

The Heat is on in Health Care

While watching the news one night in March, a story was focused on shutting down the Gorge Road Hospital in Victoria. When one of the Provincial Liberal Health Care commercials interrupted the story like an impatient child competing for our attention, telling us how much more they're going to spend on Health Care over the next few years, above 15 other ministries. Their prescription should read, "We're taking care of our sick and injured by shutting down hospitals, creating longer wait lists for operations and a soon to be transient workforce, invented



Shop Steward "RGH" Steve Peddle.

by tearing up Collective Agreements and re-signing yellow dog agreements with multinational corporations which pay some health care workers a little above minimum wage."

Our Health care system in Canada is running into financial trouble but, instead of investigating and understanding the problem, the Ministry of Health has decided to use regressive management and negotiating tactics taking the financial shortfall out on the backs of their workers. The BC Liberals and other governments that believe in the free marketplace, have no problem when a corporation increases the cost of these meds by an exponential rate, they simply pass the costs onto us. Now, if a worker simply wanted a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) - watch out unless, of course, you're a manager like the *Regional Director; Food Services and Housekeeping who got a 42.91% increase or the Regional Director; Materials Management who got a 35.04% increase, from last year. Meanwhile, our members are offered a 9.5% wage rollback. Our medical services plan costs have already doubled and now the BC Liberals are contemplating contracting out the administration of these services to another out-of-Country privateer; we can all brace ourselves to pay for their profit margin. These privateers are the reason the Insurance companies tell us they need to quintuple our liability insurance costs and why our plan costs continue to explode faster than a can of beans on a campfire.

The Local has been representing workers in Health Care since the late 1940's. Technology has come a long way over the past sixty years and our members that work in this Sector conduct themselves as professional craft workers and stay on top of the technological changes that come each year. For those efforts, our members are facing 108 pages of proposed cuts at the negotiating table, being pushed around like we're the problem; we are not the problem! The multinational corporations selling their product at grossly inflated prices are the problem. Skyrocketing manager's salaries are the problem and our Federal and Provincial governments are the problem for not properly funding health care. Hospitals in BC are going to heat up this summer with a 90% strike vote mandate and this government should know its coming, as they've been taking our members temperature for far too long! So, if misfortune finds you at one of our hospitals over the next few months, remember these workers are union members and I urge you to treat them with the same respect and human consideration they give to the most fragile of our society.



Members Terry Roberts and Vicki Parish taking a break from the sun.

*Wage increases verified by VIHA Statement of Financial Information, Dated 04/01/01 to 03/31/02 & 04/01/02 to 03/31/03.

Spring 2004

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RRSP meetings - 6pm

May 19 Victoria, Pro Pats Legion

May 20 Nanaimo, Howard Johnson

- Campbell River Unit moved to July 5th to accommodate the Holiday

- Baskin Pig Roast July 10th

- Fishing Derby July 24th & 25th

- Tournament of Hope August 7th & 8th

Business Managers Report



**Philip M. Venoit - Business Manager/
Financial Secretary**

Over the past quarter, I have spent considerable time contemplating several of the Local's old or non-existent policies. Although these policies are dull and tedious work, its work that is overdue. Both the Federal and Provincial governments have enacted strict Privacy Legislation for employers and unions to adhere to and thus I have co-drafted the Local's Privacy Policy in answer to this new legislation and although the Provincial government's legislation has not met the Federal standard yet, we must comply with both. This policy will likely change slightly in the near future when the provincial government re-releases its Privacy Act.

We have also re-written the Local's Dispatch Policy. Most of this policy is consistent with the way the Local has been handling the dispatch of manpower in the construction industry over the past decade, with the exception of changing the "local hire" provision in the Industrial sector. This change still allows an employer to utilize local hire but at that time, the employer's name call ratio will change to one (1) name call in four (4) members. If our contractors believe they need a local hire advantage to win a job, then local hire is what the local should be providing to them. Along with these two policies, the Executive Board has also finished their review of the Local's Policy manual. These manuals will be available in both offices and at the Unit meetings beginning this Summer. Voting for acceptance on the policies that fall under the authority of the membership will be conducted at the Unit meetings in the month of July. Please find the time to attend your respective Unit meeting.

