



Off The Shelf

Newsletter of Vancouver and Gibsons Library Workers

Imagining the "unthinkable"

by Barry O'Neill
President of CUPE BC

When the Paul Martin Liberals fell to a non-confidence vote on November 28, I felt the same sense of exhausted resignation as a lot of other CUPE members.

Oh, no. Here we go again. Another election.

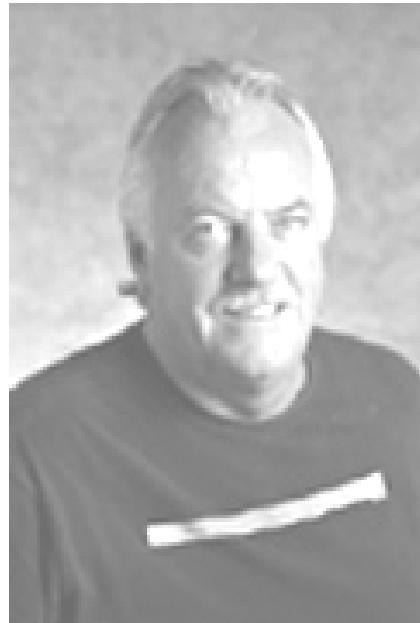
Believe you me: the notion of gearing everyone up again for a Christmas campaign—only a month after the civic elections, six months after the provincial polls and barely a year and a half since the last federal vote—was about as appealing to me as a root canal.

I didn't want another election any more than you do. But thanks to the realities of parliamentary politics—especially the volatility of minority administrations—there was nothing we could do about it. And on January 23, Canadians will elect a new federal government.

It may well be another minority. But this time, things could end up much worse for CUPE members, their families, and all working people. If Stephen Harper's Conservatives form the next government, you can be sure they will wreak legislative havoc in Ottawa for as long as they can. Even with a minority, they can erode public services in this country, strip away working people's gains and turn back the clock on human rights legislation faster than you can say "notwithstanding clause." Really, I don't think it's overstating things to say that Stephen Harper makes Brian Mulroney look like a progressive.

The history of Canadian federal politics has always been a choice between one or the other of the two established

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Barry O'Neill

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- * *CUPE 391 News*
- * *And tips on enhancing your critical state testing technique*

...Imagining from previous page

parties. Sadly, when things are too close to call between Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum, one of them tries to sway potential NDP voters to their side by dismissing the New Democrats' "third party" status. Last time it was the Liberals. "If you really fear Stephen Harper," Paul Martin told progressive voters, "then vote Liberal because that's your only alternative." It's called "strategic voting," and many voters bought it: they checked the box marked "Liberal" on their ballots when their hearts really said "NDP."

Of course, it's no surprise when Paul Martin resorts to this tactic. But when it's a labour leader like CAW president Buzz Hargrove, I say enough is enough.

Earlier today (December 2), Brother Hargrove gave Paul Martin a qualified endorsement, saying that the minority Liberal government "deserves to go back to Ottawa with even bigger numbers." He urged his members to vote Liberal in ridings where the NDP has no chance of winning. "Don't waste your vote," he said.

"Waste your vote?" Apart from fuzzy logic—who gets to decide, after all, which ridings are hopeless for the NDP?—this is also lazy politics. It ignores the ebb and flow of voter preferences—especially in the shadow of scandal, such as we've seen with the Gomery report. It also ignores the fact that the Liberals are a tired, corrupt and spent force who have been governing for far too long without defending public health care from privatization or promoting good jobs and labour stability. Indeed: why on earth should working people hand Paul Martin our vote as an act of faith?

Even if the NDP truly has "no chance of winning" in certain ridings, that's all the more reason to reduce the popular vote for both other parties and increase the NDP's party revenues for the next time around. If we ever want to see a New Democrat government in Ottawa, then that's the type of "strategic voting" we need to start doing.

There's no better time than the present. Support for the two major parties is shaky at best, and the NDP's position in popular opinion polls does not reflect the party's increasing support in ridings where the sitting Liberal or Conservative MP is vulnerable. New Democrats, in other words, are in a good position to stake out larger political territory, stand out from the Liberals and assert their own agenda, and plant in the public's mind the idea that an NDP government is a real possibility rather than a utopian pipe dream.

That's right, folks. It's time to start imagining Jack Layton as prime minister and the NDP as the governing party.

