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Workers Speak Out about Their Concerns

On the Serious Problem of the Casualization of the Workforce

- Jason MacLean, President, Nova Scotia Government and General Employees' Union -

Our most pressing concern is the economy and job security. With the casualization of the work force and more precarious work coming up, my members' jobs are being put at risk. So for instance, the Conservative Party is talking about cutting jobs or cutting back on the public sector. We have to understand that it is the public sector workers that keep the community moving, especially in rural Canada. When you are talking about health care, you don't just say that you are going to improve health care, you talk about putting the services and supports in there and that is the public sector worker who works in that system. You need more people.

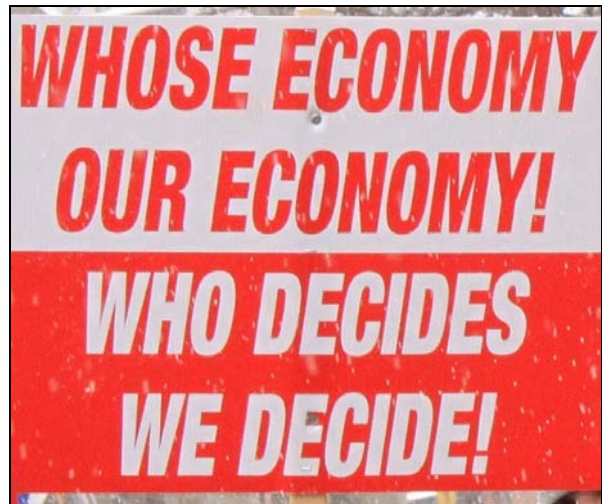
We have issues in Nova Scotia where the Health Authority is posting positions that are at 0.3 designation which is like one-third of a job. Not only that, but they have the audacity to post 30 of them at a time, which in my opinion are nine to 10 full-time jobs that could be out there and not have people working three to four jobs.

We need to get rid of the precarious work and have more substantial solid work for people so they can contribute back to the communities.

Another issue that is out there, and it is our members as well, is more Nova Scotians than you know are using soup kitchens and food banks. We need an affordable housing strategy. We need to have people not working three to four jobs so they can take care of their health, they can take care of their families and not end up in the broken health care system or the welfare system.

So these are issues that are presenting themselves to us and as far as I am concerned the parties are just brushing off things, they are not actually talking about tackling specific issues. I do hear about housing, which is good, but I do not hear about the health care system in terms of what it is comprised of and that is people.

You do not go into automation when you are talking about health care. You need to have the health care professionals in place to be able to do it and right now they are running low staff and that is an issue that is straight across the board, from Nova Scotia to BC. That is something that is being overlooked. I really would like to see a focus on the workers who are holding this country together and not just be about little banner issues such as health care because there is a lot more to health care than just saying the word.



When you casualize the workforce you are forcing somebody to work two, three, four jobs just to make ends meet. And not only that, they create precarious work so they can keep the wage level down. They are strictly competing with what the market is out there and what they are saying is people will take what is left over.

It is my belief that this is creating a situation where employers are not loyal to the employees and where employees do not become loyal to the employer. That is why you have people jumping from career to career to career and nobody ever getting settled, nobody ever able to set roots down and you get people moving around all the time and that creates other health issues.

These are serious issues and they have to be addressed. I do believe the parties are missing the point if they are not talking about it.

What I am saying here is to the employers. They need to be loyal to their employees instead of

paying minimum wage or just above minimum wage, because that means their competitors are employers like McDonald's as opposed to an employer that pays more money. It means they won't have people looking for a career, they will only be looking to hold themselves over and then move onto something else. For an employee to be loyal to an employer the employer has to show that they are loyal to them, so they can settle in and say this is a place where I want to stay, this is a place where I want to set roots down and call this home for the rest of my career. We had some success in our bargaining to get employers to pay workers coming in more than what they would have paid before bargaining took place because they realized that they need to be loyal to employees.

This problem of casualization of the workforce is a problem that exists all across Canada. When you go to places and you talk to people they are working multiple jobs. Why are they working multiple jobs? It is because they are not getting fulfilled in one job. They have to take on filling those other hours in order to make ends meet.