The Bargaining Council of British Columbia Building Trades Unions (BCBCBTU) have finished correlating proposals for the Standard Inside Wiremen's Agreement which will be going forward to the Construction Labour Relations Association (CLRA) in May. I believe it is in both our best interests to

conclude an early agreement this round and I will have more to report in the next newsletter.

In February, I attended the Western Canadian Utility Conference where we were presented a Canadian version of the IBEW "New Orientation Course". This course is designed to help new members with an understanding of their rights and responsibilities as IBEW members and Len will be instructing this course soon. We discussed Public/Private partnerships (P-3s) at length pertaining directly to Healthcare, Education and Utilities, Drug and Alcohol Testing, IBEW public relations on a National Level, American Income Life and Insurance costs. We also raised \$705.00 to go to Multiple Sclerosis. We have committed ourselves to a First District (Canada) Organizing DVD/CD production which will begin later this Spring with the concept to explain to non-union electrical workers throughout Canada the benefits of joining our Union.

Our Nanaimo Office lease is up at the end of June and as I committed to when I ran as Business Manager, we will be leaving an office open so our members that live further up island have somewhere they can drop in. The new location will be released in the next newsletter as we have looked at other office space at half the price but have not yet decided which is most suitable for our needs.

The BC Liberals have officially left the door open when it comes to compulsory certification of the Electrical Trade. The new Safety Standards Act allows for one (1) Journeyperson to oversee two (2) "trainees" and for residential construction another two (2) "individuals" can be used. An individual can be defined as anyone that's looking for a job. *"Coming soon to a street corner near you, a guy holding a sign which reads "Will wire house for food"*. I don't think this is going to fix that skilled trades shortage we've been hearing about for the past couple of years!

Baskin Pig Roast is being held on July 10th this year in Campbell River.

The Local's Social Committee chaired by Brother Lorne King has also set dates for the Locals fishing derby up in Comox at Airforce Beach for July 24th and 25th. Please let President, Mike Vandervoort know at the Campbell River Unit or the Office know if you can attend these functions as the campground in Comox needs confirmation by June.

The Campbell River Unit has moved their July meeting to the following Monday July 5, which has been approved by the Executive Board, as per the Local's Bylaws.

New EI Compassionate Care Benefit

Beginning January 4, 2004, up to six weeks of Employment Insurance (EI) Compassionate Care Benefits will be available to EI-eligible workers who must be absent from work to provide care or support to a child, parent, spouse or common-law partner (provided they have cohabited for a year or more) who has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death. The six weeks of benefits (after the two-week waiting period) can be taken within a 26-week (six months) time frame. Both the waiting period and the six week Compassionate Leave can be shared with your spouse.

The Compassionate Care Benefit is a move in the right direction for workers rights and responsive to business needs at the same time. It accommodates business's ability to retain a skilled workforce by bearing some of the cost of employees who take time off work to care for gravely ill or dying family members. Your Record of Employment will have a new code "z" for this new leave. Until then, ensure your employer uses the code "k" (other) and fills in the appropriate reasons for your leave. Also, please inform the Local's Dispatch of the leave as well.



Members standing together on the picket line at the Royal Jubilee Hospital.

**Remember
to submit all
members' dues
to the Victoria
office only.**

Financial Secretary's Overview

Manulife Financial RRSP's

Over the past decade, our members in the Inside Wire Section (construction) have voted to put most of their increases into their RRSP package. Currently the Inside Wiremen are at \$5.10 per hour, the Marine section in the private yards is at \$3.71 and the Motor Winders also contribute. After the market spiraled with the news of Enron, World Com & Nortel, investors in the mutual market were left with a level of distrust however, over the past year, this market has rebounded and is again creating great returns on our member's investments. Now is the time for our members to become more familiar with the opportunities they have with their money. Many seem to be transferring their money from Manulife Financial into other Financial Institutions. This, of course, is your choice but I would caution, the low fees associated with our plan cannot be duplicated on the retail market. We have

two (2) meetings set up in May on the 19th in Victoria at the Pro Pats Legion and in Nanaimo at the Howard Johnson Hotel on the 20th. These meetings are set up to inform you of your options so you can make the best decisions in preparing for your retirement. I hope to see you there and you're welcome to bring your spouse.