Let's try this on for size over the next several weeks: whether you're on the job or at home, talking with friends,

family or colleagues about the election, focus your discussion on the NDP. If you're actually volunteering for the party, remove the words "strong opposition" from your vocabulary. Instead, talk about how the party needs to win every single riding where Liberal or Conservative support appears to be slipping. Talk about how a Jack Layton administration is going to defend public healthcare, improve access to daycare and promote good jobs in our communities. Talk about an NDP government as if the party is currently hovering at 35 percentage points in the public opinion polls, rather than 16 to 20. And while you're at it, send e-mails to friends and relatives in other parts of the country, and talk about the same stuff. You'll be amazed by how quickly the word spreads.

Right-wing media pundits like to describe the notion of a federal NDP government as "unthinkable." Well, it's time to start thinking about it.

December 2, 2005

Solidarity Fridays!

*Wear your union
pin and share
ideas with co-
workers on how we
can support each
other.*



Gibsons 391 member Laura Houle (far right) supporting the BCTF picket line at her daughter's school this fall



10th Annual Labour Community Christmas Dinners

When: Saturday, December 24, 2005
5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Where: Vancouver

Maritime Labour Centre

1880 Triumph Street, Vancouver, B.C.

Where: Surrey:

Upper Auditorium Whalley Legion Hall

13525 - 106th Avenue, Surrey, B.C.

Why: To bring a small measure of joy into someone's life. Any donation that you can send is greatly appreciated.

Please make cheques payable to:

Labour Community Christmas Dinner
c/o Angela Schira, Secretary-Treasurer
B.C. Federation of Labour
200-5118 Joyce Street
Vancouver, B.C.
V5R 4H1

For more information on picking up donations or to volunteer, please contact CUPE BC's Sharon Prescott at (604) 291-9119, Edward Wood at 604-685-9556 or the B.C. Federation of Labour 604-430-1421.

Environmental Awareness Committee News

by Keith Edwards

Better late than never...

VPL CUPE 391 staff Environmental Awareness Committee (EAC) would like to thank all 108 participants in this years' Clean Air Day Challenge on June 8th, 2005. EAC drew separately from FITCITY so as VPL staff could have prizes won among themselves rather than VPL just competing against other city departments. Congratulations to the VPL employee, I know of at least one - Hank Einarson, that won from that draw.

A special thank you to local 391 for their \$100 contribution towards the prizes. The rest of the prize money came from the refundable fund, collected and returned by EAC volunteers.

Out of the names drawn, we tried to pair the prizes with the people that could best use them. Hopefully EAC was not too far off. Bike riders won the bike certificates and related maps/trail guides etc. Maybe these gas prices will get us all into or onto something less dependent upon fossil fuel!

Clean Air Day prize winners:

Ashley Tanasiychuk (Britannia) - \$40 gift certificate for Our Community Bikes at 3283 Main St. + a Greater Vancouver Cycling Map & Guide, Fall/Winter 2004 2nd ed.

Mark Wostradowski (Cat.) - \$40 gift certificate for Bicycle Sports Pacific + a Greater Vancouver Cycling Map & Guide, Fall/Winter 2004 2nd ed.

Shelly Zhang (Level 4) - \$30 gift certificate for Choices Market.

Corinne Thiriar (Level 6) – Bike guide maps for Seymour, Cypress and Fromme + a Greater Vancouver Cycling Map & Guide, Fall/Winter 2004 2nd ed.

Musa Tryon (Level 6) - Choices reusable bag with one box of Nature's Gate Natural Toothpaste and a If You Care 100% recycled aluminum foil (50 sq. ft.).

Dorothy Tan (Joe Fortes) – Choices reusable bag with one box of Nature's Gate Natural Toothpaste and a If You Care 100% unbleached parchment paper (70 sq.ft).

Cynthia Hopkins (Childrens) – Choices reusable bag with one box of Nature's Gate Natural Toothpaste and If You Care 100% unbleached parchment paper (70 sq.ft).

Joreen Wan (Level 5) – 4 Joreen Wan – 4 Chocolate bars from Endangered Species Chocolate Company (with 10% of profits supporting endangered animals).

Helen Lightfoot (Britannia) - a Greater Vancouver Cycling Map & Guide, Fall/Winter 2004 2nd ed.

Michael Gelinas (QIS) - a Greater Vancouver Cycling Map & Guide, Fall/Winter 2004 2nd ed.

