



Office closures, massive cuts to service, staff

In June, TELUS announced buyout offers to members as part of a plan to cut the unionized workforce, currently about 17,000, by 5000.

On July 11, the other shoe dropped.

TELUS announced plans to close offices and phone stores in BC and Alberta as part of its cost-cutting initiative.

The plan will see the closure of 33 of the 40 phone stores, leaving three major stores in BC (Victoria, Vancouver and Burnaby) and four in Alberta (two in Edmonton and two in Calgary). This initiative will have a direct impact on about 250 workers.

Of more significance in terms of numbers of employees, the company also plans to consolidate and close call centres. The total number of call centers will drop from 66 in 20 communities to 28 in

nine communities, eliminating about 1,800 positions. It will reduce the number of telephone company employees in a number of smaller communities, and eliminate them entirely from others. Areas affected include operator services, repair service, customer care, telemarketing and credit and collections.

The Union has blasted the cuts in staff and service as "a devastating and unwarranted attack on communities, customers and workers."

The Union attributes the company's shaky financial situation on mismanagement and bad investment decisions, particularly the decision to pay

more than \$6 billion to acquire Clearnet.

TWU President Rod Hiebert has called for the replacement of TELUS CEO Darren Entwistle, a commitment to provide quality service, and retention of service in local communities.

Shareholders and financial analysts appear to have reached a conclusion similar to that of the Union, as share prices dropped sharply after the announcement of cutbacks, and precipitously after the announcement of a major downgrading of the company's status by a bond rating agency shortly after the July 11 cuts were announced.

The Union organized a series of public meetings to draw attention to the destructive nature of the company's plans, and activists have made presentations to a number of city and municipal councils. Public response to the Union initiative has been overwhelming positive.

Meanwhile, TELUS managers have been pressuring employees to take a buyout package and leave the workforce, in many cases implying or saying outright that they will be without work if the

office in their community closes.

The Union has taken steps to reassure members that they are being given false information, and that even if they are facing an office closure, they are not facing a layoff

As recently as August 20, incorrect information was being spread by some managers, and the Union was forced to respond with the following message:

(See 'Company', page eight)

Buyout offers revised
story, page three

TELUS seeks 'concessions and worse'

Our members at TELUS have been working nearly two years now without a revised collective agreement, and contract talks can be described at best as moving at a snail's pace. And that's an optimistic way of looking at it.

Actually, the bargaining situation is even worse than that, says Vice-President Bruce Bell.

As bad as the slow process of talks is, Bell says, the more frustrating problem stems from what the company is seeking at the bargaining table.

"It is all negative," says Bell. "Concessions, and worse. The company is proposing nothing but takeaways. There is not the slightest suggestion TELUS has any desire or intention of building on the existing agreement, or of offering anything positive to the membership. TELUS has made it clear they want to tear down what has been negotiated over the years and decades, and replace it with an agreement that strips away hard-won rights and seriously weakens our members' position within the workforce."

The company wants to water down the job posting procedure, or more accurately, Bell says, to gut the job posting procedure, moving away from seniority to a posting procedure

based largely on factors such as skills and qualifications, irrespective of seniority.

They want to do away with our broad contracting out rights, with contracting out protections applying only to core functions, as defined by the company. Similarly, they propose to gut the work jurisdiction clause.

What we see is bargaining of form without substance, and what substance there is can only be described as entirely negative for workers, says Bell.

"It would appear that in pursuing this radical departure from accepted bargaining practice, the company is banking on a cowed and complacent membership accepting what is being dished out. The Union believes TELUS is seriously miscalculating the mood and resolve of the membership. From our travels around B.C. and Alberta, meeting with members throughout the company, it is evident to us that the vast majority of the membership is not buying the company line, and will fight for what they believe in to secure a decent collective agreement."

The Company's stubbornness at the bargaining table must be seen within the wider context of their strategy. The slow pace and negative tone of

bargaining is taking place as important issues are being considered by the federal Labour Board, most notably, the issue of the status of Clearnet within the bargaining unit. (As you will see in a related story elsewhere in this issue, the Clearnet application appears to be still months away from resolution.)

Also of crucial importance to members, bargaining is taking place now in the shadow of a major initiative by TELUS to downsize the workforce, and the company's level of service to the public.

In July, the company announced plans to reduce the workforce by 6,000, including 5,000 bargaining unit personnel (see related story). Part and parcel of this slashing of the workforce is a plan to close the majority of phone stores, down from 40 to seven, and to consolidate call centres, eliminating more than half the existing 66, a move which will hit smaller communities particularly hard. It will also place enormous pressure on members remaining in those communities.

"Clearly the company is hoping the threat of job loss and severe disruptions in the workplace will weaken the resolve of members and allow them to virtually impose the

contract they want," says Bell. "But what we are finding is that it is firming up the determination of the membership to resist."

The cuts to service and to the workforce have led not just to unhappy workers, but also to unhappy customers, and to unhappy shareholders. The new "get tough" approach has nothing positive for anyone, and they are paying the price in business terms as well as industrial relations terms.

It is important for the membership to understand the Union has no intention of playing the company's game, says Bell, no intention of lying down and letting management roll over our members and their hard-won rights.

What we need from our members, he says, is continued support for our efforts and determination to resist the gutting of the collective agreement.

"Come out to local meetings, stay informed, resist company efforts to panic or stampede members into hasty decisions about your future, and together we can work to protect your jobs and your futures," Bell says.

"In the past, the workers have always prevailed when we stick together. We will remain rock solid again this time."

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Retirement thanks

Dear TWU:

I wish to thank you for my \$1000 cheque, honorary life membership, pin and letter on the occasion of my retirement on May 30th, after 36 years with BC Tel and TELUS.

They have been very enjoyable years. Thank you again.

