

leaflet

PULP, PAPER AND WOODWORKERS OF CANADA

Let's renegotiate NAFTA

It's time for labour and environmental standards to become part of NAFTA

UNITED STATES presidential candidate John McCain apparently thinks Canadians, and perhaps US voters, will be reassured by his promises to defend the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The truth, however, is different. Citizens in both countries, especially workers, could benefit greatly from a thorough rewrite of NAFTA to put their interests first, rather than the interests of corporate investors who alone have reaped the benefits in the 15 years since NAFTA was signed.

Moreover, a poll conducted in March by Angus Reid Strategies found that only 24 per cent of Canadian voters believe NAFTA should continue under its current terms, as opposed to 45 per cent who said, "Canada should do whatever is necessary to renegotiate the terms of NAFTA" and eight per cent who want to scrap the treaty altogether. Canadians have it right.

Too often, NAFTA has been used against the interests of workers and communities by encouraging a rush to the lowest labour and environmental standards and by giving corporations an opening to overturn regulations that operate in the public interest.

A prime example is Canada's restriction on exporting raw logs from BC, which is now facing a challenge from Merrill and Ring, a US-based company with Canadian timber holdings. Canada is being sued for attempting to ensure Canadian sawmills, which employ Canadian workers, have a shot at getting the logs before they are exported. If this lawsuit is successful, Canada will have to lift the requirement and pay damages to Merrill and Ring. Unfortunately, there is no quid pro quo for citizens, workers or communities.

Instead of using trade policy to give rights to corporations, why not use trade policy to raise the living standards of working people in each trading nation? Why not make tough environmental and labour standards part of the basic enforcement

continued on page 5

side
in

VOL. 45 NO. 2
APR-OCT 2008

Economic boom
Casual workers are left behind in boom times

4

Private forestland
WFP sells thousands of hectares to real estate developers

9

Money
The world's system now creates tragedies

14

“It feels to me like the government of BC and the forestry companies are doing their damndest to kill the forest industry.”

OUR ROOTS ARE IN OUR COMMUNITY

A person sees the above words at the front entrance to every Canfor mill in BC, and I would guess there are signs just like them at the front entrance to everything Canfor owns south of the border. Let's take a look at what has been happening to Canfor's "roots" in the last little while.

Mackenzie has been shut down, brought back, and suffered serious cut-backs to its union employees and their wages. Despite the union doing its level best to keep the mill running, Canfor has Local 18 on indefinite layoff.

Fort Nelson's plywood and OSB plants were shut down indefinitely. Then the plywood plant is up and running. However, it took the union taking a 10-per-cent wage cut in order to do that. Now the plywood plant has shut down.

In Fort St. John, Canfor stated in the papers it would be building a co-gen plant. Then, a couple of months later they shut the mill down.

As of May 26/08 [when the plywood plant burnt down], everyone knows what happened to NCP. I'm fairly certain most know how, or are be-

ginning to understand how, Canfor "treats its roots".

So I look at all this and I ask myself, what's going on? The first thing that comes to mind is that the "roots" are dying and Canfor's letting it happen. That doesn't make a lot of sense to me, though. I think everyone knows what happens when the "roots" die.

What I can and will speak on is the crazy concept of selling raw logs. The environmental people, PPWC, and many others lobby the government to stop it. However, Canfor and the other forestry companies either do nothing or outright condone it! This makes no sense at all. We make wood products to sell to people and, at the same time, sell these same people raw logs so they can make wood products themselves. Who in their right mind would buy wood products from us? You'd think the companies would be standing beside us on this one.

One must remember that Canfor has some mills in the US, one of the places we sell raw logs to. Makes a person think, doesn't it?

It feels to me like the government of BC and the forestry companies are do-

MACPHEE WAS A WORKING CLASS HERO

Thank you for the article about Angus Macphee in the *Leaflet*, Jan-Mar 2008.

I came to know Angus through our solidarity work with the exploited people of Central America.

The commitment of Angus to working people went beyond his trade union to the marginalized in our society and in Latin America.

He understood so well the importance of honesty and was a person of integrity. He is no doubt a part of Canadian working class history and lives on in the hearts and minds of all who knew him.

Bud Godderis
CASTLEGAR

ing their damndest to kill the forest industry, sell off all our assets, and turn BC into a third-world province. I don't like that idea, and I'm sure no one else in BC does, except of course the present government and the companies involved. We all need to get together and find a way to stop it, because they won't.

Jymm Kennedy
Local 25
PRINCE GEORGE

CHEERS FROM A FAR-AWAY PPWC FAN

The *Leaflet* is great. I still read it online. I miss reading it at the Local 18 union hall or at work in the sawmill. It seems some places are better than others for reading the *Leaflet*.

Local 18, what a mess

up there. I sure hope the executive is fighting the Campbell government at every turn. Hopefully, better days are ahead. Stay strong and united.

I retired from Mackenzie and moved to Moncton.

I am still with a union, UFCW at the Co-op store here. I got on the negotiating committee. The business rep comes from Ontario. The unions sure are different east of Ontario. There seems to be no involvement from people on the floor.

Our minimum wage is \$7.75 per hour. If you make between \$10.00 and \$20.00 per hour, you are doing well.

