



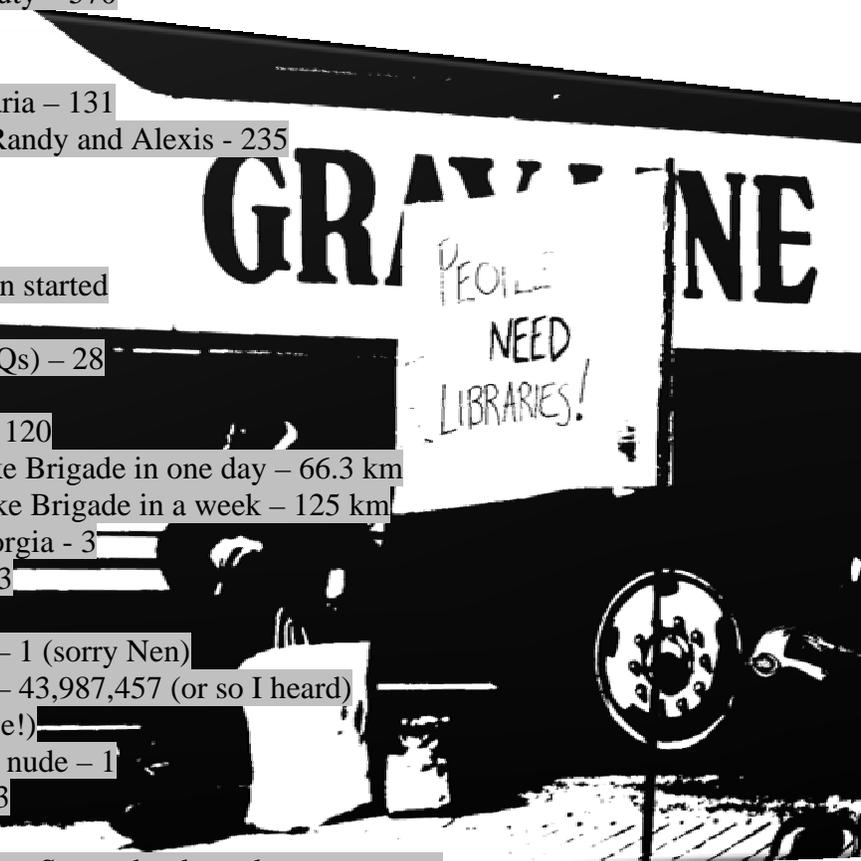
Newsletter of Vancouver  
and Gibsons Library Workers

# Off The Shelf

## Strike by numbers

by Peter DeGroot and friends

Days CUPE Local 391 were on strike – 87  
Members who signed up for picket duty – 570  
Picket locations – all 21 branches  
Kilometres driven by “the van” – 75  
Kilometres walked on the line by Maria – 131  
Crew talks given by Peter, D’Arcy, Randy and Alexis - 235  
Signatures on the petition – 5,650  
Videos created during the strike – 19  
Blog entries - 142  
Picket signs used – more after the rain started  
Breakfasts at Central- 4  
Gourmet BBQs (or non-gourmet BBQs) – 28  
Chili Nights at Central - 5  
Hardship hats donated to Britannia – 120  
Longest distance travelled by the Bike Brigade in one day – 66.3 km  
Average distance travelled by the Bike Brigade in a week – 125 km  
Painted banners for Grandeur on Georgia - 3  
Front page photos in 24 and Metro - 3  
Dogs who joined the picket line- 17  
Number of folding chairs that broke – 1 (sorry Nen)  
Unsubstantiated rumours that started – 43,987,457 (or so I heard)  
Youngest picketer – 14 months (Olive!)  
Supporters who joined the line in the nude – 1  
Sam Sullivan sightings on our line - 3  
Booths at “Word on the Strike” – 28  
Days waiting to hear back from George Stroumboulopoulos – too many  
Different hats worn by Peter – 2  
Guest speakers at our picket line – 13  
(Jack Layton, Libby Davies, Tom Hanson, Naomi Klein, NDP Candidate Randall Garrison, Bill Saunders, Ellen Woodsworth, Counsellor David Cadman, World Poetry Society, Poet Laureate George McWhirter, UBC Poet, Regina CUPE Library Worker, Solidarity Notes Choir...)  
Sets of wings worn by the Flying Pickets – 7  
Days that our solidarity wavered - 0



## Womens' Work

by Mary Duffy

Walking the line, I was drawn to the warmth of the circles of knitters reminding me of my mother's (gone now for 18 years) and my grandmother's (gone 42 years) work.