Yours truly,
Stephanie Williams
Local 11

Dear TWU:

Thank you for the \$1000 cheque, the letter and the honorary life membership. I enjoyed my 30 plus years with BC Tel and considered myself very lucky to be able to take the buyout 6 years ago. Life has been very busy but very good.

Thank you again.

In solidarity,
Pat Springman
Nelson

Dear TWU:

I wish to thank the TWU for the honorary life membership, pin & cheque for \$1000 presented by Brother Rod Giddens on behalf of the TWU. It has been my pleasure to support the TWU for the last 36 years. As a member I have enjoyed the best of benefits and working conditions. For this I thank a strong union leadership and members. I wish all of you continued success.

Yours sincerely in solidarity,
Dave Peterson, Local 5

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Dear TWU:

Thank you for the \$1000 cheque, honorary life membership and letter presented to me on my retirement.

I enjoyed my participation in the TWU and especially liked working with Lila Wing and Kathy Pearn when I was in Local 23. Keep up the good fight.

In solidarity,
Shirley Archambault
Local 20

Dear TWU:

I would like to express my thanks to all of my friends who came to celebrate my retirement on March 1, 2002.

It was wonderful seeing all my old friends from Operator Services FW1 Unit 3 and my friends from Mobility and out of town friends and family - thank you for coming.

Special thanks to the roasters/presenter: Dolly Storey, Martha Fast, Dana White, Chris Latrace, Neil Cusati, Lorne and Lisa Fairgrieve and Peter Massy. They restrained themselves and only told the nice stories which was greatly appreciated as my whole family were there. Also thanks to my friends in Operator Service, Kamloops for their lovely retirement best wishes.

I would also like to thank the Union and membership for giving me the opportunity over the past 35+ years to serve in many capacities. It is with great pride I can say I am a member of the TWU. Our Union has

worked very hard to serve the membership and I encourage all members to support their Union. The benefits we receive aren't due to largess on the part of the company we work for but a result of good bargaining by our Union representatives.

Good luck and thanks for the memories.

Sister Drina Latrace
Local 51

Dear TWU:

From party line to wireless - what a time! When I started at BC Telephone in June 1963 the residential installation charge was \$6.00, rental of the telephone line including a black dial set was \$6.25 per month. A coloured set was a one-time fee of \$9.00 and the use of a longer cord was an extra charge too. Now computers, fax and answering machines, call management features, e-mail, cellular - the workplace has definitely changed!

Thank you for the Life Membership in the TWU, the cheque for \$1000, the mailing of the "Transmitter" and my pension.

Sincerely,
Donna Harder
Local 50 and 1

Dear TWU:

I recently retired from TELUS after 31 years, the last years on disability benefits. I would like to thank the TWU for their support and services over the years. I would also like to express my thanks for the retirement gift of a cheque for \$1,000 and the Honorary Life Membership certificate and the pin.

I look forward to receiving the Transmitter and the opportunity to keep in touch with the members.

Yours truly,
Gerald Westgarde,
Houston

Dear TWU:

First, I would like to thank the TWU for my \$1,000 retirement cheque.

Second, I am grateful for the good wages and excellent benefits I received as a TELUS employee.

Lastly, I am grateful for the monthly TWU pension cheque I will be receiving.

All of the above things were made possible by hard fought negotiations and the commitment of the TWU to improve the working conditions of its members.

Well done, and again, thank you.

In solidarity,
Marianne Klos,
Operator Services,
Local 11, Victoria

Dear TWU:

Thank you for the honorary life membership and the \$1,000 cheque I received on my retirement.

I appreciate the hard work the TWU has done for its members during my 36 years and 11 months of employment at BC TEL/TELUS.

Irene Andonian,
GT&PS Vancouver

CLC thanks

Dear TWU:

I would like to thank the TWU for your considerable contribution toward the 2002 Harrison Winter School. There have always been many TWU students at the Winter School and this year was no exception. The instructors provided by your union all did an excellent job as part of our Winter School team.

Cheryl Tellier again did an excellent job with her Facing Management class, and Monte Worthington again excelled in the Parliamentary Procedures and Public Speaking class. Brian Elliot worked

well with David Winter in the Basic Shop Steward class in a very large Week 1. Tamara Marshall also did a great job and, as discussed, helped lower the average age of our instructor team. It is important for us to continue to integrate new, younger instructors into the School for it to continue in its pre-eminent position. All instructors would be eagerly welcomed at future schools.

It was a pleasure working with Bruce Bell and Rod Hiebert to fit your TWU instructors into the School. I need the instructors to deliver our program, but it is also my responsibility to help develop your own union's instructors. I hope that we can continue in a mutually beneficial way. Your acquisition of Alberta membership has obviously increased the demands in your own union. I'm pleased that we have been able to provide Brenda Makeechak to do initial instructor training, and use some of those instructors at the Winter School to broaden their knowledge and abilities.

Again, many thanks to Rod Hiebert and Bruce Bell for your assistance and cooperation. I look forward to working with both of you in future years.

In solidarity,
David Rice
Regional Director,
CLC

This letter was sent by Mae Burrows, a member of the Executive of the Vancouver and District Labour Council, to the Chair of the Board of Directors of TELUS

Dear Mr. Canfield:

I am writing as a shareholder in TELUS to express my extreme dissatisfaction with the performance of CEO Darren Entwistle. I bought shares in TELUS as part of an ethical social investment portfolio managed by Perry Abbey of United Securities. I am now urging United to no longer include TELUS as an ethical investment based on the poor working relationship Entwistle has with TELUS workforce, the poor investment decisions he has made and the fact that he is now attempting to dig out the debt he incurred by creating unemployment in numerous communities through his abrupt and drastic lay-offs. Unemployment not only impacts negatively on our communities, but a reduced workforce will also have a negative impact on TELUS service.

