeling the same way when they got home. Now trying to reenact that routine in the workplace the following Monday, that's when the gut was reminded all over again of the price you pay for doing something unique and satisfying with the coworkers you are blessed enough to work with at VPL. We may not have been recruited that night, but pushin' books with the Bronx crew has been all the more jovial, and of course, dope, since we ventured out together.

Signing off,
Andre

Any similarities between real and actual first letters of person's and place's names and those used in this story are purely and intentionally coincidental.

Thanks to all CUPE 391 members who submitted articles, humour, etc. to this issue of Off The Shelf.

Submissions for the next issue can be sent to Lorne via e-mail (lornemac@vpl.ca), or hard copy to Carnegie Reading Room.

By the Numbers:

- 100, 000:** Approximate number of Iraqis killed since the U.S. led invasion of 2003, according to a study published by the highly respected medical journal *The Lancet*.
- 58, 000:** Approximate number of American soldiers killed during the entire Vietnam War.
- 2:** Place Iraq occupies in rank among all countries possessing the highest amounts of oil reserves. Saudi Arabia is ranked number 1.
- 1:** Place the U.S.A. ranks in the world by countries consuming the most energy.
- 0:** Number of Weapons Of Mass Destruction found in Iraq since the U.S. led invasion. (I thought the CIA would have planted them in Iraq long ago.)
- ?:** Number of people around the world it will take boycotting products **Made In The U.S.A.** to successfully resist the American imperialist war machine.

**Merry Christmas,
Happy Hanukkah
and
Best Wishes To All
In The New Year**