Practically every week when my older daughter was tiny, a sweater a cloak, mittens, or pair of booties would arrive in the mail from another province. These cherished gifts contained more than just beautiful wool in pastel colours, they held in their fibres a grandmother's DNA and love for a grandchild who would only manage to visit her twice before she died. Eight years later, my mother's work was passed on to my second daughter, a grandchild she did not live to meet.

What remains now, twenty two years later are my mother's creations; strong and beautiful enough to pass on to the next generation.

My grandmother and mother never "worked outside of the home". My grandmother raised eight children while "making" fish on the flakes, planting vegetable gardens, feeding the hens, retrieving their eggs, shearing the sheep and carding their wool to knit. My grandfather, skipper of a fishing boat was her partner.

My mother similarly did not work "outside the home", but very hard within it.

The family/ economic unit has changed drastically since I was a child. Recent studies show the nuclear family/economic model is no longer the norm. Most women work outside the home. Many women like me are single parents or are in alternative family structures.

We've come a long way babies, or have we?

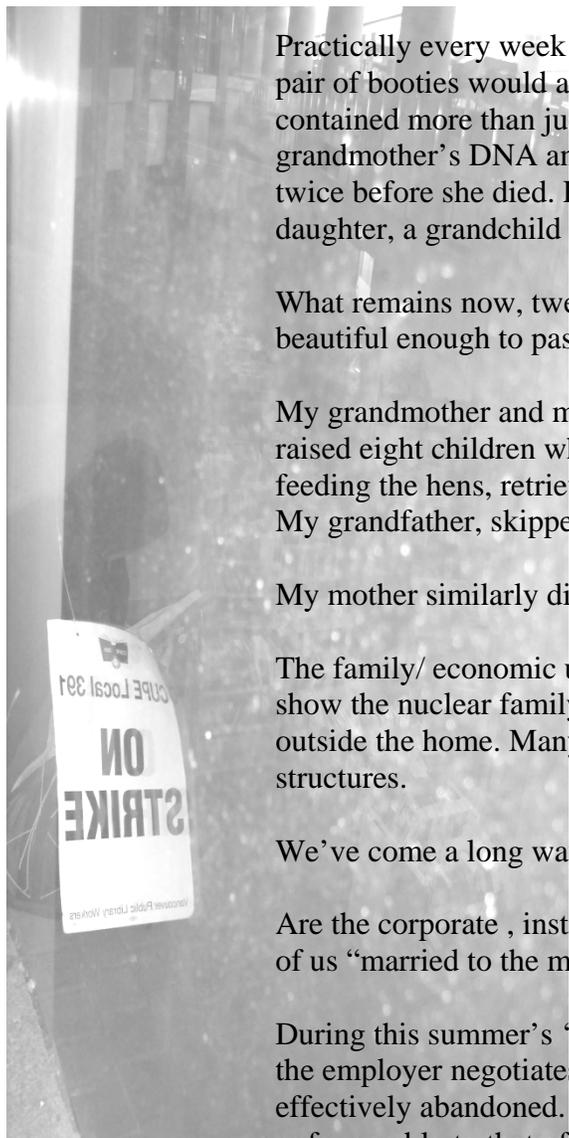
Are the corporate , institutional families we have joined fair partnerships. Or are some of us "married to the mob", finding ourselves tied to hierarchical betrayers and bullies?

During this summer's 'lock out", because that really what it was, not a true strike where the employer negotiates in good time and in good faith with the employee, we were effectively abandoned. Librarians' work was compared over and over again unfavourably to that of our 'brother", the city planner. Our work could not be seen as similar to theirs, it just did not entail the same responsibility.