A related issue is that an affordable housing strategy is needed especially here in Halifax. Halifax has high rent for the size of the city that it is and you have a lot of people that are making just above minimum wage and a lot more working minimum wage and everybody has to have roommates and multiple jobs just to get by.

Coastal Forestry Workers Defending Their Rights

- Interview with Brian Butler, President, USW Local 1-1937 -



Forestry workers rally in Campbell River, September 26, 2019.

Coastal Forestry Workers employed by Western Forest Products (WFP) and some of its contractors have been on strike since July 1. The 2,600 workers are members of United Steelworkers Local 1-1937. About 1,300 work for Western Forest Products and 1,300 for contractors. Their five-year contract expired on June 15 this year.

WFP approached negotiations with the union by putting 24 concessions on the table. It has refused to move off those concessions or discuss the union's concerns, during negotiations and mediation, which concluded on September 13



when the mediator informed the union that the company was not willing to move so there was no point for further discussions at that time. Included in the concessions demanded by WFP are the conversion of the pension plan from a defined benefit to a defined payment plan, two-tier wages with a lower starting rate for new employees, and changes to the benefit plan, long-term disability coverage, and vacation pay.

Renewal Update interviewed Brian Butler, President of USW Local 1-1937 to learn more about the issues at stake, particularly working conditions which were a main focus of the Campbell River rally on September 26. He noted that over the past five years the working conditions of coastal forestry workers have deteriorated in ways that compromise their safety and cause maximum disruption to their lives. The company has singled out and terminated individual workers and is making every effort to break the union through contracting out and dividing the workforce into smaller separate entities.

The following are excerpts from that interview.

Renewal Update: At the rally in Campbell River on September 26 we heard from the union leadership and the workers that there are major concerns over working conditions, including the drug and alcohol policy and “alternate shifts” and contracting out. Can you explain?

Brian Butler: Shortly after the last contract was signed in 2014, WFP introduced a drug and alcohol policy. It originally stated that if there was an incident and there was suspected impairment, there would be testing. If the person tested positive they went and saw a substance abuse professional who would determine whether the person had a drug or alcohol problem and needed treatment [...] discipline was guided by that. In 2017 they got rid of the substance abuse professional process. [...] If you tested above the thresholds that they had, they just fired you because you had violated the policy. So consequently, you can have a 30-year employee who used marijuana on the weekend. Wednesday of the following week they have an incident at work. They’re tested. They find THC in their system. It’s above a level established by the company. They’re fired. The company also determines who gets tested and who doesn’t. It’s a targeted process, where they pick and choose who they test, when they test. [...] They seem to use it more as a weeding tool to get who they don’t like out of the bargaining unit. We’re fighting back against it. We have arbitration scheduled for this fall coming up and at the bargaining table we’ve introduced proposals to make it a fair process by which they shouldn’t be able to terminate someone unless they can determine impairment and that people should get help.



Alternate shifts were imposed on us in 2003 negotiations. There was a strike. The Liberal government of the day put us into binding mediation and as part of the binding mediation process the mediator instituted an alternate shift process. Prior to that any alternative shift had to be agreed upon by the workers. [...]

Alternate means alternate to a standard Monday to Friday eight-hour shift. That brought in different shift configurations. Instead of Monday to Friday eight-hour days, it brought in shifts where you

work compressed work weeks, so you work four 10-hour shifts or you’d work six days on, three

days off, or four days on, four days off. The six and three was 8.6 hours a day, the four and four was 11.4 hours a day.

The problem with that on the manufacturing side of things is that they then put on multiple shifts. If you were used to working eight-hour shifts and you've been working there for 30 years, all of a sudden you have to work 10-hour days and when you work 10-hour days in manufacturing, a day shift and an afternoon shift, when you butt those two shifts together, the work day is a lot longer. So instead of starting at 7:00 am you now start at 5:00 am which means you have to get up at 3:00 am to get to work, and the afternoon shift ends at 3:00 am which means you don't get to bed till 5:00 am so it basically turns everybody into a graveyard workers. It also shortens the amount of time you have away from work during your four-day work week. And because they want more shifts in the week, they do a schedule where they have split days off. So one week you work Monday to Thursday, the next week you work Tuesday to Friday, the next week you work Monday and have Tuesday off and then work three days and have two days off. So people don't know whether they're coming or going. This is fatigue-inducing. We have lots of incidences of people driving away from work and falling asleep at the wheel. This is in manufacturing.