I'll always be PPWC
Glen Nelson
Local 18 retiree
MONCTON, NB

Where the truth dies

BY SEAN REEL INTERIM EDITOR

THIS IS BEING written the day after Canada votes. At first I thought I was alone in being entirely dejected when Mr. Harper dropped the writ, but apparently there was quite a high percentage of Canadians who were somewhat ticked off that we would again be required to exercise our overworked democratic privilege and duty. For the first couple of weeks I was thanking Sony or whoever it was that invented the remote control which enabled me to avoid any political ads or interviews. I mean Mr. Harper and his sweater image thing. I'm sure he was the only one who felt any warmth from that nonsense. My sense of disgust with all of the leaders could not be denied even though I kept telling myself, due to some sense of guilt I suppose, that I'm not supposed to feel this way. Then all of a sudden, as I was watching the leaders' debate in French and they were all pointing fingers at each other and calling each other liars, I finally felt hope as they were telling the truth for the first time in the campaign.

I know we live in a democratic state but I wonder about the quality of our state of democracy. Apparently, Canadians stayed away in droves from this election, putting up the lowest percentage participation figures in our history. Monthly union meeting numbers would of course make the 58 per cent national citizen participation look awesome in comparison. There is no doubt political parties put together campaigns and issues that, for the most part, leave many of us scratching our scalps. The country, the economy, and the world are seemingly falling apart and we get to watch party leaders behave like children and do whatever they can to avoid the truth. And after all is said and done are we ever rewarded for going to the trouble of voting? Cynicism is cheap, easy and so often the perspective that can be proven to be right.

However, as most of you may be aware, we will be asked to carry our democratic burden once again next spring in BC. Is this an election which you will find easier to relate to and get interested in as you listen to another round of truth talks from people like

Gordon "I would never rip up a union contract" Campbell? We are probably only a few months away from the next resurgence of the Fraser Institute. They seem to have disappeared from the mainstream media since their election victories through Harper and Campbell. But I'm sure they are ready with their studies which will show the "true" state of our economy and social order and how their right-wing policies need to continue so we can produce more millionaires and billionaires. It is think tanks like the Fraser Institute which seem to have taken over democracy and write policy for the conservatives on the planet. Their latest dinner guest, at \$1,000 a plate, is Karl Rove, the senior crook, I mean advisor, for most of the Bush administration. I guess he is here to advise Gordon Campbell before the next election.

I have learned over the years from election campaigns and think tanks that "truth" is a concept and not a reality. But what baffles me is their power to sway public opinion to the benefit of a wealthy few when the truth is eternally before us. What person with their feet on the ground living in BC with families and neighbours

doesn't know that the basic necessities of life, such as housing, education and health care, are no longer affordable or available for working people. The truth can be costly and hard to take but to deny it is madness. In the end it comes down to the fact that for a democratic state to fulfill its theoretical optimum citizens must be informed and active. Laziness in this aspect of life means giving everything over to Gordon Campbell and his Olympic and real estate development party. Do you think your family and descendants will look upon you proudly for such negligence? Get angry, get active and find the truth.

CANADIANS STAYED AWAY IN DROVES FROM THIS ELECTION, PUTTING UP THE LOWEST PERCENTAGE PARTICIPATION FIGURES IN OUR HISTORY.



LOCALS • National executive board members report on activities of their Locals at September meeting • Company wants to reduce per tonne labour costs **6**

PROVINCIAL • Changes to BC's carbon tax are needed • Logging rates and forestland sales pose grave risk to rare Douglas fir forests **8**

Economic boom means no payoff for casual workers

There's not much looking up for those who work at the bottom

DESPITE SOLID economic growth and low unemployment rates, BC is home to a growing number of casual workers who struggle to achieve economic security, according to a new study by two University of Northern BC professors.

Improving the Economic Security of Casual Workers in BC, released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, looks at the troubling contradiction between BC's booming economy and the precarious situation of workers who lack secure jobs.

"Casual workers are caught in a double bind: low pay means they need to work more hours, taking on more work shifts. But irregular hours, shift work, short call-ins, and minimal notice of scheduling are undermining their ability to balance work and family obligations," says Fiona MacPhail, University of Northern BC Professor and study co-author. "Life is a scramble for casual workers."

The authors examined Statistics Canada data and surveyed 160 casual workers. Among their key

findings:

- The number of casual workers in BC increased by about 59,000 between 1997 and 2007. Casual workers as a percentage of all employed workers increased from 10 to 12 percent among women and from 9 to 10 per cent among men.
- Casual workers experience a high degree of economic insecurity with respect to income, skills, employment, representation, and control of their time.
- Women are more likely to be casual workers than men, and non-Canadian-born respondents reported lower levels of basic security than Canadian-born respondents, including difficulty accessing food, housing and health care.
- Contrary to popular belief, most people do not choose casual work. About 80 per cent of survey respondents reported actively seeking permanent work.
- Casual workers have been negatively affected by specific policy changes introduced in BC from

2001 onwards, including the reduction of the minimum wage to \$6 for the first 500 hours of work and changes to the *Labour Relations Code* that make it harder to unionize.

- While the rate of casual employment is dropping elsewhere in Canada, in BC it is growing.

Among the study's recommendations:

- Increase the minimum wage and index it to inflation;
- Strengthen features of the Employment Standards Act (ESA) such as increasing the minimum shift (from two to four hours), posting work schedules, lengthening the notice before the start of the shift and providing termination notice;
- Expand coverage of the ESA to include all unionized workers, independent contractors, and workers in all occupations, including agricultural workers and truck drivers; and
- Enforce the ESA by eliminating the "self-help" kit and re-instituting direct monitoring and enforcement.

"BC is often promoted as 'the best place to invest,'" says UNBC Professor and report co-author Paul Bowles. "But if it is also going to be the 'best place to work,' the provincial government needs to re-think its approach."