Selecting materials, creating programs to provide struggling families with literacy and seniors with lifelong learning. No, not nearly as important as providing a city with plans to create monuments to itself rather than finding and implementing solutions to this city's desperate problem of homelessness. Keeping current with the latest technological developments and ensuring even the city's neediest have equitable access to information.

Nope. Absolutely no complexity or responsibility there. Bob or Barbara the builder will always be seen as more "responsible" than Miriam or Mark the library worker because he/she is perceived to be engaged in performing traditional mens' work.

See **Women's Work** on page 3...



## Women's Work continued...

### *But if I had a hammer.....*

Well, I don't know but I've been told at various all staff meetings that he/she who does not change will be left behind. Will our institutions and in particular VPL who is so adept at adapting to technological change evolve to value, meet and match the new economic, family and societal patterns or will we be left far far behind as the new generation of library workers take their valuable skills: new media, language proficiency, community development tools and their knitting to find a "home" that is more progressive with regard to respecting and valuing their diverse skills?

### *Dispatches from Branchland*

There was a beeping sound around the reg. desk so staff were looking around all the equipment to see where it was coming from.

Not there.

Next place to check was the building alarm panel.

Nope not there.

Next, check all the computers...we're getting closer.

Finally, staff went over to the public station and saw a lady keeled over the IPAC keyboard. She had fallen asleep and her nose was hitting one of the keys.

Staff woke her up and she apologized.

Lily Gee  
Kitsilano Branch

**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 [lornemac@vpl.ca](mailto:lornemac@vpl.ca), or [freelorne@gmail.com](mailto:freelorne@gmail.com).

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



## *Does Protest Change the Status Quo?*

By Jennifer Ariel Caldwell

My mom was a good hippie in New York during the 60s. She participated in protests that mattered, caught national attention and shaped history. Throughout my life, I've marched for farmworkers' rights, against wars and schools of torture, but always felt like my participation made no difference. The wars roll on like the inexorable machines they are, the School of the Americas still teaches generals from all over the world how to torture and kill, farmworkers still get sprayed with pesticides and have to bring their infants with them to the fields. I've become jaded about my ability to change the status quo.

But with our strike, I really felt like we had the chance to stand up for what's right and fair, and that we might make a difference. Other library systems throughout the Lower Mainland, Canada and even across the world wanted to see the resolution to our strike. People stopped me on the street because of my bike flag ("People Need Libraries, Love Your Library") and encouraged us to continue our fight for equal pay for equal work. I felt like I had my big chance to stand up for what I believe in, just like my mom taught me, and that it would make a difference.

On the eve of our second vote, I wrote in my journal that I wasn't sure if our struggle had brought about the idealistic change I hoped for. I believed, and still do, that our Bargaining Committee fought long and hard with an entrenched, antagonistic employer, and they did the very best they could. They had our best interests in mind and bargained with skill and savvy that I can only imagine. We were wet, cold, hungry, financially broke, and disappointed.

At the pre-vote meeting, Laura asked whether the "special wage adjustments" were enough of a step toward pay equity, and voices from the floor called out "no!" The agreement still left out over half of our membership, despite the flapping of our bike brigadiers' "No One Left Behind" signs, sending our prayers for a fair resolution like Tibetan prayer flags flutter to bring world peace.

Theoretically, we can't have wage increases for everyone because we need to give that money to the top wage-earners to make VPL "competitive" as

a workplace. If we were paid fairly in the first place, it might not be so hard to find and retain staff. But universities, colleges – heck, even the besieged school libraries – pay much better than our pokey little municipal library. We'd truly be competitive if we could offer a salary commensurate with similar positions throughout the City.

Library workers know their stuff. They provide professional reference service to the community every day of the week. And contrary to what's been promoted in the media, library staff members do kick-ass research. The pay equity presentation that the Bargaining Committee made to Brian Foley is a terrific example, and it's publicly available on the CUPE 391 website.



*Scooter and the gang serving up delicious burgers for another one of those fabulous Friday barbeques outside Central*

see 'Protest' on page 6...



# Winter Ball 2007 Winter Ball 2007 @ The WISE Hall



I would like to thank Debra McGerrigle (and others who may be credited for these photos), and the Very Pretty Ladies for putting on a fun night and donating \$178 to the WISH Women's Shelter from the 50/50 draw.