The logging shifts are more of the four on/four off or six on/three off. For instance, in truck driving you'd work 11.5-hour days but by the time you do an 11.5-hour day plus your pre- and post-trip, it's a very long day and people are fatigued. Log truck driving and hand falling are the two most dangerous occupations out there. People get killed on those jobs. [...] Workers lose family life, the ability to volunteer in their community. Marriages break up. It's just a really bad shift. So we're looking to get back to a process where parties can agree upon shifts and not just have them dictated by the employer.

RU: You have said that one of the aims of WFP is to break the union. Can you elaborate?

BB: One of their key proposals is the contracting-out issue. What they want to do is to break the union up into smaller and smaller pieces. [...] So, if you take one of the big logging operations, which has well over a million cubic metres annual harvest, they want to take that parent company crew and break it into phases. So the falling phase is one contractor, the yarding phase is another contractor, the loading phase could be another contractor, the trucking phase, road-building phase, dry land sort phase. Once you break the bargaining unit into smaller and smaller pieces, you then have a bunch of contractors in there who bid low to get the work and then they cheat on their contract in order to make ends meet. They rip people off on overtime or don't pay travel time or are delinquent with benefits. So what happens is the union is constantly fighting with these contractors, over and over and over again, a lot of times probably bankrolled by WFP to create problems for the union.

Water Is Life: Rural Albertans Speak Out

On October 6, Women for Rights and Empowerment hosted a forum in Edmonton to discuss problems related to the energy sector of the economy and the issue of Who Decides? The cartel parties are engaged in a great deal of Alberta-bashing. The forum provided an opportunity for workers directly involved in the oil and gas industry, and people who live in the communities where extraction is taking place to speak in their own name and raise their concerns. *Renewal Update* has published the speech given there by André Vachon, a pipeline builder and the MLPC candidate in Edmonton Manning.[1]

As well, two women activists from Clearwater County gave an extremely informative presentation on the fight of the people of Clearwater County to protect the drinking water of the Prairies, and expose the reality of “fracking” operations in their community.[2] A very lively discussion took place with many people joining in to ask questions and give their views. The presenters immediately dispelled the idea that the issue is whether one is “for or against oil and gas.” The issues they are raising concern everyone, including the families in their community and elsewhere who make their living from oil and gas.

Residents of Clearwater County have organized successfully in the past to defend the health and safety of their community. They formed the Clearwater Coalition in 2000 to intervene in an application by Shell Canada to drill a sour gas well which posed serious hazards to the community. The Alberta Energy and Utilities Board agreed with the Clearwater Coalition and issued a decision that Shell’s application was not in the public interest because public safety could not be adequately assured.

When people learned in 2018 that the global energy giant Repsol had applied to extract 1.8 billion gallons of water annually from the Clearwater River for an enormous hydraulic fracturing (fracking) project, they went into action again. The Clearwater River flows into the North Saskatchewan River, the source of drinking water for most of the Prairies. Withdrawing large amounts of water for fracking affects everyone on the Prairies. Fracking in their community directly affects people’s health, as well as that of the fisheries and wildlife.

Two women in their group went from door to door in their community to bring people together to raise their concerns and opposition to Repsol’s application. Their work shows how people in rural Alberta are organizing, through their own efforts, to demand that their communities have a say in matters that affect them. They are standing up for the public interest at a time when governments are equating the public interest, national interest and even national security with the most powerful private interests.