National officers help Locals negotiate contracts

THE PPWC WAGE caucus met with Canfor Pulp over the summer in Prince George and hammered out a new collective agreement. We made significant gains on the health and welfare package, where it will be a benefit to most members. The wage increases will be 10 per cent over 4 years: 2, 2.5, 2.5, and 3 per cent annually.

Bargaining began with VanCity Credit Union on March 17 and concluded on July 17. The agreement for the workers at Squamish Savings Credit Union and Squamish Insurance Agencies (a division of VanCity Credit Union) is for four years. Wage increases of 3 per cent were calculated retroactively to January 1, with further annual increases of 3, 3 and 2 per cent in the succeeding years. The wage scale was harmonized with VanCity's other union and non-union scales. Some language changes were also agreed to.

After about 18 days of negotiations over several months with Pine Profiles Inc., by the middle of May a first collective agreement had been reached on all articles except the wage schedule. Although the employer did not offer a general wage increase, there is now in place a fair wage schedule which will immediately give many of the workers wage increases from \$0.50 to \$1.50 per hour. Most of the rest will see their wages regularly increase over the life of the two-year contract. Other new benefits include a \$75.00 safety boot allowance and company-supplied work gloves.

I believe it is an acceptable contract with some good language which could be used as a model in bargaining with other small enterprises.

LET'S RENEGOTIATE

continued from page 1

mechanisms of trade deals, rather than the toothless window-dressing in the NAFTA side agreements on labour and environment?

If corporations are lowering their costs by repressing labour rights or by exploiting environmental loopholes, offsetting duties should be imposed on imports to eliminate that kind of unfair advantage. Most countries currently impose duties on imported products if those products are made with subsidies. These measures, called countervail duties, are used by both Canada and the US NAFTA does not prevent their use.

If subsidizing a company is an "unfair trade practice" resulting in the application of a duty, then shouldn't a duty be applied when a trading nation keeps wages low by failing to support collective bargaining rights?

More and more North Americans believe trade should be about raising the living standards of the citizens of trading nations. Measures need to be put into NAFTA to ensure that happens. There is no reason to believe that trade deals are cast in stone.

• KEN NEUMANN
- USW/CALM

Selfishness

"The modern conservative is engaged in one of man's oldest exercises in moral philosophy, that is, the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness."

- John Kenneth Galbraith
(1908-2006), (Canadian-born)
US administrator and economist

Crimes against Mother Earth

"The earth is not dying. It is being killed, and the people killing it have names and addresses."

- U. Utah Phillips (1935-2008),
Grammy-nominated folk singer,
songwriter and political activist



Wilson/
CALM

The eternal paradox

"How is one to live a moral and compassionate existence when one is fully aware of the blood, the horror inherent in life, when one finds darkness not only in one's culture but within oneself? If there is a stage at which an individual life becomes truly adult, it must be when one grasps the irony in its unfolding and accepts responsibility for a life lived in the midst of such paradox. One must live in the middle of contradiction, because if all contradictions were eliminated at once life would collapse. There are simply no answers to some of the great pressing questions. You continue to live them out, making your life a worthy expression of leaning into the light."

- Barry Lopez, Arctic Dreams

What's new in your local? Write to your union. Keep us all in the know. Contact louise@ppwc.ca.

LOCAL 26
CASTLEGAR

PPWC gets no satisfaction

The long-awaited employee climate survey was released last week [week of Sept. 1] and the results were not good. Apparently, we rated sixth of the six colleges that participated in the survey.

It found that, of the four labour groups, the exempt management group was the most satisfied and the PPWC the least satisfied group.

One of the bigger issues that arose was lack of both leadership and direction. It seems to have startled the president, but we will have to wait and see if she does anything about it. Managers that can't manage, imagine that.

TERRY BALYK, NEB MEMBER

LOCAL 15
KIMBERLEY

Where have all the pipefitters gone?

The negotiations with the company took place last month [August] and are now completed. Jim King accompanied our negotiating committee when they exchanged the main wage and bull session items. Four days were needed to cover the items with the company.

This was followed with three special membership meetings to explain the content of the offer. The vote followed and passed by over 80 per cent.

Two of the main items that were

big at our Local were the extended health for retirees and the bridging pop-up for members who retire before 60.

We are now down to six pipefitters. The company is not replacing them when they retire or quit. Last month one member quit after he was refused leave. The mill manager said it was hard for him to find work for pipefitters in the power and recovery area. The two remaining fitters on the 3 and 3 days are coming off in October. It has been said by the manager that the main needs of the mill were millwright driven.

DAVID GUSTAFSON, NEB MEMBER

LOCAL 16
NEW WESTMINSTER

Is anyone here still managing?

As of Sept. 12/08, the morale at the plant is the lowest I have seen in all the years I have worked. To top this off, we have lost our hot meal cafeteria service because the company would not pay the money required to operate.

The company promised to have adequate vending machines, which are now empty. There were no cups for the water dispenser. After making numerous requests, the human resources officer told me the company was not obligated in the contract to supply cups and it wasn't his job.

Most of the office staff has been fired, and the sales manager and one of his top sales people have left to work for competitors.

The foremen are overloaded with work and unable to make any decisions from our plant. Any decisions are put forward to the Winnipeg office, which then have to go through the main office in Chicago.

All in all, there is no one in charge at our plant. Until we have someone who can make decisions and invest some money where it is needed our future is unknown."

PAUL REID, VICE-PRESIDENT

LOCAL 5
NEW WESTMINSTER

Credit union workers join Local

Our Local is growing with the addition of the workers at Squamish Credit Union, and there are a few more opportunities out there.

Thanks to those who made the Squamish organizing drive successful.