Bursary Fund

At the Annual General Meeting of the Bursary Fund, the Trustees unanimously endorsed a motion to increase the Bursary by \$100 per year for our apprentices successfully passing school. After close review over the past few years of realizing gains in each of those years and considering the increased costs the BC Liberals have downloaded on our apprentices, we cautiously decided to bump up the bursary to \$400 effective immediately for those apprentices currently in trade school.

Day of Mourning

On April 28th, Union workers in almost 100 countries all over the world pay tribute to the memory of those workers that have died in workplace accidents or from an occupational disease. On this day in 1914, the first comprehensive Workers Compensation Act was given third reading in the Ontario Legislature. On average, two Canadians die at work each and every day and one million injuries are reported each year by provincial and territorial Workers Compensation Boards. Many of us have suffered a work related injury, others have had near misses and some have even witnessed a work fatality.

Our rights to having a safe workplace are under constant review by every corporate-funded government on the planet. These rights are often a determining factor where some employers decide to set up their business. Worker's injuries and illness are a direct result of the success of industrial empires built on the backs of our labour. The sectors our members work in are amongst the most dangerous.

As important it is to remember our fallen brothers and sisters, it is just as important to continue to fight for the living. So remember, we all have the right to go home at the end of our shift, don't take unnecessary risks, listen carefully and add constructively at your safety toolbox meetings. Always think twice and act once.

Sector Report

Appliance Repair – Our members at Camco Appliances are preparing for negotiations. The employer has shut the plant down in Hamilton however, if we continue to support our members working at the Burnside Road, Victoria location, we should be OK. Remember, our members at Camco cannot publicly compete against the stores they sell to so if you're looking for a kitchen appliance please drop in to see them.

Cablevision – The CIRB has determined the CRTV Programming Department rightfully belongs in the IBEW bargaining unit. This is great news for our members there, as the larger the unit, the greater our bargaining strength.

Construction – Industrial is slow with the exception of some maintenance work Surgenor Electric has in some Courtenay area saw mills and the Boiler job Vicar Electric is finishing up in Elk Falls. Mill. **Commercial/Residential** is keeping many of our members busy all over the Island. Some of the larger projects on the go or coming up are; **South Island** – Canem Systems: is just finishing the Marriot Hotel, 2nd floor Lab renovations at the University of Victoria, Tillicum Mall - Linen & Things, and Sandringham Hospital. Houle Electric is finishing up the Naval Officer Training Centre, 5th floor Victoria General Hospital, MDS Metro Labs, and they're starting the Psychiatric Emergency Services and the Asbestos Abatement (EMI) at the Royal Jubilee Hospital and the Standard Life Tower energy retrofit. Emery Electric is finishing up the new Island

Farms addition, Bear Mountain time share condos and the Township of View Royal SCADA system for their sewage treatment. **Mid-Island-Houle** has the Kiwanis Lodge conversion, Chemainus Hotel, Pacific Sands Hotel, and the Wickaninnish Centre in Tofino. Canem has the City of Nanaimo maintenance contract, Oceanside Village Resort and Duncan Safeway. **North Island** – Houle has picked up the Comox Valley chlorination project, Comox Centre Mall, Extra Foods and Winners in Courtenay.

Federal Government Dockyard – A fresh statement of claim has been filed in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice on behalf of our members at Dockyard. The claim lays out the argument concerning ownership of the Pension Surplus plunder the Federal Government used in conjunction with the EI Fund to pay down the deficit.

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Marine – Victoria Shipyard is fairly busy with the HMCS Vancouver, a Sealand Container, the Sir Wilfred Laurier and Tully Coast Guard vessels and an American fish boat. There has also been some discussions with a couple of East Coast groups interested in running casino vessels from converted fast ferries, and looming BC ferry contracts.

Motor Winders – We are about to go into negotiations with Beaver Machinery and Duncan Electric Motors. Both shops are a little slow right



President Mike Vanervoort presenting Andrew Sexsmith with trade certificate.

now with little work coming from the Pulp and Paper mills.

Municipal – After a decade of planning, the new CREST system is in place in the Greater Victoria area and due to the new system falling outside the City of Victoria as the Employer our last two remaining members in the Radio Shop have accepted a buy-out and started their pensions.

Railway – We have concluded negotiations with E&N Rail and the Memorandum of Settlement is in the hands of our members on the Island Council of Railway Unions for ratification.