Disappearing the Public Interest

The activists from Clearwater County found that the regulatory process has been drastically and dramatically altered since they last engaged. The conception that the regulator that approves energy projects must uphold the public interest has been completely destroyed. In 2013, the Alberta government enacted the *Responsible Energy Development Act*. This Act replaced the Energy Resources Conservation Board with the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER). The legislation removed all mention of the public interest, and with it even the limited opportunities that had once existed for the people of Alberta to intervene or appeal a decision on energy projects.

Now, in order to appeal a decision, a person must be “directly and adversely affected” by a project. In the case of the licence to the global energy company Repsol, the AER determined that this was



restricted to people who live on the Clearwater River. The previous legislation permitted appeals to the Environmental Appeals Board, an arms' length quasi-judicial tribunal. In addition, appellants could be eligible to receive funding to prepare their case. Now the AER reviews its own decisions. People who are "directly and adversely affected" can appeal to the same regulator who made the decision, with entirely predictable results. Appeals through the courts are restricted to questions of law or jurisdiction. With no public interest test in the legislation, from a legal standpoint, there is no public interest to be violated.

As the activists from Clearwater summed up the situation, the regulator is funded, controlled and ruled by the global oil and gas private interests. The regulator can decide when and whether to hold hearings and who can participate. The regulator is not even required to report annually, to the legislature or publicly. The AER approved Repsol's application in spring 2019.

The direct experience of the residents of Clearwater County is that the people of Alberta have no say in matters which greatly affect them. One presenter had direct experience with how they are deprived of any decision-making power or even the ability to initiate serious discussion.



The rule of the oligarchs is such that raising concerns about the decisions taken by big oil and gas is considered anti-Albertan and people are being accused of being "funded by foreign interests." This has gone so far that the United Conservative provincial government has openly declared war on anyone who dares to challenge the "right" of the oligarchs to decide everything. It is equally clear that the demand of big oil and gas for "regulatory reform" is intended to permit these oligopolies to act with impunity, and to deprive communities immediately affected and all who recognize that water is life of any say whatsoever.

Water Is Life

Members of the Clearwater County community fought and continue to expose Repsol's 10-year licence to take 1.8 billion gallons of water annually from the Clearwater River. To put this in perspective, this is equal to the drinking water for a year for 2.5 million people. But unlike drinking water, the water Repsol has been given by the provincial government is lost to the hydrologic cycle forever. With glacial melt in decline and no longer supplying tributaries like the Clearwater River, this is an even greater concern. On average, around 70 per cent of the water extracted never returns to the surface. What does return is contaminated with fracking fluid, including a mix of toxic chemicals that is considered "proprietary," silica, radioactive elements, and salts. This mixture is then injected into deep wells and also lost to the hydrologic cycle. There have been reports that vehicles transporting this water have been seen disposing of it at night on farmers' fields.

The presenters from the Clearwater group explained the dangers of fracking which scientific studies have repeatedly linked to groundwater contamination, methane leaks, earthquakes, and public health issues. Fracking involves the injection of massive quantities of water, chemicals and silica at high pressure into shale deposits to release the gas and oil trapped within the rock. Fracking involves drilling an oil or gas well vertically and then horizontally into a shale formation. Almost all the world's fracking operations are in the U.S. and Canada, and account for about two-thirds of all new

natural gas production there.

Health and Safety of Workers and the Community

Silica is a known lung carcinogen and also causes silicosis, a preventable but incurable lung disease which can cause disability and death. Fracking has only become widely used in the past 10 to 15 years. Since it takes 20 or more years for silicosis to develop, the impact on the health of workers and communities where fracking takes place would not become evident until their health has already been severely compromised. The bitter experience of workers in the asbestos mines, insulators and others exposed to asbestos in their work is a stark warning as to how known dangers to workers are hidden and suppressed, and how willing the global oligarchs are to deliberately sacrifice the workers.

The forum of Women for Rights and Empowerment concluded with remarks from Indigenous activist, author, poet, and producer of the documentary *Sacred Spirit of Water*, Morningstar Mercredi, and her powerful reading of a poem celebrating the rising of women for their rights.