In other news...did you know that over a billion plastic bags are given to consumers every day, most of them in North America and Europe. This not only creates demand for non-renewable resources like petroleum and natural gas, but also wreaks havoc with the ecology by polluting the air with toxins during the manufacturing process, polluting land and water when they are disposed of, and damaging ecosystems during the never-ending search for new sources of petroleum and natural gas.*

We can reduce our ecological footprint by simply re-using plastic bags and re-using bags that are made from environmentally friendly materials – like hemp.

**And starting wars that kill tens of thousands of people to avoid change.*

For more information on this subject visit reusablebags.com

Young library workers speak out

By Holman Louis

(Article was first published on the cupe.bc.ca/ website, Dec. 18, 2003)

CUPE BC wants to get its young members involved in the union. Here's what some young library workers had to say about issues that concern them. I also asked for their feedback on some typical concerns of library workers in general.

Some of the interviews were conducted on the spot. Others were done via email. The results, although non-scientific, may represent the views of many young library workers in B.C.

YW1 is 25, and has worked six years as a page at the Greater Victoria Public Library.

YW2 is 22, and has been a page at the Greater Victoria Public Library for 5 1/2 years.

YW3 is 21, and has worked four years as a page at Greater Victoria Public Library.

YW4 is 28, has been a **Library Assistant 1** at **Vancouver Public Library** for four years.

Q1. As a young library worker, what is one key issue that concerns you, and what do you think the union can or should do to address your concern?

YW1: There is no opportunity for advancement. There's too much hiring from outside. Having a university degree is a requirement to get a [circulation assistant] job.

Experience within the system should count. The union should push for recognition of minimum requirements [for the job].

Note: While the statement about having a university degree being a requirement is an exaggeration, YW1 obviously feels that management has a propensity towards hiring applicants who are more than qualified for the job. This is despite wording in his collective agreement that states that where 'the qualifications,

experience, skill and ability of the auxiliary employee to perform the work in question is equal to that of an external applicant, the auxiliary employee shall receive preference.'

YW2: After five and a half years of working regular hours, I am still considered to be an auxiliary employee. Employees meeting a certain threshold of hours should be made regular staff, regardless of job title. And there is no holiday pay for statutory holidays. I always lose hours because of statutory holidays.

Note: At the Greater Victoria Public Library the collective agreement states that all pages are, and remain, auxiliary employees, despite working regularly scheduled hours.

YW3: I don't like how jobs get added to our list of duties. Processing of holds used to be done entirely by the circulation assistants, but some of it is now done by the pages. But we didn't get any increase in pay for the additional duty. Pages need to stand up more for themselves. Many of us are just working here while going to school and don't take an interest in the union.

Q2. Do you feel that there is a trend towards the de-humanization of libraries; that there is less personal contact between staff and patrons due to fewer staff and an increased reliance on technology?

YW2: Yes, a little, like the self-checkouts, and patrons having the ability to check their account status on the Internet.

See *Young Library Workers* on next page...

...continued *Young Library Workers*

But personal contact with staff is still available. There is less contact [between patrons and staff], but there is a choice.

YW4: Yes, to a degree, although I know for a fact that it is not what the majority of the public want. If they wanted to just interface with a machine they could stay at home and troll the Internet on their computer. A public library provides many things to the public that cannot ever be replaced by technology.