DAN KIBSEY, NEB MEMBER

LOCAL 9
PRINCE GEORGE

Rebuild is almost complete

The chip screening rebuild at PG Pulp is well underway. The new screens and conveyor system are progressing rapidly now that the contract has been settled.

We have three days scheduled downtime planned for the end of October to finalize tie-ins and bring the equipment online.

FRANK ROBERTSON, NEB MEMBER

Buddy, can you spare a dime?

IN OUR MILL it is all about costs. The company wants to get to \$80 per tonne labour costs. Since they cannot increase their theoretical tonnes total, the only way to reach their goal is to reduce manpower, and/or cost per person.

We have had several meetings over this since the beginning of July. We are now in contract negotiations and the theme has continued.

We will be faced with the layoff of up to 140 members if we do not come to some kind of agreement. We already have over 30 members laid off.

We have offered up some seniority rights for bumping and working lead hands in exchange for no layoffs. For example, a junior pipefitter might get laid off from the pipe shop. He may be senior to a production worker. We have offered that he will not be able to bump, but will be used in a “cost reduction team” until attrition

returns him to his position in the shop. This saves the company training costs, saves the pipefitter’s rate, and saves an operator’s job.

With the extent of the potential layoffs, the production lines would be affected over half way up. The training costs and production interruptions from new operators would be extremely expensive.

The only reason our plan would work is that we have an older workforce. About 40 of our members are over 60.

Each year for the next ten years or so, we will have over 25 members per year turning 60. The average age for retirement in the industry is 60, so we will lose enough members through attrition to get to \$80 per tonne in about 4 years. Unfortunately, this is not soon enough for the company.

We are presently talking about other ways to solve their concerns about costs with minimum impact to our members.

We had Jim King attend one of the meetings so we had an outsider’s view of what we are doing. Sometimes when you are going down a path, you are so intent on not falling, you do not see where you are going. Thanks, Jim.

LANCE REESE, NEB MEMBER

Harmac workers hope mill will be up and running soon

On July 30 Chief Justice David Brenner of the BC Supreme Court accepted Nanaimo Forest Products Ltd.’s bid to purchase the Harmac Pulp Mill and its related assets. The offer was for \$13.2 million and closed on Aug. 29.

The employees (both staff and hourly) have formed a separate company called the Harmac Employees Ownership Group and own 25 per cent of Nanaimo Forest Products Ltd., together with three other equal partners.

The final details of the legal and financing arrangements for mill start-up are now being worked on and should be finalized the week of Sept. 22.

At this point, there are around 60 people in the

mill with around 25 trades doing preliminary maintenance work. The plan is to have the annual maintenance shut prior to starting the mill up, which is anticipated to happen in early October. Initially, the mill will start up on one line, which will bring approximately 175 Local 8 members back to work.

A new chipping mill is being installed (which will take about three months), and the second line will come back up at that time, with about 75 more members returning to work.

We will keep you posted as events unfold.

Canexus Chemicals has operated throughout the Harmac shut and has redirected their product to other customers. In the months ahead they will supply the pulp mill as it resumes operations.

The Long Hoh Sawmill and Chemainus Value Added Division continue to operate.

Ladysmith Forest Products continues the indefinite shut with no cause for optimism on the horizon.

BOB SMILEY, NEB MEMBER

Owed to the spell checker

I have a spelling checker
It came with my PC
It plane lee marks four my revue
Miss steaks aye can knot sea.

Eye ran this poem threw it,
Your sure real glad two no.
Its very polished in it's weigh,
My checker tolled me sew.

A checker is a bless sing,
It freeze yew lodes of thyme.
It helps me right awl stiles two
reed,
And aides me when aye rime.



To rite with care is quite a feet
Of witch won should be proud.
And we mussed dew the best
wee can,
Sew flaws are knot aloud.

And now bee cause my spelling
Is checked with such grate flare,
Their are know faults with in my
cite,
Of none eye am a wear.

Each frays come posed up on my
screen
Eye trussed to bee a joule
The checker poured o'er every
word
To cheque sum spelling rule.

That's why aye brake in two
averse
By righting wants to pleas,
Sow now ewe see why eye dew
prays
Such soft wear for pea seas!

- Internet/CALM

BC's carbon tax needs work

Changes to BC's carbon tax are needed in order to ensure people in different income groups pay a fair share, according to a new study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Is BC's Carbon Tax Fair? analyzes the impact of the tax and revenue "recycling" for households with varying income levels. It finds the tax is progressive for the first year, although personal and corporate income tax cuts still result in an undesirable net benefit to the highest income households, which also have the largest ecological footprint.

As the carbon tax increases in subsequent years, however, it becomes regressive, meaning low-income families pay a larger share of their income to the tax than higher-income families. The authors argue the best way to fix the problem of inequality is to rework how carbon tax revenues are spent.

Is BC's Carbon Tax Fair? An Impact Analysis for Different Income Levels, by Marc Lee and Toby Sanger, may be downloaded at www.policyalternatives.ca.

Casino plays odds at Labour Board

The efforts to organize workers at Gateway Casino in Burnaby, BC, continue at a glacial pace. In early July, the votes of about 70 supervisors were finally counted, one year after the certification vote.

At the end of July, the BC Labour Relations Board dismissed

another challenge by the casino. As a result, the votes cast by 225 dealers and slot machine attendants can now be counted, nine months after they were cast.

There are about 200 employees who have not yet voted. Management at Gateway has asked the Board to impose a ban on union sign-ups until next February, citing the strain placed on it by the legal proceedings around the certification votes as well as by the opening of a new casino in the fall.