Notes

1. See "An Idea of What Our Work Life Is Like," *Renewal Update*, October 12, 2019.
2. The Kenney government will soon open its "war room" and has announced that it will include "a research group, a data analysis wing and a rapid response team to challenge misinformation in real time while promoting information about Alberta's oil and gas sector." In this environment, people are finding ways to continue to act while still being mindful of the potential impact on family members.

Current Struggles in Defence of Rights

Sask Crown Workers on Strike for New Contracts



Striking Saskatchewan public sector workers rally in Regina, October 11, 2019.

Five thousand workers at SaskTel, SaskEnergy, SaskPower, SaskWater, DirectWest, SecurTek, and the Water Security Agency began a strike struggle for new collective agreements on October 4. Most agreements expired over two years ago. The workers demand wage increases and an end to contracting out and other practices that are leading to privatization of the Crown companies to pay the rich. The strike of the Saskatchewan public sector workers is part of the broad class struggle of

the working class across Canada to uphold the dignity of workers and claim what belongs to them by right from the value they produce.

The Saskatchewan Conservative government of Premier Scott Moe insulted the workers with a legislated two-year wage freeze while giving all Members of the Legislative Assembly a 2.3 per cent salary increase this year.

The workers agreed to lift the strike temporarily on October 7 but the government locked out SaskTel workers. This prompted the other workers to continue the strike until negotiated agreements are reached.



“We’re going to stay on the picket line in solidarity with SaskTel and to ensure that our own membership is not divided by the employer,” said Ian Davidson, Unifor Local 649 President, representing workers at SaskEnergy and SaskPower. “Crown workers and our families are united as ever in the campaign for a fair contract, and that doesn’t change today because the government has dropped the ball again,” Davidson added.

Two thousand crown workers and supporters marched through the streets of Regina on October 11, demonstrating their opposition to the insulting arrogance of the Conservative Party government and their determination to reach collective agreements acceptable to themselves.



(Photos: Unifor, My Crowns)

Vancouver Island North Actions to Defend the Right to Health Care from Birth to Death

- Barbara Biley -

Canadians have a right to health care from birth and before, until death, and it is our expectation and demand that the state should provide that right with a guarantee. None of the cartel parties that want to form government and which claim that the issue is not one of rights but of “affordability” have convinced people to give up this demand. In fact, the experience over the last 20 years and more is of anti-social policies enacted by federal and provincial governments, including centralization and the establishment of corporate “boards” to manage health care, repeated ‘reorganizations’ and privatization. These clearly show the need for people to speak in their own name, to discuss the

health care needs in their communities and the country as a whole, and to organize to empower themselves to provide what is needed.



The cartel parties vie with one another to get our votes, promising solutions to problems like funding hospitals, providing home care and building necessary residences with appropriate care for seniors. More often than not they ‘listen’ and say the ‘right words’ to convince people that all they need do is elect the right party and their problems will be solved. Not so. One need only look at the promises of the Liberals in 2015 that they, unlike the Harper Conservative government, would stand up for public health care. Once in

power the Trudeau government has not only implemented all the Harper government’s cuts to transfer payments but enabled and encouraged privatization and increased foreign control of health care in Canada.

Health care workers and residents on Vancouver Island, particularly the northern part of the island, have learned through their own experience that collective action and not passive acceptance of the status quo are needed to defend the right to health care and to hold governments and agencies to account.

Alongside the fight of health care workers for adequate staffing levels and increased investments in hospitals, home care and seniors’ residences, the community is waging two important fights right now. One concerns the conditions at Comox Valley Seniors Village, the other the transfer of clinical pathology from the Campbell River Hospital lab to Victoria.

Below are brief reports on these two aspects of the efforts of people who are organizing for change, and breaking through the veil of silence behind which those with power and privilege act against our interests. They are informing everyone of what is taking place and mobilizing public opinion in favour of what is needed by the community.

Families and Supporters Force Vancouver Island Health Authority to Take Action

On September 30, the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA), in response to a report by the Comox Valley Medical Health Officer, put Comox Valley Seniors Village, a 136-bed residential care facility in Courtenay, under direct administration by the Health Authority. Comox Valley Seniors Village is owned by Anbang Insurance Group Co., a multinational based in China that was taken over by the Chinese government in 2018 after its chair was imprisoned for corruption. This was part of the purchase of all Retirement Concepts seniors’ residences in Canada, approved by the federal government in 2017.