Wholesale – Our members at Westburne in Nanaimo and Port Alberni have recently ratified their Collective Agreement with a 6.5% increase over the next 3 years.

Dispatcher/Training Coordinator Report

There are two topics I would like to inform the members about - Apprenticeship and Workers Compensation Board issues.

This Provincial Government has abandoned apprentices and left them to fend for themselves. They not only have to pay full tuition fees but are expected to handle their own registration. This has created problems for apprentices from not knowing when they had to go to school because they didn't realize they weren't registered to showing up for schooling they thought they were registered for only to find their seat was filled because they hadn't confirmed their registration. All classes have wait lists and any seats that come available are snapped up immediately. I strongly advise the apprentices to inquire about seat availability for future classes when they are registering. To solve some registration problems, if a deposit is paid

for the next session of schooling, a seat is held and the deposit is applied towards the tuition fee for that session. If there are any questions about schooling or other apprentice issues, contact me in the office immediately so we can deal with them promptly.

On March 31st I had the pleasure and honour of making presentations to Richard Chouinard on behalf of our Local, WJETS and the ECA. After 29 years of instructing at Camosun College and developing the premiere program for Electrical Apprenticeship training in the Province, Richard has retired and we thank him for his tremendous contribution to our Trade.

As with every other program in the Province, the WCB was made to cut back all services by one third. What this has meant to working people is one less appeal level for claims for WCB benefits and a gutting of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations. The regulations have been changed from prescription-based to performance-based which means that instead of having the regulations written out, the employer will assess the situation and set the safety requirements. If an incident occurs, the employer simply has to explain how they arrived at the safety procedures and as long as the WCB is satisfied with the explanation there is



Len Rousseau presents retired Brother Wolfgang Stroezer with his 50 year pin.

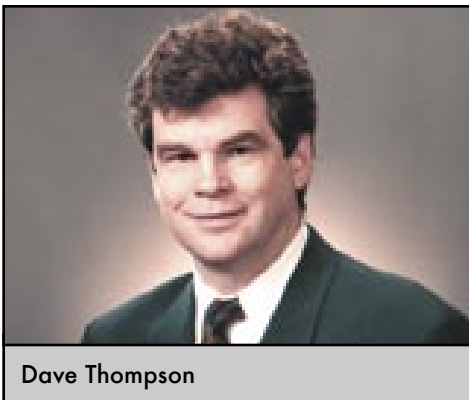
no problem. Another change which is important for workers to be aware of is that under the new regulations, the exposure limits and threshold levels for most chemicals has been raised. The danger that creates for workers is very obvious when working in areas where paints, thinners, etc. are being used or stored. The need for and the number of First Aid Attendants required is also left for the employer to assess and determine. These are only a few of the changes which have been made. If any member has a question or concern, I encourage them to contact me in the Victoria office.

In Solidarity,
Leonard J. Rousseau



South Island Code Course.

Organizers Report



Dave Thompson

The Union recently attended a Comet Two Train-the-Trainer course hosted by the International Office. The course covered all aspects of Organizing including salting and top-down Organizing. We will be putting on courses

for our members in the near future. Once we have people trained we will be in a good position to begin Organizing on a consistent basis. Many of you have asked how to get involved. Now is your chance.

We are also looking at ways to gain new markets for our members. In the first step towards expanding our portion of the Industry, we have conducted meetings in the Nanaimo and Campbell River areas. The idea was to find out first hand from the wiring section what we could do. A lot of good ideas were generated at these meetings and we are now moving on to the next phase which will involve the contractors. It is hoped we can implement some changes in the very near future to get our unemployed members back to work.

We have just completed a Job Sharing Letter of Understanding at CRTV. This means two of

the office staff shares one full-time position. The plan is a win-win for both the members and the company. The members have time at home with their children, dramatically cutting down on child care costs and the company gets full staff coverage year round.

The Union is working with Houle Electric on a Habitat for Humanities project in Nanaimo. Brother Ken Stahl is spearheading the community project on our behalf. The idea is to provide volunteer labour to Habitat as they take on the building of a house for a low income family. This is a great project and we need to thank Brother Stahl for taking the lead on this. As well, we need to acknowledge Houle Electric for providing the permits and equipment. If you would like to volunteer a little time to help wire a home, please call the Business Office. The project should get underway around May 15th.