**A job well done ladies!**

## Congratulations to contest winners!

**Belle of the Ball** - Gillian Doan

**Beau of the Ball** - Jen Caldwell

**Charlie Brown of the Ball** - Dana Putnam

## **Dance Competition:**

**1st place** went to Mosh Mount Pleasant

**2nd place** went to Suzy, Jen and the Swing Dancers

**3rd place** went to Elektra and her Sexy Back gang



*'Protest' continued...*

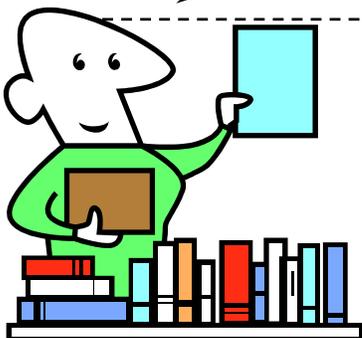
The effects of the crap deal we accepted have already begun. Many people left the system during the strike, and others will leave. Library staff who planned to have Nov. 12 off for Remembrance Day now have to re-arrange their plans since the library will be open. Despite Aliza's hard work, Johan and other auxiliary and part time workers will not get time and a half for serving the Carnegie community on Christmas Day or any other holiday. Sherpas, let's heave-ho with the burdens and continue to carry this lurching, unbalanced system up the mountain of decent public service, despite the lack of benefits to ease our aching backs.

Just before the voting started at the information meeting on Oct. 19, the lineups at the microphones refilled themselves like garden water fountains. Undertow emotions tugged at us; some people cried and others swore. Among other things, we talked about how this is a first step toward a more equitable, professional relationship with the employer and the City. There is still a lot of work to be done. Hopefully the newly-minted Joint Committee on Classification Issues will be able to sink its teeth into the pay equity issue, which continues to glare like a lighthouse beacon from Central's seventh floor.

My mom's response to the strike was "you look good in a placard, honey." And my response, after 88 days, is that I hope other library systems build on the research supporting the case for pay equity, and take the fight a step further before the next round of VPL bargaining in 2011. I'm hurt by the employer's and City's attitude that our goretex bums could fuse with the Central cobblestones before they'd acknowledge our case. I feel like we may have made a difference but we might not see it for a long time. In this age of instant gratification, I'll just have to be patient before I rule out the idea that my presence at a protest ensures that it goes unnoticed.

For your worksites convenience I have listed the recycling items the Environmental Awareness Committee will accept for transporting to the recycling depot. Simply clip the box below, tape it onto a box or tote for staff to place recyclables into. When it is full send it off to central addressed to:

**CEN: Keith Edwards, EAC**



The EAC collects the following items, that VPL does not, to reuse or recycle:

- batteries (household)
- micro-fiche films,
- plastic cd and video cases (broken)
- plastic spools from cash register receipts,
- plastic wrappings (around newspaper or documents),
- styrofoam blocks (from new computers)
- tattletape,

## Christmas Day at Carnegie

by Beth Davies  
Librarian - Carnegie Reading Room

Although I've been down for the odd visit, this year was the first year I've worked Christmas Day at Carnegie. To be honest, I was very grumpy about coming in to work. I'd been opening presents with my kids at home, having a lovely time. Playing superheroes with their capes and magic wands seemed much more attractive than going in to work.

Even when I got to Carnegie I questioned why the library needed to open. Sure, it was great that the Carnegie Centre was open as a place for people to hang out, in the warm, with food served by the kitchen and occasional visits from a neighbourhood Santa or two. But there aren't any newspapers published on Christmas Day, and who wants to check books out?

By five minutes past ten, the place was packed. Christmas Eve newspapers were spread out on the library's big oak tables, and a steady stream of people came in to get the crossword puzzles that we always photocopy, even though they were from the day before. People were checking out books and magazines, videos and DVDs, sharing recommendations with other patrons about movies they'd watched the night before. It was busier than any regular morning, and it was pretty clear that there was a huge demand for our services, today of all days.