What “administration” means is that for six months the management of this facility will be carried out by a representative of the VIHA, which is the government-established regional board responsible for health care services on Vancouver Island. In the case of two other Retirement Concepts facilities on Vancouver Island — Selkirk and Nanaimo Seniors Village — VIHA has sent its own employees, nurses and care aides, to the facilities to ensure adequate care for the residents.

In recommending administration at Comox Valley Seniors Village, the local Medical Health Officer

reported: “On careful review and consideration of the Licensing Report it is my determination that the Licensee is either unwilling or unable to meet the minimal requirements of the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* and the expected standard as per s.7(1)(b)(i) to ensure the health, safety and dignity of persons in care is not being met.” In support of her recommendation, she outlined months of licensing reports, recommendations and compliance orders and the failure of the facility to respond adequately.

This action follows months of activism on the part of families and other people in the community who have lent a hand to do research, write letters, contact Island Health, Licensing and Ministry of Health officials. All residential care facilities in BC are required to have a Family Council but families of residents who were clearly in danger from inadequate staffing, improper cleaning protocols and many other problems quickly found that the Family Council was run by management and complaints and concerns were not addressed.

Families established their own independent organization, Crying Out Loud, and increased their pressure. Under the name Seniors Voices, a website was set up by community members where families could share their stories, concerns and demands. When no significant improvement took place they demanded, on May 20, that the Health Authority take over the facility and run it as seniors’ care should be run, as a public enterprise, not a publicly-funded private enterprise in which profit, not care, is the aim of the owners. They contacted the Medical Health Officer for the Comox Valley, who followed up on licensing investigations and took action at the end of September.



The company blames inadequate staffing on a systemic shortage of care staff and not the substandard wages that they pay, which are well below the negotiated compensation levels in all the publicly-owned seniors residences. The staffing shortage as well as other problems related to cleaning, food services and others, have reached a crisis point in the three facilities where the Health Authority has taken some action. These are the squeaky wheels and health care workers and families know all too well that these are not the only places in which “the health, safety and dignity of people in care” are not being met.

Having come this far, the families and community have no intention to back off but are closely participating in developments, including providing information and presenting proposals for measures that can be taken to raise the standards of care. Beyond the concerns about the care of their family members and friends in Comox Valley Seniors Village, activists have also embarked on discussing the bigger picture of seniors’ care, public versus private ownership, how to provide seniors’ rights with a guarantee and to empower themselves to bring about the changes in health care delivery that are needed.

Fighting to Maintain Laboratory Services in the North Island Hospitals

VIHA is in the process of implementing a plan to remove clinical pathology services from the two hospitals on the north of Vancouver Island North, in Campbell River and in the Comox Valley. Such

a move will seriously affect the care provided to patients in the hospitals.

Centralizing clinical pathology in Victoria, over three hours away by road, increases the time that it takes for local doctors to get test results, leading to delays in care. Clinical pathology (testing of body fluids, blood, urine, etc.) has already been removed from the hospital in Campbell River, and VIHA's intent is to do the same to the Comox Valley hospital in 2020.

The laboratory staff in Campbell River, along with 75 doctors and all but one of the five pathologists currently working in the two hospitals, as well as local governments and the advocacy group Citizens for Quality Health Care, are actively organizing to protect the lab at the Comox Valley hospital and to demand the return of clinical pathology services to the Campbell River hospital.



The “justification” that is being given for the change is that samples that are sent to Victoria are analyzed by clinical pathologists, specialists, while tests done in the community hospitals are performed by general pathologists. The implication is that “specialist” equals “better.” The truth of the matter is that in 2014 a group of clinical pathologists in Victoria established the Vancouver Island Clinical Pathology Consulting Corporation (VICPCC) and successfully lobbied VIHA for the contract for all clinical pathology on the island. At that time, VIHA's department head for pathology was a shareholder in the corporation.