Further, I am requesting that the TELUS Board of Directors call a special general meeting of shareholders to review Entwistle's and his executive group's performance and compensation packages. I would like to see Entwistle replaced by a manager more sensitive to his employees and community, not to mention with sharper financial acumen.

Obviously the impulsive purchase of ClearNet for \$6 billion was a grievous error. Estimates put the purchase at three times a reasonable value for the Company. The debt that has resulted from that poor decision has meant a serious devaluation of my stocks, but moreover, Entwistle's tired and uncreative response to this unnecessary self-created debt is to suddenly lay off 6,000 people. Our communities do not need further unemployment. And I must add that TELUS does not need worse service for its customers.

I am displeased with the information that there is considerable coercion to force employees (predominantly female) to accept "voluntary" buy-out and early retirement packages. On top of this, Entwistle and his executive have

received a raise in their compensation, in Entwistle's case, 90% over last year. It is outrageous that such a poor performer would receive an increase in salary. Further, as a shareholder, I am increasingly annoyed at the disproportionately high salaries that CEOs receive, Nortel CEO John Roth is the star in taking shareholders down the drain while increasing his personal wealth. Entwistle is part of the same discrediting bunch of CEOs.

Apart from losing a hard-earned investment, I am embarrassed to be associated with TELUS based on the hostility that has been exhibited by Entwistle toward his employees and their union. He has taken his company from a place that long enjoyed reasonable employer-employee relationships to one where there is apparently abuse, bullying, and a virtual unwillingness to negotiate or talk with the union.

To quote the social investment leader Deb Abbey of Real Assets, "Long-term shareholder value can best be achieved when all stakeholders - including employees - are empowered to make themselves heard and treated fairly" (Real Assets. Real Change Volume 1 - Issue 4 Summer 2002). Under Entwistle's leadership this is not the case. Further Ms. Abbey points out, "Labour unions are often necessary to redress the balance of power between employers and employees."

As a shareholder I would like to see Entwistle replaced, a conciliatory process initiated immediately to restore the respect for the employees and their representative union, and a more creative solution than massive lay-offs to the debt Entwistle has created. Perhaps Entwistle should personally assume responsibility for his poor decision-making and overall performance and start paying off TELUS's debt himself as due retribution.

I look forward to your response to the issues I have raised in this letter.

Mae Burrows,
Burnaby, BC

Scholarship winners

The names of the winners of seven TWU scholarships for the post-secondary 2002 academic year have been announced.

Five scholarships worth \$1,000 each have been awarded to:

Terra Pritchard of Port Hardy, BC (parent, Henry Pritchard, Local 35).

Najjla Kuzyk of Edmonton (parent, Allison Kuzyk, Local 207).

Jordon Soet of Burnaby (parent Len Soet, Local 51).

Sukhveer Clair of Burnaby (parent Surinder Clair, Local 5).

Alexander Thomson of Prince George, BC (parent Robert Thomson, Local 9).

Two scholarships worth \$750 each have been awarded to:

Teresa Agar of Port Coquitlam, BC (parent Barry Agar, Local 7).

Aleeza Mohamed of Calgary (parent Salim Mohamed, Local 204).

New procedures for awarding TWU scholarships were adopted this year to include the expanded membership base in Alberta.

VDIP revised, ERIP the same, TELUS adds money to TWPP

TELUS has revised the financial incentive plans it announced in June to encourage members to leave the workforce, and has agreed to put money into the Telecommunication Workers Pension Plan to partially compensate the plan for the additional burden imposed by early retirements.

In mid-September, the trustees of the TWPP endorsed the company's offer to beef up the plan, and the Union's Executive Council, after considerable debate, has endorsed it as well.

The telephone company made three offers to members in June in an effort to reduce the unionized workforce by 5,000. Of the three, only one remains the same as originally proposed.

The Early Retirement Incentive Plan (ERIP) remains unchanged. In BC, it covers members who have reached the age of 55 with 25 years service, or age 60 with less than 25 years service. (It is slightly different for those members who come under one of the Alberta pension plans.) The ERIP offers eligible

members 12 months salary plus \$500 per year of service up to a maximum of 30 years, or \$15,000. As an example, an employee with 30 years service earning \$55,000 will be offered \$70,000.

What has changed is the Voluntary Departure Initiative (VDIP), aimed at members under the age of 55 with at least 10 years service. It was originally a richer package than the ERIP, offering up to 18 months salary, one month for each of 18 years of service, plus \$1,000 a year for up to 20 years service. So as an example, a \$50,000/year employee with 20 years service would have received \$95,000 total.

However, as the company agreed to put additional money into the pension plan, it also scaled back the amount of the VDIP payment, breaking it into two options.

Under the first VDIP option, which would allow the member to seek an unreduced pension from the TWPP at age 55, the company will provide an incentive equivalent to that of the ERIP, that is, one year's salary plus \$500 per year up to 30 years.

The second VDIP option would remain as offered in June, that is, a maximum 18 months salary plus a maximum \$20,000, but the member who accepts that option would not be eligible for a TWPP pension until age 65.

A third option originally proposed by TELUS, the "Continuance", has been withdrawn by the company.

TELUS has also agreed to put additional money into the TWPP, in response to Union and trustee concerns over the negative financial impact on the Plan as a result of the buyouts. The company will make up a portion of the shortfall created by the ERIP, and a portion of the shortfall resulting from the VDIP.

TELUS also indicated, as the Transmitter was going to press, that pension estimate information would be going out to all ERIP-eligible plan members in mid-September.

Members have until October 18 of this year to accept the ERIP or VDIP. Those with specific questions about their entitlement should contact their respective pension offices.

TELUS disconnect

From July 19 Edmonton Sun

Contrary to its slogan, the future is anything but friendly at TELUS these days. With an anaemic stock price, loaded with \$8.8 billion in debt and shedding staff, the future for the giant telecommunications company is looking downright grim.