BCGEU president Daryl Walker says he doubts the Board will grant the company's request and hopes "cooler heads will prevail within management" to allow for talks to continue.

- CLV Reports

BC needs to reduce poverty

Gordon Campbell's recent 10-point economic plan will have no impact on BC's most serious problem: persistent and extreme poverty.

BC has the highest poverty rates in the country. Thirteen per cent of the population is living in poverty, and for five years running BC has had the highest child poverty rates in the nation. Poverty rates for groups such as female-headed, single-parent families, aboriginal people, recent immigrants, and people with disabilities are dramatically higher.

Taking action on poverty is a collective responsibility and should be a government priority. Recognizing that morality is not usually what makes governments act. People, in general, support government poverty reduction plans.

Vancouver Island needs a Forest Land Reserve

LOGGING RATES and forestland sales by the three largest private forestland owners on southern Vancouver Island pose grave risks to globally-rare Douglas fir forests and to the region's livability, says a study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

The study finds that in key cases logging rates and land sales spiked following provincial government decisions favoring the companies.

"Last year's controversial decision by then Forests Minister Rich Coleman to allow Western Forest Products to pull its private forestlands out of its Tree Farm Licenses is proving disastrous for Island residents," says Ben Parfitt, a resource policy analyst with the CCPA's BC office, and author of the study. "Loggers and environmentalists alike opposed the move and with good reason. Since then, WFP has accelerated its logging of fir forests and placed thousands of hectares of forestland on the auction block for sale to real estate developers."

The CCPA study comes in the wake of a report by BC's Auditor General that found Coleman's decision was made "without sufficient regard for the public interest". When private lands are bundled with public lands in Tree Farm Licenses, all lands are to be managed on a sustainable basis as forestlands. Because private forestlands within TFLs are designated as "managed forestlands" they cannot be sold for other purposes and are assessed at low tax rates.

Restoring the Public Good on

Private Forestlands looks specifically at logging rates, wood waste levels, log exports, and proposed land sales on private forestlands owned by WFP, TimberWest and Island Timberlands. It finds that:

- Logging rates are, in some cases, twice what auditors say can be sustained and in key cases jumped dramatically after the province allowed companies to pull their private holdings out of tree farm licenses.
- Hundreds of milling jobs are foregone each year based on estimates of log waste on lands owned by the three companies and raw logs they export.

"Instead of managing and regulating important forest resources in the public interest, we're tossing concerns of sustainability, greenhouse gas emissions, drinking water quality, and urban sprawl out the window, and for what?" says Parfitt. "For company shareholders that have already benefited enormously from the favorable tax rates that apply to private forestlands."

Unions negotiate drug test policy

The Construction Labour Relations Association (CLRA), representing companies, and the Bargaining Council of BC Building Trades Unions have negotiated a drug test policy. It is aimed at improving safety in an industry with a reputation for higher-than-average, on-the-job drug use. An industry official said it will establish a standard policy in the province before several large-scale industrial construction projects get started.

Under the policy, employees who show signs of impairment on the job site can be tested for alcohol and nine other drugs, including cocaine, methadone and marijuana.

An employee will be considered positive for marijuana only if his or her test reveals impairment while on the job, as opposed to evidence of use outside of work.

"We opted for a non-invasive testing policy which is designed to measure possible current impairment on the job, not what you did last week," said a CLRA spokesperson.

To my knowledge, there is no drug test for impairment other than alcohol at this time. If impairment tests were available, there would be no reason for pre-employment drug tests.

Impairment on the job is a safety concern to be addressed on the job. Using safety to discriminate or at the minimum influence lifestyles is plain wrong. When real-time impairment tests are available, our union should be able to develop a drug test policy.

WAYNE WARAWA, OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY OFFICER

NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD THAT HITS HOME

PETROLEUM

Is Hugo Chavez becoming the George Bush of South America?

THINGS SEEM OUT of place in Dominica these days. This natural jewel of the Windward Islands in the eastern Caribbean is a small island state smothered in thick green volcanic jungle. It survives on its beauty and an ability to pro-

duce food for export that is rare in its part of the world. Yet an oil refinery is planned on Dominica's southwestern coast to service the petroleum needs of the dozens of English-speaking micro-states that dot the ocean from Trinidad in the south to Puerto Rico in the north.

Venezuelan oil money is being thrown around all over the eastern Caribbean as Hugo Chávez tries to outflank US influence in the region. Dominica has become the main regional point of entry for the Bolivarian Revolution. Not only has Dominican Prime Minister Roosevelt Skeritt committed in principle to the controversial oil refinery, he has also announced that the small island state will join the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), Chávez's economic counterweight to the US-inspired Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Dominica is also benefiting from Venezuelan largesse in the form of aid to upgrade the Melville Hall airport, provide university scholarships to Dominican students, and improve the island's agricultural economy.

It is, however, the oil refinery that has drawn the greatest atten-

tion, much of it highly critical. Dominicans have been burning up the phone lines on the island's lively talk radio scene to express their doubts about whether the air pollution and oil spills that accompany a refinery are compatible with the sustainable development and eco-tourist ambitions long associated with the Caribbean's "Nature Island".

Add to this the relatively few permanent jobs created by a refinery and its impact on fishing, and the carbon-based future looks far from rosy. Dominicans who share fierce democratic sensibilities rooted in Caribbean political culture are particularly critical of Skeritt's Labour Party for the secrecy and lack of open discussion around such life-changing issues as the refinery and ALBA. The refinery controversy in particular has reached such a level of intensity that the Skeritt government has been forced into a partial climb-down, suspending its previous decision, at least for the moment.