The communities on Vancouver Island fought to have two hospitals when the plan was to replace them with one hospital on “neutral territory”

between the two population centres, which are 45 kilometres apart, an inconvenience for everyone. That battle was won and two hospitals were built, one in each of the major population centres on the north island. Then the communities fought against paid parking at the hospitals and, unlike most hospitals in BC, parking is free.

The two new hospitals were built with laboratories equipped and staffed for the functions of community hospitals. The removal of clinical pathology from the Campbell River Hospital has meant delays in test results, extreme frustration for lab workers who are not permitted to consult with the pathologist working in their own lab if they have a question about a test but have to phone or email Victoria and often wait hours or days for responses that used to take minutes.

Various initiatives have been taken to reverse this plan to degrade hospital services for North Island patients, among them a petition started by Citizens For Quality Health Care which calls on the legislature to:

- 1) Provide funding for three pathologists for the Campbell River hospital (currently funded for 2.4 and the work is being done by 2),
- 2) Restore clinical pathology service at the Campbell River Hospital, and
- 3) conduct an independent investigation into the apparent conflict of interest that resulted in the contract between VIHA and VICPCC.

Copies of the petition are available and have to be returned by November 14 to Lois Jarvis in Campbell River, 250-287-3096 or Barb Biley in the Comox Valley, 250-338-3149.

Barbara Biley is the MLPC candidate in Courtenay--Alberni.

New Agreement Ratified by Striking Vancouver Hotel Workers at Three Hotels

- Brian Sproule -



On October 15 negotiators of UNITE HERE Local 40, representing striking hotel workers at the Westin Bayshore, Pinnacle Hotel Harbour Front, and the Hyatt Regency Vancouver, reached a tentative agreement with negotiators for the hotel owners. The agreement was ratified by the hotel workers on October 16, ending the strike at these hotels.

The new contract provides for wage increases over four years, workload reductions for room attendants, workplace safety improvements, job security and protection from on the job sexual harassment. "With this contract we have achieved a new standard in the hospitality industry which will improve the lives of not only our own members and their families, but the lives of all hotel workers in Vancouver," stated Zailda Chan, President of UNITE HERE Local 40.

Congratulations poured in from other unions and community organizations. "Amazing News! Congratulations to Vancouver hotel workers for reaching a deal. Collective action works!" states the Writers Guild of America. "Congrats to Unite 40 members. Strikes Work! One more hotel to go," writes the Vancouver Tenants Union.

While celebrating the achievement of a tentative agreement for three hotels, members and officials of UNITE HERE Local 40 vow to continue the strike at the Rosewood Hotel Georgia whose owners have refused to meet with the union for several months. Workers employed there are members of a different bargaining unit of UNITE HERE.



Meanwhile the hotel has obtained a court order banning picketers from using sirens, drums, air horns, whistles, noise makers, speakers and megaphones, and playing pre-recorded music or messages louder than 75 decibels, measured six metres from the source, effectively banning their use.

The union web site states “Hotel Georgia ON STRIKE! We will continue to picket from morning to evening, through the rain and cold, until all our members get the contract they deserve! When you pick a fight with the union you pick a fight with all its members. [...] We will be here until there’s a contract won here as well.”

Local 40 president Zailda Chan stated “I’m very proud. This strike has changed all of us. It’s changed every striker on the picket line. It tells the hotel: don’t underestimate us.”

Renewal Update visited the picket line at the Hotel Georgia on October 16, and spoke with hotel workers, including those from the other hotels who have augmented the line. One picketer told RU that while he is happy with the tentative agreement and wants to return to work, he is not going to abandon his fellow workers.

As a result of the court order severely limiting picketing activities only token picketing was taking place in front of the hotel on Georgia Street, but around the side under shelter from heavy rains, a long line of pickets and tables were in place. Drumming continued in defiance of the injunction but not as loud as before. When copies of RU No. 31 were presented to the picket captain she proudly pointed to her picture on the front cover, shouting slogans through a bull horn.

Brian Sproule is the MLPC candidate in Burnaby South.

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