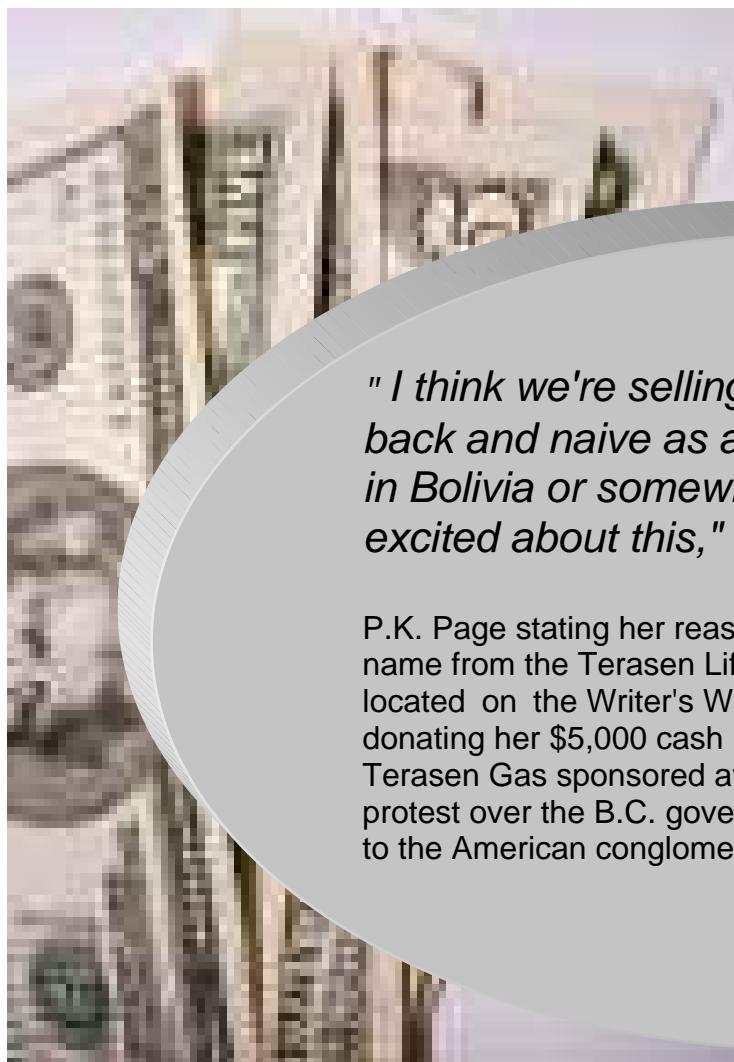
Note: In a follow-up question, none of the interviewees indicated that they feel threatened by the increased use of technology in libraries.

YW4: No. Even on the most basic level, a machine cannot re-shelf a book. And I do not believe in the future obsolescence of books.

Q3. Are you concerned about job security and pay equity?

YW2: Pay equity for sure. We're not keeping up with other public sector workers in wages. Our wage is barely keeping pace with minimum wage. It's definitely not keeping pace with inflation. As for job security, being an auxiliary, [the library] has no obligation to give me hours. I can go from 35 hours per week to zero, and they don't even have to give me an explanation.

YW4: I am definitely concerned about pay equity. Public librarianship is the lowest paid profession, and our clerical staff members do not have wage parity with other civic inside workers. As for job security, that is always a concern, especially with complex seniority clauses that punish those who change job status within our workplace.



"I think we're selling our birthright. We're so laid back and naive as a country. I mean if we were in Bolivia or somewhere, I think people might be excited about this,"

P.K. Page stating her reason on why she decided to remove her name from the Terasen Lifetime Achievement Award plaque, located on the Writer's Walk in the Central library. Ms. Page is donating her \$5,000 cash prize to charity and is hoping other Terasen Gas sponsored award winners will do the same, in protest over the B.C. government approved sale of Terasen Gas to the American conglomerate Kinder Morgan.

Source: CBC News, Nov 22 2005

Sweet lucid dreams are made of these...

By Arthur Gillard (L.A. II)

Lucid dreaming may be simply defined as dreaming with awareness that you are dreaming. It may occur spontaneously or as a result of the dreamer noticing incongruities or impossibilities in the dream. Although it has been noted in the West at least as far back as Aristotle, awareness of the phenomenon of lucid dreaming did not enter the public consciousness on any large scale until relatively recently, notably following the publication in 1985 of Stephen LaBerge's groundbreaking book **Lucid Dreaming: The Power of Being Awake and Aware in Your Dreams**. In the East there is a rich tradition of lucid dreaming in certain meditation traditions, but here we will focus on the Western approach – although it is worth noting that studies have shown the incidence of spontaneous lucid dreams tends to increase in long-term meditators.

The degree of lucidity one may experience varies widely, from low-level or tacit lucidity – enough to use magical powers, for example – all the way to high-level lucidity in which you realize everything you are experiencing is occurring in your mind while your physical body is safe in bed. Generally your ability to control the dream increases with the degree of lucidity, but it is up to you to choose how much control to exert – including choosing to simply witness the dream as it unfolds.

The experience of lucid dreaming is limited only by your imagination, and can be used in a variety of ways, including fantasy/adventure, overcoming nightmares, rehearsal of skills, problem solving or creativity, healing, experiencing psychedelic or transcendent states, shadow work, and insight into the illusory nature of reality.

Lucid dreaming is an easily learnable skill, given motivation and effort. The most fundamental element is good dream recall, which improves readily if one sets the intention to recall dreams when going to bed, and gets into the habit of writing down whatever can be recalled upon waking up. Many exercises have been developed to cultivate the skill of lucid dreaming, but one of the best for beginners is State Testing.