Normally, the performance (or lack thereof) of a specific private company isn't worth commenting about, but TELUS is no ordinary company. For many Albertans, it's still their company. The former Alberta Government Telephones privatization itself as AGT in 1990 through a share offering that gave many ordinary Albertans an opportunity to buy a piece of the action.

For years the company rechristened TELUS in 1996, was a very good deal: the share price appreciated slowly but surely, and the company paid a very generous dividend to shockholders.

Then the high-tech stock market mania of the late 1990s took over and TELUS has never been the same. Just a month after Darren Entwistle became TELUS CEO in the summer of 2000, TELUS purchased rival cellphone operator Clearnet for a whopping \$6.6 billion – a price that was a staggering 53% premium over Clearnet's share price at the time. That was the beginning of the long slide down for TELUS from which it is still trying to recover.

These days, you're hard-pressed to find folks (who don't sit on the TELUS board) who have confidence in Entwistle, the board of

directors and upper management. Shareholders certainly don't. TELUS shares were trading at around \$41 when Entwistle took over. They now languish at just over \$10 and pay a smaller dividend to boot. It's hardly just Bay Street fat-cats who have watched their TELUS investment dwindle – all those Albertans who accumulated TELUS shares over the years have been hammered.

Unionized staff don't seem to have any confidence in the management either. A couple of weeks ago the union called for Entwistle to be fired. While one telecommunications analyst says that TELUS has to deal with "one of the most militant unions in the country", we suspect Albertans who have watched their TELUS investment shrink are tending to find their sympathies lie with the workers, not management.

And that sympathy probably grew when TELUS announced last week it is cutting 6,000 employees (including 1,000 managers) by the end of next year. While corporate downsizing is an unfortunate reality of the business world and something that many companies have undergone, it is terribly sad that the folks at the bottom of the ladder lose their jobs because of decisions made at the top.

There is no quick fix for TELUS. But we find it difficult to believe that the same management team that led the company to this low point can turn it around.

TELUS needs to hang up on its current management.

Debt rating cut to junk status

By Roma Luciw
Globe & Mail

TELUS Corp.'s debt rating was slashed to junk status by Moody's Investors Service, sending its stock plummeting more than 20 per cent, in late July.

The influential New York based debt rating agency said it is concerned that Canada's second largest phone company is not generating enough cash to pay down debt, which was about \$9-billion at the end of the last year.

Moody's cited two recent regulatory decisions that will reduce TELUS's earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) by \$300-million each year. In addition, the company's plan to compete with rival Bell Canada in Eastern Canada is consuming cash and could cut into profit, Moody's noted.

Moody's cut the senior unsecured rating of TELUS to Ba1, a speculative, or junk rating, from Baa2, an investment grade rating.

The ratings agency called TELUS's debt outlook "negative" and said that it may downgrade senior unsecured debt further.

Shares of Vancouver-based TELUS fell 21 per cent or \$1.95 to \$7.20 in early afternoon trading on the Toronto Stock Exchange.

The Moody's downgrade, following a similar move by Canada's Dominion Bond Rating Service Ltd. earlier in July, will increase pressure on TELUS executives as they try to control costs and reduce the company's debt load.

Some analysts have said Moody's carries more weight with investors because it is based in the United States. A downgrade by credit rating agencies can make it more costly or difficult for companies to borrow money. If a company's debt falls below investment grade, some institutional investors, such as pension or mutual funds, may be prevented from holding its bonds, debentures or other debt securities.

Earlier this month, July, TELUS announced plans to cut 6,000 jobs and streamline its operations to improve productivity and cut costs in the wake of a Canadian Radio television and Telecommunications Commission regulatory decision.

The job cuts, combined with previous reductions, will have reduced the company's 28,000 member work force by slightly more than 20 per cent when they are completed in 2003.

In late May, the CRTC handed down a ruling that essentially froze

local residential phone rates charged by TELUS and the other major phone services. The ruling also reduced the fees that alternative phone companies pay for access to the big telcos' networks.

Then in July, Moody's said TELUS faces "execution risk" on its downsizing and broader business plan. The company may have "little flexibility to react to adverse developments" and few options to boost cash flow because it has already reduced its dividends and has few assets to sell, Moody's said.

First child?

CEP 1120 / The Local / CALM

A man spoke frantically into the phone, "My wife is pregnant and her contractions are only two minutes apart!"

"Is this her first child?" the doctor asked.

"No, you idiot!" the man shouted. "This is her husband!"

Mystery writer dies

The Guild Reporter/
Newspaper Guild/CALM

Mildred Augustine Wirt Benson, a member of the Newspaper Guild since 1944 and a reporter for The Blade, died May 28 in Toledo Hospital. She was 96.

Although officially – if reluctantly – retired since the end of last year, Benson had continued coming to The Blade once a week to work on a monthly column. She was at her desk when she became ill and was taken to the hospital, where she suffered respiratory arrest.

Under her own name and pseudonyms, Benson was the writer of more than 130 books for young people – including 23 of the first Nancy Drew mysteries. One year, while a reporter, she wrote more than a dozen children's books.

But for a half-century after the initial Nancy Drew book appeared, in 1930, Benson's identity as the writer who had shaped the teen sleuth was largely unknown. She received a flat rate, no royalties

and had to sign a release promising not to make any claim on the character and not to use pen name "Carolyn Keene," which was owned by the syndicate that put out the series.

A lawsuit between publishers in 1980 allowed Benson to substantiate that she indeed wrote the first Nancy Drew book and many of the later volumes. But despite this vindication, Benson was reluctant after 50 years of public silence on the matter to trumpet her achievement.

The attention blossomed beginning in 1993, when the University of Iowa – her alma mater – held a conference on the widespread interest in Nancy Drew and invited her as a guest. Television, radio and newspaper interviews followed by the score, and she was inundated by fan mail and requests to sign her books.