Carnegie Community Centre staff and volunteers welcomed back library staff after the strike with a big 'Welcome Back' banner sign. A very warm and appreciated welcome indeed!

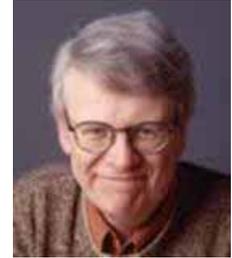
Five minutes later, and I knew I'd made the right decision to come in. A patron had decided, after twenty-two years, to reconnect with his family. He remembered his mother's phone number, and although the area code had changed, we looked the number up. The name that popped up was the man's brother. The patron took his phone card and went to use the pay phone. Within five minutes, he was back, unable to get the card to work. Legally blind, the man was unable to read the phone number and password to make the phone call, so I wrote it out in large numbers with a thick black marker on a big sheet of paper. The patron had many family members and friends' names to look up. He wondered if any of them were alive, if any of them would remember him, if any of them would want to keep in touch. Back and forth the man came for a couple of hours that morning, always patiently waiting, and always stepping aside to let other patrons check out a DVD or borrow a newspaper. By noon, he'd discovered what we had both suspected, that his mother was dead. But he'd reconnected with two of his brothers, and had a lead on the whereabouts of his son, who was in Vancouver. And before I left, the patron presented me with a candy cane, and wished me a Happy Christmas.

I left Carnegie shortly after lunch time, buoyed by the spirit of community in the neighbourhood, and fuelled by way too much sugar. And I left the library in capable, dedicated hands: Farah Jamal, Wanda Power, and Wendy Fletcher all gave up time on Christmas Day to work at Carnegie. They, and all the Carnegie part-timers and auxiliaries who staff the branch on statutory holidays, work for straight pay. Their commitment to our patrons and our community is generous and humbling.



Paul Whitney's annual salary for the last four years:

2004:	<b>\$147,028,</b>	plus <b>\$2,662</b> in expenses.
2005:	<b>\$159,910</b>	plus <b>\$2,738</b> in expenses.
2006:	<b>\$166,604</b>	plus <b>\$5,251</b> in expenses.
2007:	<b>\$172,001</b>	plus <b>\$5,100</b> in expenses.



Mr. Whitney's salary increased by \$24, 973 in only four years, more than what a new 'Shelver' will likely earn in a whole year. As Mr. Whitney toasts the Library Board and the city for giving him such generous raises, VPL staff who perform some of the most physically demanding jobs within the library, book shelvers, are now more likely than ever to join the growing ranks of the working poor in this world class city. So much for equality in the workplace.

Sources: [http://www.vpl.ca/pdfs/2004\\_VPL\\_SOFI.pdf](http://www.vpl.ca/pdfs/2004_VPL_SOFI.pdf); [http://www.vpl.ca/pdfs/2005\\_VPL\\_SOFI.pdf](http://www.vpl.ca/pdfs/2005_VPL_SOFI.pdf); [http://www.vpl.ca/pdfs/2006\\_VPL\\_SOFI.pdf](http://www.vpl.ca/pdfs/2006_VPL_SOFI.pdf)  
[http://www.vpl.ca/images/uploads/file/pdf/Library\\_Financial\\_Statements\\_2007\\_sofi.pdf](http://www.vpl.ca/images/uploads/file/pdf/Library_Financial_Statements_2007_sofi.pdf)

## Announcements

Carnegie is always in need of clean, used plastic shopping bags (the kind with handles). Remember to take any receipts out!

Thanks to all of you who continue to send bags - we really appreciate it.

Beth

The Hardship Committee would like to thank everyone who worked so hard on the benefit concert, knitted, donated paycheques, grocery cards and otherwise gave of their time and energy with such kindness. We couldn't have done it without you.