Sadly, a little money goes a long way in a small and poor country.

● SEBASTIAN JOHNS

- Adapted from *New Internationalist*

Regulator is fired for leaking plan

BY MICHÈLE DEMERS

WHEN AN HONEST and dedicated food safety professional is fired for the sake of a communications plan, we should be wary of the direction our country is headed. Luc Pomerleau was fired by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) in July for releasing a government document implementing the shift of food inspection from government to food manufacturers and distributors.

Pomerleau was alarmed by the vision of the fox guarding the henhouse. He was part of a large team of government scientists and regulators assigned as the watchdog for all food produced in or imported into Canada. After studying the document, he became concerned for the health of his own children and for all Canadians. He made the right choice, even if his boss didn't think so. Transferring the responsibility to industry is not the right thing to do.

The privatization initiative means brokering federal laboratories and buildings, contracting out government services to the lowest bidder, including much of the information technology work, and now delegating the food inspection and product labelling to private industry, all at a huge cost to taxpayers.

Canadians have faced a number of health crises, such as SARS, mad cow disease, avian influenza, and E. coli in produce. The adverse effects have been mitigated by the quick and effective work done at CFIA, Health Canada and other federal departments.

We purchase, eat and drink items from all over the world. We do so with the trust that many vigilant, hard-working professionals have ensured a high level of safety. We have faith the information on the labels is accurate and truthful because of CFIA's high reputation.

In this global economy, it is the wrong time for the government to withdraw from the inspection of animal feed mills, the certification of commercial seed, and the elimination of mandatory label registration of meat and processed products. Implementing self-policing for the food industry will never be the right choice.

WE DON'T WANT the CFIA to be diminished to an oversight role, allowing industry to implement food safety control programs and to manage key risks. What will happen in a crisis, after the government has sold

off the laboratories and dismissed all the regulators? By the time the managers in Ottawa find out, it will be very late in the process. And by then, will the CFIA have the expertise to deal with the issue and save lives?

The Australian privatization model created just such a problem. Australian public affairs experts noted that the system has efficiencies, but public health benefits are less apparent. The system is less accessible to consumers, and decision-making processes are not open or transparent. The science has been separated from the core policy-making process, rendering the system more vulnerable to political agendas and processes.

This summer, we Canadians didn't have to worry about having tomatoes on our burgers and in our salads.

That was not the case south of the border. This is just one example where our system of government regulators is superior to the US model of more self-regulation.

Canada employs scientists and regulators for a very good reason: our health. Canadian public regulators are so well respected that they are invited by other countries to implement Canadian-style systems and educate new government regulators.

THE POMERLEAU case will have a far-reaching negative effect and long-lasting repercussions on the health and welfare of us all. An invisible gag order has blanketed the entire public service. Scientists, researchers, regulators, and other government experts will be fearful of speaking up when dangerous situations arise.

In order to maximize industry profits and fund future government "strategic reviews", corners will be cut. When the regulated become the regulators, a true assessment of the risks cannot be accomplished. Contaminated food will enter our food supply. Accidents are bound to happen, and we will be left wondering how our government could have let them happen.

Michèle Demers is president of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada.

- Public Values/StraightGoods

True political story

Supposedly G.B. Shaw once sent Winston Churchill some tickets for the first night of one of his plays.

Churchill then sent Shaw a telegram to the effect: "Cannot come first night. Will come second night if you have one."

Shaw promptly replied: "Here are two tickets for the second night. Bring a friend if you have one."

- Internet



Business one-liners

- Given a bad start, trouble will increase at an exponential rate.
- Glory may be fleeting, but obscurity is forever.
- Go where the money is.
- Good advice is something a man gives when he is too old to set a bad example.
- Good judgment comes from experience. Experience comes from bad judgment.
- Good listeners are not only popular everywhere, but after awhile they know something.
- Government expands to absorb revenue and then some.
- Great minds run in great circles.
- Half of being smart is knowing what you are dumb at.
- Happiness is merely the remission of pain.

- Internet

Workers disrupt auction of equipment

Former employees of the bankrupt H.J. Jones-Sons Ltd. of London, Ontario, recently protested their lack of severance pay.

About 45 people held up an auction to sell company equipment for about half an hour, according to a report in the *London Free Press*.

A representative from their union, the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers, decried the fact that, under Ontario law, companies with less than 50 employees don't have to pay severance when they close.

Chicago-based Knight Packaging bought the family-owned company in February 2007.

Last March, when the closing was announced, severance was said to be up for discussion, but so far none has been forthcoming.

- CLV Reports

Wal-Mart faces Supreme Court challenge

The Supreme Court of Canada will hear appeals from a number of workers who lost their jobs when Wal-Mart closed its store in Jonquiere, Quebec, on Feb. 9/05.

The company said the store, located several hundred miles north of Quebec City, was unprofitable and closed it shortly after the United Food and Commercial Workers wanted to go to arbitration in order to finalize a contract for the 190 workers.

The UFCW won certification in late summer 2004, and bargain-

ing continued for over a year with no contract being reached.

Union officials charged that Wal-Mart closed the store because of its efforts to unionize; Wal-Mart disagreed.

At a subsequent hearing before the Quebec Labour Board in December 2005, Wal-Mart was found to have contravened the province's labour laws.

However, the Quebec Court of Appeal later ruled in favour of Wal-Mart.

The Supreme Court will likely not hear the case before 2009.

- CLV Reports

Buttons advertise union's plight

An arbitrator has ruled that bright red buttons with a pro-strike slogan don't fly, at least not in public areas in airports.