At her death, Benson was believed to be the oldest Guild member with active membership.



TWU delegates to CLC convention in Vancouver in June

2 retiring CLC officers honoured

Calm

Delegates celebrated the achievements of two retiring officers at the CLC convention in Vancouver in June.

"You've been my inspiration, my strength through difficult times. But I'm going now, I'm done and I'm going home to Newfoundland," said former secretary-treasurer Nancy Riche in response to the tributes and funny stories told by former CLC president Bob White, Elsa Ramos from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and others.

Riche has been an officer since 1986 and secretary-treasurer since 1999 and has co-chaired the Women's Committee for 16 years. She also steps down as head of the Women's Committee of the ICFTU.

Retiring executive vice-president Jean-Claude Parrot said he'd "visit a few picket lines in the future but concentrate on paying back time to family." Before becoming executive vice-president in 1992, Parrot was president of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers.

Parrot opened his union to women and fought for maternity leave before anyone else took on these issues.

Delegates elected Hassan Yussuff, who was an executive vice-president, to the position of secretary-treasurer. They chose two new executive vice-presidents: Barbara Byers, president of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour since 1988, and Marie Clarke Walker, a vice-president of the 14,000-member CUPE Local 4400, representing Toronto education workers.

President Ken Georgetti was re-elected without challenge.

Podmore wins Award of Excellence

August 29 Vancouver Sun
BC's leading entrepreneur says Vancouver developer David Podmore is a guy who can get things done. Canada's top labour leader knows him as a straight shooter. His peers recognize him as an excellent homebuilder, a dedicated family man and a tireless community worker.

Those qualities were exactly what the Real Estate Institute of BC was looking for when it decided to name Podmore – co-founder, president and chief executive officer of Concert Properties Ltd. – the recipient of its first Award of Excellence.

"This award honours a member of our profession who has shown outstanding leadership and contribution to the real estate industry and to their community, while maintaining a balance between their professional and personal life," said Stephen Mullock, president of the institute, which represents all facets of the industry. "David fit the bill exactly."

Mullock's praise for Podmore, 53, was endorsed by BC business luminaries – including Jim Pattison, Peter Brown, Jack Poole and fellow

developer Michael Audain – as well as Ken Georgetti, president of the Canadian Labour Congress.

Pattison calls Podmore "a total team player" who is "great at getting things done," while Brown, chair of Canaccord Capital Corp., refers to Podmore as "one of the unsung guys in Canada."

As CEO of Concert – jointly owned by management and union pension funds representing some 200,000 British Columbians – Podmore juggles the investment needs of both big business and the labour movement.

The company, established as VLC Properties in 1989, initially to help fill Vancouver's need for affordable rental housing now boasts assets of more than \$500 million and working capital exceeding \$240 million.

Concert, which is among the province's largest development firms, is one of the few that exclusively employs union labour.

During his career, Podmore has been responsible for more than \$3.5-billion worth of projects, including BC Place Stadium, the BC pavilion at

Expo 86, several of Concert's planned communities in Greater Vancouver and Harbourside Business Park on the North Shore waterfront.

"David is straightforward, proficient, honest and good at what he does," said Georgetti, another Concert co-founder along with Podmore and Poole.

"He has the full confidence of the board of directors. Concert's portfolio is looking very good over the long term.

"The company has provided high-quality [housing] along with solid returns and millions of hours for unionized workers. It has really helped boost the BC economy.

"Some people doubted us when we first started, but those detractors have turned into grudging supporters." For 2000-2001, Concert was selected by the Canadian Home Builders Association as the "best home-builder in BC."

Concert's notable projects include Collingwood Village in east Vancouver, Arbutus Walk on the old Carling O'Keefe Brewery site near 12th and Arbutus, Hemingway at Oakridge, and Oscar at Richards and Drake.

Court backs Union on CIRB Decision 108

We are pleased to report that the courts have backed the Union in a dispute with TELUS on Canada Industrial Relations Board Decision 108.

In Decision 108, the CIRB essentially ruled that as TELUS grew across Canada, the TWU would grow with it.

TELUS did not like Decision 108, and appealed.

On September 9, the Federal Court of Appeal issued a ruling upholding Decision 108 – an important victory for the TWU.

AFL questions govt motive for Labour Code changes

From: Labour News Alberta Federation of Labour

The Alberta Tories have appointed a special MLA committee to consider amending the Labour Code – but the Alberta Federation of Labour is questioning the government's real motivations.

"We think this could be a Trojan horse for the union busters in the province," says AFL President Les Steel. "The people affected by the act – unionized employers and employees – have not been calling for a review any time soon. We think this is coming from people who distrust unions on principle."

Human Resources Minister Clint Dunford says he wants the changes to the Code to be small, but Steel says he does not trust that to happen.

"We've heard the Minister's assurance, but we don't trust that he can keep the issue under control. His track record in delivering on his promises lately has been poor," says Steel, referring to recent political defeats for the Minister, including the WCB Longstanding Claims Tribunal and raising welfare rates.

The AFL is suspicious of the process involved in the new MLA committee, to be chaired by Tory MLA Richard Marz. "Why is it not all-party committee?" asks Steel. "That decision alone makes it feel like the deck is stacked."

Louis Laberge passes in July

CLC/CALM

Working men and women throughout Quebec and across Canada have lost one of the great working class heroes of the 20th century with the passing of Louis Laberge, in July.

Laberge believed, passionately, that working people have a right to a decent standard of living and to a fair share of the wealth produced through their labour and the hours they sacrifice in the service of others. It was this passion and his leadership that built the Quebec Federation of Labour (FTQ) into the force it is today. It was his vision that led to the creation of the FTQ Solidarity Fund, an idea that extended the power of the workers from the shop floor into the financial markets so their own money and savings would be used to the benefit of themselves, their families and communities.