CRITICAL STATE TESTING TECHNIQUE

1. Make a habit of seriously asking yourself several times during the day, "Am I dreaming or awake, right now?" Particularly do this if you notice anything out of the ordinary.
2. Test your state. There are several ways to do this, but one of the easiest is to read some text, look away, then read it again – in dreams writing will almost always change in some way. Or jump up and try to prolong the time you stay airborne. Another very reliable technique is to look twice at a digital time display, which never behave correctly in dreams.
3. If your state test reveals that you are awake, then imagine what you would do in the same situation if it turned out to be a dream: this will help motivate you and also help set intentions to carry out while lucid dreaming.

A final tip: for beginners, it may be difficult to stay in the dream state for long once you've become lucid. However, should you feel yourself beginning to wake up, spin rapidly while focusing your attention on your dreambody; almost invariably this will stabilize the dream.

References:

1. Lucid Dreaming FAQ: <http://www.lucidity.com/LucidDreamingFAQ2.html>
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3. Patricia Garfield, Ph.D., *Pathway to Ecstasy: The Way of the Dream Mandala* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1979)
4. Malcolm Godwin, *The Lucid Dreamer: A Waking Guide for the Traveler Between Worlds* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994)
5. Celia Green and Charles McCreery, *Lucid Dreaming: The Paradox of Consciousness During Sleep* (New York: Routledge, 1994)
6. Kenneth Kelzer, *The Sun and the Shadow: My Experiment with Lucid Dreaming* (Virginia: A.R.E. Press, 1987)
7. Stephen LaBerge, *Lucid Dreaming: The Power of Being Awake and Aware in Your Dreams* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985)
8. Robert L. Van de Castle, Ph.D., *Our Dreaming Mind* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994)
9. Rick Veitch, *Rabid Eye: The Dream Art of Rick Veitch*, Vermont: King Hell Press, 1995)
10. Charles T. Tart, *Waking Up: Overcoming the Obstacles to Human Potential* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1986) [The focus of this book is neither dreaming nor lucid dreaming, but many students of lucid dreaming have found it invaluable.]

Editorial

The War on Christmas

People, there is a war on. I'm not talking about the one going on over in Iraq, which is to liberate Iraqis from tyranny, oppression, torture, and their oil, and replace it with peace, freedom and democracy. No, I'm referring to the war at home, in our own front yards, store windows, shopping malls, Christmas television and radio programs, advertisements, schools, community centers, libraries, government offices, newspapers, office parties, family gatherings, mail flyers, coffee shops, grocery stores, turkey farms, beer commercials, and discounted consumer bulk warehouses. Special interests groups have added another front on their war on decency and free and open markets across the globe, to include the war on Christ himself. Instead of using the word Christmas, special interests and radicals, who just can't seem to accept the fact that communism lost to capitalism, want to take Christmas away from us by taking the word Christmas out of Merry Christmas, and replace it with words like Happy Holidays, Seasons Greetings, or what have you.

Make no mistake, this is the first step to destroying the meaning of Christmas. First they eliminate the word Christmas, and people will say "Well I'm not a Christian, so why should I be concerned?" Then they will ban Santa Claus from our community centers and shopping malls, force us to eat only tofurkey instead of factory farmed turkeys, legislate a moratorium on using arable land for harvesting Christmas trees, and energy humbuggers who control government will fine people for lighting up their yards and houses for more than only six weeks before Christmas. I should be allowed to put up as many lights as I want on my own private property, and leave them on all the time if I so choose. God is all about light, so it only makes sense that the more light I surround myself with, the more I'm celebrating the spirit of Christmas, Christians blockbuster holiday that is a win-win-win for everybody, and rewards us with our celebration of the season by providing a 'shot in the arm' for the economy. And the last time I checked we still have the right to celebrate our freedom of religion in this country.