In early July, members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, who represent aircraft mechanics, ground crew and cargo handlers at Air Canada, began wearing the buttons, which read "Prepare to Walk the Line in 09".

Air Canada objected, saying the union was prejudicing the bargaining process in advance of the contract's expiration on June 30/09.

The airline's management also feared loss of advance booking of passengers fearing labour disruptions of their travel plans.

Arbitrator Martin Teplitsky agreed and ordered the workers to stop wearing the buttons, but only in places where members of the public were being served."

- CLV Reports

Immigrant workers face poor work conditions

RECENT IMMIGRANTS not only have poorer job situations than Canadian-born workers, but immigrant men are also twice as likely to sustain workplace injuries that require medical care compared with men born in Canada.

The Institute for Work and Health (IWH) has released two new studies comparing work conditions and injury rates between immigrants and workers born in Canada.

“Immigrants with five or fewer years in Canada are more likely to have higher qualifications than their jobs require, to have physically demanding jobs, and to work fewer hours than they want to,” says Peter Smith, a scientist at IWH and the lead researcher of both studies. New immigrants are also less likely to have supervisory responsibilities, to be unionized, or to have access to employment benefits.

Results from the study were presented at Statistics Canada’s socio-economic conference. The findings were based on interviews with more than 76,000 workers, from four waves of Statistics Canada’s Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics.

The second study, published this month in the journal, *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, looked at work-related injuries in immigrants. The researchers analyzed information from more than 97,000 workers who took part in the Canadian Community Health Survey in 2003 and 2005.

This study shows that new immigrant men report a high rate of medically-treated injuries result

from work. One explanation might be that new immigrants have more severe work injuries because they work in more hazardous settings, suggest Smith and co-author Cameron Mustard, IWH president. More information on immigrants’ work hazards and injury risks is needed to confirm this explanation.

Both IWH studies highlight work-related issues in immigrants that can also affect their health.

“Being overqualified for your job, for instance, is associated with declines in health,” notes Smith. Limited access to non-wage employment benefits, such as disability insurance, may result in financial insecurity if a person is unable to work.

The research also shows that conditions may be worse for certain types of immigrants, and may linger for years. Immigrants who are visible minorities, whose mother tongue is not English, or whose highest degree is from outside Canada are more likely to be overqualified, to lack supervisory responsibilities, and to be underemployed. Up to 20 years later, immigrants are still less likely to receive non-wage benefits or be unionized.

- IWH/CALM

Just the facts on unions

Here are some quick facts on unions from Statistics Canada’s annual *Perspectives on Labour and Income*.

- The average unionized worker is paid \$23.58 an hour while the average non-union worker is paid \$18.98.
- The majority of union members are now women, which has been the case since 2006. The unionization rate for women (30 per cent) exceeds men’s (28.7 per cent): 2.15 million women and 2.07 million men are union members.
- Unionized women are closer to achieving pay equity than non-unionized women. Women in unionized full-time jobs average 94 per cent of union full-time men’s average (\$23.36 versus \$24.83).
- The wage gap is much bigger for non-unionized full-time women who earn only 81 per cent of non-union full-time men’s average (\$18.16 versus \$22.50).
- A full-time union workers’ average wage is \$24.15. Full-time non-union workers average only \$20.55.
- A part-time union workers’ average wage is \$19.99. Part-time non-union workers earn dramatically lower pay of \$12.56.

- Statistics Canada/CALM

Money delusion: in search of wealth

The world's money system is in need of an overhaul

WE HAD THOUGHT that the collapse of Enron was a one-off financial hiccup and that otherwise our money system was safe and sound in the hands of the market. However, this doesn't seem to be the case. The credit crunch and sub-prime mortgage lending crises have brought much misery to many in the US as well as in the UK. Prestigious and solid-looking banks such as Société Générale, Northern Rock and Bear Stearns have exposed the underlying weakness of our money system. These examples may be only the tip of the iceberg of the hidden instability of the money market.

In the wake of such financial turmoil one can only conclude that the world's money system is in need of an overhaul. The system, which was created to facilitate economic transactions, is now creating economic tragedies. What was a measure of wealth has taken the place of wealth itself. What was a means to an end has now become an end.

Let us be clear. Money is not wealth. It is a delusion to think that money is wealth. True wealth is good land, healthy animals, flourishing forests, clean water, honest work, abundant creativity, and human imagination. Money was designed to oil the wheels of economic interaction and to ensure that the workings of the marketplace were smooth and simple.

The purpose of money was and should be to serve the human community as well as the Earth community. However, it appears that the original purpose has now been reversed. Instead of money serving people and planet, now people and the planet are put into the service of money. Natural resources are converted into consumables to make money. Whether these consumer goods are necessary or not is irrelevant. As long as money is made, all and everything is justified. The money machine has to be kept in motion at all costs.

Of course, most of the money supply is controlled by the few. It may appear that there is never enough

money to go round, but in fact there is plenty of money available to those who already have it. Yet, for the have-nots, there is always a great scarcity. For example, there is never a shortage of money for wars and weapons, but it is always in short supply for arts and education. There is not a lack of money for fashion, but never enough for food for the poor. No one needs to ask where the money will come from to build huge buildings for banks, supermarkets, office blocks, shopping centres, and luxury villas, but there is never enough money to build houses for the poor.

Naturally, there is a hierarchy in money. Some currencies are more valuable than others: the dollar dominates, the rouble is subordinate. If you have euros, pounds and yen you are privileged, but if you have only

“Money is not a god-given fixture: it was designed by us, therefore it can be changed by us.”

rupees, dinar and pesos you are powerless. You have to give 100 rupees to get £1! When you buy something with the dinar you need a hundred times more than you would in dollars, and if you sell something you receive a hundred times

less. If you work for a British bank in the UK, your earnings are likely to be a hundred times greater than if you do the same job for the same bank in India. This is why call-centres have sprung up in poorer countries.