"Brother Louis made a difference. He leaves behind a legacy of change and progress," said CLC President Ken Georgetti.

Steel also points out that the summer is the hardest time for unions to participate in such a review. "Why is it happening in the summer? Could it be they want to discourage union participation?"

Steel says that Alberta's labour laws are already among the most employer-leaning in the country. "It is very difficult to organize workers in this province, the laws are so stacked against the workers. What more do employers want? A ban on unions?"

Steel says the AFL will mobilize its affiliates to respond to this review to make sure labour's voice is heard. "Despite being the summer, we will get our members moving on this issue. We have to. Too much is at stake."

"Last time they reviewed the Labour Code, it became the worst in the country. Working people need to fight to make sure the same thing doesn't happen again," Steel concluded.

Pensioners Dinner October 18

The TWU's annual Pensioners Dinner and Dance for retired and disabled members will be held Friday, October 18.

Location is the Operating Engineers Hall, 4333 Ledger Avenue, Burnaby.

Doors open at 6 p.m., dinner at 7 p.m., dance at 9 p.m.

Tickets are \$15 per person. A letter has been sent to all applicable members. Those wishing to attend should fill out the form enclosed with the Letter, and return it to the Union office with a cheque payable to the TWU to cover the cost of tickets.

BOYCOTTS

All readers are asked to support the following trade union sponsored consumer boycotts. Please do not patronize or purchase any of these goods, services and/or retail outlets:

All Non-Union Postal Outlets
Dispute with CUPW
Philips Electronic Products, Quebec



Nanaimo's 'blah blah' sisterhood

By Peter Massy, BA

The "blah blah sisterhood", as the Nanaimo operators refer to themselves, walked out the Nanaimo operator services office for the last time on September 6th, 2002. The name blah blah sisterhood was coined early this year, when one member who had heard enough corporate nonsense in a meeting, stood up and yelled "blah, blah blah, blah blah."

The Nanaimo operators carry that mantle with pride. For a year and right up to the day of the closure, management did everything in their power to force the operators to give up, quit and take the Voluntary Departure Initiative. These members were tested. Their self esteem was attacked. Their faith in the collective agreement was put to the test. Management said they would not be, could not be, re-assigned or redeployed. Take the ERIP/VDIP or be laid off. Right up until the last two weeks, senior executives were pushing, pressuring the operators to leave.

Finally in the last days of August, operator service management realized that some of the Nanaimo operators were not walking away from their jobs until they had more information. Operators were given a list of offices to report to on Sept 7th, the day after the Nanaimo closure. Interesting that all the operators with children were assigned offices from which you could not get home every night.

That eventually got sorted out. Next came the issue of expenses. Management issued a bulletin that contradicted the collective agreement. Over a two-week period the Nanaimo operator executive with the assistance of a plant Brother finally got the company back on track. Next came the issue of corporate credit cards. None had been issued. Some members were just receiving them on the day of the closure. Management did not stop there, they also informed the operators they could not take a leave of absence. When the union challenged this

management backed down. However they would not put anything in writing and it took until September 5th at 4 pm to get them to do so. Too late for some operators.

You think that management would have given up with the pressure by this point. No, they told operators who were going out of town that they had to check into their assigned offices as soon as they arrived at their destination, before checking into their hotels.

At the end, 27 Nanaimo operators were re-assigned on full board and lodging to other offices until at least Oct 4th. What happens after that date is still unknown.

Management of operator services firmly believed that they could get the Nanaimo operators to quit. They were wrong. They closed an office, but they never destroyed the solidarity, the strength and family known as the blah blah sisterhood. When we left on them Sept 6th, at 6:30 in the evening, they were sharing stories, songs, food and drinks.

anything through the policy changes. There are increases, but no decreases, in amounts members will receive.

Under the former Northern Location Policy, which Alberta Telus had implemented to encourage workers to remain in the North, craft workers in High Level and Fort McMurray were entitled to an isolation allowance but clerical workers were not. Clerical workers in both communities are now covered by the policy.

The company had justified granting the allowance to craft but not clerical employees on the grounds that it was difficult to retain craft employees in northern Alberta, but that no such difficulty existed with respect to clerical employees. However, the Union successfully argued that the old

policy was discriminatory, resulting in the changes.

The new policy also includes increases to the Northern allowance, to the Housing Protection and Relocation provisions, and to special medical needs in High Level.

At the same time, the Union and Company signed off a Letter of Agreement which provides remedy in the form of lump sum payments to six clerical members (current and past) in Fort McMurray for time worked without additional compensation prior to the new policy.

June Lewis said a good deal of time and effort went into negotiating the changes, but the net result is a gain for all members, men and women, working in the two communities.

Okanagan supports campaign against cuts

A delegation of Local 16 members attended the Regional District of the Central Okanagan Meeting August 26.

After hearing a presentation by Business Agent George Doubt the board members voted to do three things:

1. Write to TELUS CEO and board of directors requesting they reconsider the local office closures and job cuts.

2. Write to the CRTC asking for a public hearing into Access, Quality of Service and the proposed rate increases to small business.

3. Invite Daren Entwistle to attend a CORD board meeting and explain how TELUS intends to provide service after the cuts.

The board members pointed out that the City of Kelowna was the first municipality to write to TELUS deploring the cuts. Copies of the letters from the CORD board will be sent to the Peachland and Lake Country Councils in hopes that they will take similar action.

A similar presentation has also been made to Kamloops City Council.

Schedule of Office closures

Telus has announced the schedule for closures and consolidations of call centre offices, beginning October 4, 2002.

The Nanaimo office will be closed October 4, 2002.

The Van South office will be consolidated October 15, 2002

The Whalley, Burnaby and North Vancouver consolidations are planned for the fourth quarter of 2002.

The closure of the Abbotsford office is slated for the fourth quarter of 2002.