If it was in God's plan for us not to harvest turkeys in massive quantities then why didn't he make turkeys that could fly and get away, and why would he make

them taste so good when cooked and served with cranberry sauce and mashed potatoes? And if Christmas trees were not made for Christmas than why are they called Christmas trees? It seems so self evident to sensible people. But these people are not sensible, and these times, my friends, are not sensible times. I mean, if we start down the slippery slope of celebrating any old Christian holiday with words like Happy Holidays or Seasons Greetings, what kind of confusing message are we sending to our children when we tell them "No Johnny, the Easter bunny comes during this time of year. Santa only gives you presents at Christmas time." Pretty soon parents will be forced by whining kids to put up Christmas stockings in the springtime, and dressing up the Easter bunny in a Santa suit. Then it just goes down hill from there, and holidays like Thanksgiving and Canada Day will become inseparable from the Christmas holiday. There'll be anarchy in the shopping malls, and the electric grid will collapse due to having outdoor lights turned on $\frac{3}{4}$ of the year, and we'll all be plunged into darkness, the final reckoning: the day when the true believers of Christmas, the ones who only grossly over consume during December, part of November and into January, are separated from the ones who yielded to the forces that lead to darkness. Then who will they turn to? Walmart for an everyday discounted fuel burning devise? To their believer neighbour who has wisely prepared for this day by carefully cultivating a small turkey grow-op farm in their basement? Will city dwellers, with their inexperience in using fire to stay warm and cook with, accidentally burn their own homes down, creating a domino effect and causing a wave of firestorms that will destroy cities all over the world? Or will only North and South America be adversely effected? Will people go insane from sensory deprivation, hunger and cold, start dressing up like Santa Claus en masse and attack helpless bunnies to devour their small brains in a hopeless and misguided attempt to restore meaning back into their lives? And when their emaciated bodies emerge from the bottom of your chimney, their crazed faces smeared with a mixture of ashes, bunny blood, and cookie crumbs tangled up in their untrimmed mustaches, whose side will you be on?

Members Voices

Albertine Phan would like to inform all VPL employees currently covered by Pacific Blue Cross extended health that, when the CUPE 391 contract is up for negotiation in 2006, they can request to extend their coverage to include homeopathy treatment. "This came up as a result of my presentation about homeopathy during the staff conference," Albertine said. "I had ten participants and it was very clear that most were interested but unfortunately the extended health package at the moment doesn't cover homeopathy. During this time of flu epidemic scare I would like to put the word out there that there are other options besides the flu shot." Albertine says "Homeopathy aims at stimulating the immune system to fight off infections or viruses. Vaccination actually gives you the disease and waits to see if your body can fight it off or not. Most people I know who got the flu shot became very ill and as a result have weakened immune systems."

Dear CUPE 391

The members have spoken. The biggest problem we all face is having too much work to do – and not enough time to complete the task. Is this news? Think about the weeding which is not done, or the shelf reading that never happens, or the constant backlog in Circulation – there is too much to do for the number of staff we have and the number of tasks to accomplish. We hear about "new initiatives" which affect us all, but seldom are asked our awarenesses of the impact these initiatives will have on our workload.

In terms of the "morale" of our union membership, workload is a red herring. Workload is essentially a surface issue, The real problems are the underlying ones which affect pockets of the CUPE 391 population. To look at workload without looking more deeply will leave us with the same morass we currently face, with, maybe, a few more people feeling better about themselves.

There are victims in CUPE local 391. Until we start to look at why we have victims among our union population we can't really address the morale issues we face. There may be some among us who chose not to answer the questionnaire

because it was going to be used to justify the surface issues rather than look beneath to the festering sores below the surface,

I firmly believe there are a number of people who have had their career paths sidelined, suffered unnecessary emotional anguish, and been hurt by the way management and the current practices of our union seem to pit people against each other.

Rather than working together, as in an effective workplace, we seem to have created a fortress mentality, where some members feel, as long as "I'm all right, I don't care how my actions affect others". People who choose to act as bullies or not pull their weight, have no place in a healthy work place.

Dealing with the issues of bullying and office politics will take us further down the road to good morale than concentrating, at the start, on workload. Treating all members of staff with appropriate respect will make it easier, and fairer, for all.

Respectfully yours,
Hank Einarson



Scene from Carnegie Reading Room book give away
every Friday afternoon on East Hastings St.

Off The Shelf is compiled and edited by Lorne MacDonald for CUPE 391. Submissions, letters and enquiries may be sent to me by hard copy to Carnegie Reading Room, or by e-mail to Hlornemac@vpl.caH.

I wish to thank all who sent in submissions for this issue of the newsletter.

Upcoming Meetings:



Monday, January 9, 2006,
Alma Van Dusen Room, Central Library – 1:00 pm

Thursday, February 23, 2006
Peter Kaye Room, Central Library – 5:45 pm

Annual General Meeting

Sunday, April 30, 2006
Alice MacKay Room, Central Library – 10:00 am