If you produce Nike shoes in Bangladesh you are paid 100 times less than if you were producing the same pair of shoes in the US. Thus money is an instrument of injustice and exploitation, not merely a means of exchange.

Money favours power and power favours money. Modern “democracy”, in most countries, is the government of the rich for the rich and by the rich. It is estimated that this year's US elections will cost \$1 billion. Money speaks louder than policies or personalities.

As John F. Kennedy once said, “What is designed by humans can be changed by humans.” Money is not a god-given fixture. It was designed by us; therefore, it can be changed by us. Unless we reform and redesign our money system the idea of sustainability, social justice, and spiritual renewal will remain a mirage.

● SATISH KUMAR

- Adapted from *Resurgence*

Employment insurance doesn't add up for women

NO MATTER HOW you figure it, Canada's Employment Insurance (EI) program is set up so women just can't win.

EI is supposed to ensure that workers who are temporarily laid-off or unable to work have an income to see them through this period. EI also covers maternity or parental leave and periods of disability and sickness. EI is funded completely through contributions paid by employers and employees.



EI rules exclude or unfairly penalize women because they fail to take into account the different working patterns of women and men. Only 32 per cent of unemployed women qualify for regular EI benefits, compared to 70 per cent of women who qualified for benefits before major cuts were imposed in the 1990s. Forty per cent of men currently qualify.

Women are more likely than men to be employed in part-time or temporary jobs: fully 40 per cent of working women are in non-standard employment, compared with less than 30 per cent of employed men. This reality excludes many women from EI benefits even though they have paid into the EI fund. Only about half of part-time workers who lose their jobs qualify for unemployment benefits. Periods of time women spend away from work caring for children or others, also limit their ability to have enough qualifying hours to receive benefits.

The EI program now provides up to 15 weeks of maternity benefits and 35 weeks of parental benefits. Parental benefits can be shared by both parents. However, 90 per cent of these weeks are taken by women. Expanding maternity or parental leaves from 10 to 35 weeks in 2001 was a major gain for working women. But to qualify, a woman must have worked 600 hours in the previous year. About three quarters of all women giving birth to a child do qualify, although only 60 per cent claim a benefit. But a full year of leave is much more likely to be taken by women who qualify for a reasonable benefit, or whose union has negotiated a supplement to the EI benefit.

- CLC/CALM



PRESIDENT

Jim King

FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

Greg Hall

SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT

Gerald de Jong

SECRETARY-TREASURER

Bonnie Horswill

ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER

Stuart Blundell

FOREST RESOURCE OFFICER

Arnold Bercov

OCCUP. HEALTH AND SAFETY OFFICER

Wayne Warawa

INTERIM LEAFLET EDITOR

Sean Reel

PRODUCTION

Louise Soukeroff

OFFICE

201 - 1184 W. 6th Ave.
Vancouver, BC V6H 1A4

WEB www.ppwc.ca

PHONE (604) 731-1909

TOLL FREE 1-888-992-7792

FAX (604) 731-6448

E-MAIL louise@ppwc.ca

Signed articles appearing in the Leaflet express the views and opinions of the authors. They are not necessarily the policy of the PPWC or views shared by the Editor or PPWC officers. In submitting copy or photos, contributors should note if they wish material returned. The Leaflet attempts to give coverage to all locals, and pertinent material will be held for the future if the space is unavailable in the current issue.



Affiliated to the
Confederation of
Canadian Unions

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION
CALM
OF LABOUR MEDIA

Upcoming events

November 1 Deadline for submission of bursary applications

December 3 Audit committee meets

December 4-5 National executive board meets

2009

March 31 Resolutions committee meets

April 1-3 47th annual PPWC convention

Velma keeps it together at the office

BY JIM WHITE

n O STORY OF the PPWC can ever be told without highlighting Velma Koob. Velma defines the PPWC in many respects: total commitment, innovative, secure in her ability, and dedicated.

Velma was the first employee of this National Union. She began as virtually office everything in 1964.

She remembers Lloyd Craig being president. Lloyd seldom came to Vancouver; he worked in Castlegar. The secretary-treasurer, Mitch Chernoff, also worked and lived in Castlegar. Mostly, communication came via the mails. Mitch

would do all his work at home in long hand, and Velma would carry out the final piecing together.

She remembers the first office as shoebox size with two desks, two chairs, one typewriter, and lots of cardboard boxes for files.

She tells of Angus as the only full-timer. He was first vice-president charged with organizing and very busy sometimes with five organizing drives going on at once. One of the more complicated duties she had was tracking down Angus' personal belongings—coat, watch, briefcase, etc.—that he habitually left in some hotel room in Prince Rupert or Prince George or Kamloops or Cranbrook.

Another duty she recalls was buying a kettle and making tea for the officers or members who dropped in from time to time.

She also acted as liaison between Angus and Orville, who feuded and went on “I am not talking to him” snits from time to time. Velma would deliver notes to each from the other, or she would pass on more urgent messages, such as, “Tell him I’m on my way to the Island.”

Velma was the office stalwart who made sure the business of the union was done. She was also the den mother who made sure her guys buttoned up their overcoats and wore their Billy boots on rainy days.

After all is said and done, Velma ranks as important as anyone else in the organization and, thus, all is said and done.

Velma Koob takes care of business after making sure everyone has their hats and coats on