The closure of the Kelowna, Grande Prairie and Red Deer offices are scheduled for the first quarter of 2003.

However, some services in various offices are already being closed or moved. For example (see related story), the Nanaimo Operator Service office was closed effective September 6, 2002.

Clearnet hearings resume in October

Hearings in front of the Canada Industrial Relations Board on issues relating to Clearnet were begun in late August.

However, due to a delay on the part of TELUS in getting material to the Union, the hearings were two days late getting started, and went on for only two-and-a-half days.

Several days have been set aside for continuation of hearings in October, and again in November and December.

The question of the status of Clearnet employees vis-à-vis the bargaining unit have been in dispute since the acquisition of Clearnet two years ago.

The Union's position is that Clearnet is a part of TELUS and that the employees properly belong in the bargaining unit. The company position is that the employees would have to be organized and certified in order to become TWU members.

Union negotiates improvements to Northern Location Policy

Members in two northern Alberta communities will benefit from recent changes to the TELUS Northern Location Policy negotiated by the TWU.

The changes, which apply to workers in High Level and Fort McMurray, result from settlement of a policy grievance under Employment Equity provisions, after the Union alleged that clerical workers were being discriminated against because the TELUS policy applied to craft workers but not clerical workers.

However, Business Agent June Lewis and Local Delegate Rob Pagacz, who negotiated the changes and a Letter of Agreement on behalf of the Union, emphasize that the changes benefit both men and women in the two communities, and that no member will lose

Van Tel/Safeway CU Foundation grants available

As part of Van Tel/Safeway Credit Union's commitment to its members and the TWU community, the credit union established a foundation in 1998. The goal of the Van Tel/Safeway Credit Union Foundation is to stimulate interest in volunteering and to promote community involvement. The focus is on non-profit youth and environment programs, as well as those that strive toward community enhancement and crime prevention. A number of grants ranging from \$250 to \$2,500 are awarded annually.

Van Tel/Safeway Credit Union Foundation posters will be distributed to TELUS locations across the province and brochures will be available in VTSCU branches. The Foundation will have a posting on the TELUS Intranet and on their own website at www.vantelsafeway.com.

To qualify for a grant this year, applications must be received by the Foundation no later than October 15, 2002. Also, please note that organizations must have a Revenue Canada Charity Tax Number to be eligible. Call Barbara Ciunyk at 604-656-6232 (1-800-663-1557) or email bciunyk@vantel.com for more information.

Seniority list by Province and Division

YEAR	Years	AB Clerical	AB Plant	AB Traffic	AB Total	BC Clerical	BC Plant	BC Traffic	BC Total	Total
1958	44	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
1959	43	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
1960	42	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
1963	39	0	2	0	2	0	3	0	3	5
1964	38	0	2	1	3	2	11	0	13	16
1965	37	4	8	1	13	14	27	0	41	54
1966	36	1	30	1	32	20	64	3	87	119
1967	35	3	9	0	12	21	48	5	74	86
1968	34	2	18	3	23	47	40	5	92	115
1969	33	7	34	2	43	64	209	9	282	325
1970	32	12	32	2	46	70	163	7	240	286
1971	31	12	29	2	43	79	122	9	210	254
1972	30	12	25	3	40	94	214	12	320	360
1973	29	21	65	1	87	149	389	16	554	641
1974	28	38	198	4	240	209	393	24	626	867
1975	27	37	198	4	239	113	126	19	258	497
1976	26	58	153	12	223	117	282	13	412	635
1977	25	39	132	12	183	145	109	23	277	460
1978	24	62	172	16	250	112	80	22	214	465
1979	23	71	187	24	282	151	190	37	378	660
1980	22	134	186	28	348	221	268	57	546	894
1981	21	192	194	53	439	312	596	78	986	1,426
1982	20	50	40	20	110	50	65	8	123	233
1983	19	17	2	14	33	60	19	17	96	129
1984	18	33	1	14	48	35	12	20	67	115
1985	17	53	5	27	85	47	17	12	76	161
1986	16	76	7	20	103	77	19	29	125	228
1987	15	77	5	16	98	113	31	26	170	269
1988	14	75	33	36	144	180	65	39	284	428
1989	13	50	49	29	128	205	83	40	328	456
1990	12	38	30	5	73	290	145	40	475	548
1991	11	31	14	0	45	51	44	8	103	148
1992	10	23	5	2	30	82	12	7	101	131
1993	9	31	10	1	42	28	9	3	40	82
1994	8	106	10	7	123	304	36	19	359	483
1995	7	148	13	7	168	225	15	26	266	434
1996	6	115	10	3	128	146	12	2	160	288
1997	5	231	26	2	259	240	58	8	306	565
1998	4	327	44	23	394	100	22	1	123	517
1999	3	187	77	12	276	119	31	1	151	427
2000	2	472	178	24	674	194	62	8	264	938
2001	1	232	62	26	320	166	42	5	213	533
2002	0	32	1	0	33	45	6	4	55	88
Total		3,109	2,296	457	5,862	4,697	4,142	662	9,501	15,369

Associate membership explained

Five years ago, when a number of members were leaving the BC TEL workforce prior to age 55 after accepting a Voluntary Separation package (VSP), the TWU instituted an "Associate Membership" designation to cover those members between the time they took the VSP and the time they began collecting their pension (at which time they become retired members).

Associate membership means that the member retains eligibility to apply for the Union's retirement gift (maximum \$1,000) on starting the pension, and also continues to receive the Transmitter.

With a new Voluntary Departure Initiative in the offing, Secretary-Treasurer has sent a letter to members outlining the process to become an Associate Member of the TWU. Christensen explains:

"You are required to pay \$1 per month (\$12 per year) to the TWU. Payments start the month following your last day of employment and cease when you start receiving your pension. Payment can be made by cheque for one year at a time, or for the entire amount. Yearly reminders will not be sent. If, at the time you go on pension, our payment is in arrears, the outstanding amount will be deducted from the retirement cheque."