Our deepest thanks. -Angela Ho

*It's almost the year 4706,  
and time to welcome the  
Year of the Rat!*

## Farewell sister, and keep up the struggle!

I remember on one rainy and cold day on the picket line I had a long discussion with a fellow cupe 391 member. We talked about the inequities within our workplace and how increasingly difficult it was for people like us to actually afford to live in Vancouver anymore, despite claims by mayor Sam Sullivan and his party at making Vancouver the most liveable city in the world, whatever that means. If 'liveability' means escalating gentrification throughout the eastside, or increasing commute times for downtown workers because they can't afford to live close to their workplace anymore, or the doubling of the homeless population in a few years, or the world class child poverty rate in Vancouver and B.C. (the highest in Canada), then we do live in a most 'liveable' city. But, if you're like me, and consider liveability to include things like maintaining and increasing affordable housing, minimizing inequality, taking care of our most vulnerable citizens (the ones without power and a voice that is listened to, like children and the mentally ill), then Vancouver and B.C. have completely failed.

The people who work for the Vancouver Public Library reflect this growing trend of increasing income inequality. Paul Whitney was paid a remarkable \$166, 604 in 2006, almost \$20,000 more than what he was paid in 2004, while bottom tier library workers will get paid less than before.

My CUPE 391 sister and I talked about the hypocrisy of city politicians, the increasing unliveability of Vancouver for low and middle income earners, the tax payer money pits known as the Olympics, and the Canada Line, and the Convention Centre that primarily benefits the

already well-off who own real estate, restaurants and hotels. We talked about the condo towers downtown that sit almost completely empty for most of the year while people literally die on the streets of this world class city. We talked about the politicians in awe of Neo-Liberalism or Neo-Conservatism, like everyone who holds power at the municipal, provincial or federal level, and their relentless desire in smashing what's left of the welfare state and the social safety net.

Then we talked about our future with VPL. If no meaningful gains were made in this collective agreement, my co-worker stated in frustration, then she would seriously consider quitting her job of twenty-plus years and moving on, because she felt that she could not work for an employer that disrespected its workers as much as this employer does. I was reminded of this conversation I had with her when I recently read the 'Staff on the move' bulletin on the staff webpage. She was in the 'farewell' section, as were a surprising number of other long-term staff members. Maybe if she just stuck around long enough to attend one of the management-hosted "Facilitated Engagement Sessions" she could have learned from management-hired 'facilitators' how to re-orient one's perceptions towards management from negativity to positivity and productivity, regardless how badly one is getting screwed.

Farewell sister, and to other CUPE 391 members, who have recently left VPL for one reason or another. Your solidarity on the picket line will not be forgotten.

-Lorne MacDonald

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*"If workers in BC and across Canada have suffered one defeat after another over the past two decades, it has not been from a lack of militant strike struggles, but because these struggles have been confined within the straitjacket of collective bargaining and parliamentary protest. That is to say they have been predicated on an acceptance of the existing capitalist socio-economic order which systematically subordinates basic social needs to the profits of big business."*

*By Carl Bronski  
25 October 2007,  
In the World Socialist Website  
wsws.org*

## Hardship Hats

Hardship hats, mitts and scarves  
Drop from sisters' silver needles  
A grandmother's lessons remembered

Modern day Madam Defarges  
Help cast off betrayal  
Soft wool absorbs loss as  
Guillotined hopes fall into their laps

Circles purl pink ribbon and blue mohair  
Create safety nets that stretch,  
Catch, hold and warm casualties  
Wounded by a city that has despoiled itself  
Turning citizen against citizeness  
Decapitating equity and truth

By Mary Duffy

**Dedicated to ALL the “Knit Picketeers” including:**

**Joyce Gee** who gave me a friendship scarf;  
**Susan Everall** who knit a pink scarf the same length as my daughter;  
Her sister, **Cathi Zbarsky** who disarmed an abrasive instigator at Kits with her knitting needles;  
Mother and daughter duo, **Erie and Lara Maestro**, who learned a new skill from their “sisters”;  
**Diana Keng** who can knit and take cell phone pictures at the same time;  
**Penny MacEwan** who knits for her son, Alexander;  
**Charlotte Currie**, another mother of sons who knits for them and others;  
**Margaret Nishihama** who never stopped knitting and smiling;  
**Joan Geppert** who helped stitch up Margaret's many creations;  
**Gina Gaudet** who brought along her “knit wit” and her Sheba, Maximus;  
**Monica Chattaway** who moved away;  
**Karen Lai** who came back to the line and the circle after saying a final good-bye to her mother.