Great Financial Plans



By **BILL BILES, CFP**
Financial Planner,
Van Tel/Safeway Credit Union

1. Question: What do I do with the money I receive from my "Early Retirement" or "Voluntary Departure" package? – From hundreds of retiring and departing TELUS employees.

ANSWER: After you have transferred and contributed your eligible amounts to RRSPs, and deferred the appropriate amount of what you cannot shelter to January of the following year, your first priority is to keep whatever funds you might need for living expenses easily available. Don't lock any funds into long-term

investments (i.e. long term deposits, mutual funds, stocks or bonds) if they may be needed to pay the rent or buy groceries in the near-term. Once you have adequate income from other sources to pay your living expenses, such as from your pensions or another job, you can then decide how to best use the extra funds from your package to provide for your future. Giving money to your spouse for his/her personal RRSP contribution, paying down high-cost debt, buying RESPs and investing are excellent uses for these funds, but cover your living expenses first. The same remains true of those dollars sheltered in your RRSPs if they may be needed.

2. Question: If I take the package, can I get Employment Insurance.

ANSWER: The "Employment Insurance" literature and website instruct you to apply for EI benefits *as soon as you have your record of Employment*. (i.e., your date of departure), but any "severance pay" received will delay the date you start to receive EI benefits.

Regular EI benefits can be paid for 14 to 45 weeks, the amount and duration based on your start date, the employment rate in your region, and the number of insurable hours you have. The date your benefits start may be delayed up to 104 weeks (2 years), but the payments and period remain the same. So if you receive 18 months salary as a "severance payout", your start date will be delayed at least 18 months, but the monthly benefits and the payout period you are eligible for remain the same. Hopefully,

your pension or a new job is in place and you don't need the benefits, but apply immediately upon departure in case.

This information is available through the EI website or by phoning or visiting your local Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) offices.

3. Question: If I take the package and leave TELUS, can I still be a member of Van Tel/Safeway Credit Union?

ANSWER: "Once a member, always a member!" You remain a valued member of the credit union whether you remain with or leave TELUS, and non-member TELUS employees are always welcome to take advantage of our free financial planning services. Better still, become a member and enjoy all the benefits.

4. Question: What happens to my loans and mortgages at VTSCU if I take the package?

ANSWER: Your loans and mortgages remain unaffected, but you may wish to consider some options. Since automatic payments are no longer possible from your TELUS payroll cheque, you may wish to make the payments from your chequing or savings account, perhaps on some different frequency (monthly or weekly instead of bi-weekly). You may wish to re-negotiate your mortgage amortization to reduce payments, or take the opportunity to "lock in" today's low rates with a longer term. If you'd like to increase or establish a mortgage or line of credit, negotiating and qualifying are

better done before leaving TELUS. If you are simply renewing an existing mortgage, you don't need to qualify again, just return the renewal form.

If you have outstanding credit cards or other high-cost debts, you may wish to use a consolidation loan to simplify and potentially reduce interest costs and higher payments. You might use the package to pay down or pay off higher cost debts.

Many employees taking the packages will be deferring part of the payout until next January to reduce the applicable tax rate. You may wish to get an advance on this payout by borrowing against it.

To explore our credit options, give a VTSCU member representative a call.

I have now seen hundreds of TWU members considering their various packages. Each of you has different concerns and options for the future. For many of you the package represents a great bonus. For others, remaining with TELUS is the better option. For me, the package has been a tremendous opportunity to meet your membership and I have really enjoyed meeting everyone who has visited me at VTSCU or attended one of my seminars. Good luck with your decisions and please don't hesitate to contact me for further help.

You can call Bill Biles at 604-656-6289, email at bbiles@vantelsafeway.com, or contact a Van Tel/Safeway Member Service Representative at 604-656-6200 or toll free at 1-800-663-1557. Please visit Van Tel/Safeway's website at www.vantelsafeway.com.

Bomb Threat Policy - Employee Safety Abandoned at the "Workplace of Choice"

By Tim Williams
Health and Safety Officer

It is Telus' position that during a bomb threat situation, Telus employees will not be informed that their safety is threatened until a bomb detonates, or evacuation is ordered, or until the police sound the all-clear. This is in spite of enforcement action by HRDC, which resulted in company promises to notify employees "as soon as possible" after contacting the police and initiating a search of escape routes.

Telus Director of Corporate Security, Joanne Kohel, contends that the obligation to cooperate with police in Criminal Code matters supersedes the obligation to employees.

When Telus first posted the new Bomb Threat Policy in 2001, it did not provide for timely notification to employees who might be endangered in a situation where the bomb threat turned out to be genuine.

As a result, the TWU members of the Policy Health & Safety Committee complained to HRDC. A Federal Safety Officer investigated. Among other serious deficiencies, she found that the Telus Bomb Threat Policy failed to meet the requirements of the legislation, which requires the employer to inform employees when their health or safety is endangered.

In response, the Company changed the wording of the bomb threat policy to state that employees are to be notified "as soon as possible" after informing the police and initiating a search. In reality, Telus interprets the words "as soon as possible" to mean "as soon as the police give permission".

In practice, the company has no intention of letting employee safety concerns during a bomb threat interfere with operations, disrupt the work, or cause any problems for the owners of the building.

The right to refuse dangerous work, enshrined in the Canada Labour Code and Regulations, is useless to employees if dangers are hidden from them. There are strict requirements that the employer inform employees of every known or foreseeable hazard in the workplace.

Under the right to refuse, an employee in a bomb threat situation has a right to wait out the bomb threat at another location, outside the building. To exercise this right, the employee need only inform the employee's supervisor that (s)he is exercising the right to refuse dangerous work in light of the bomb threat situation, and inform the supervisor as to where the employee will await the outcome.

Tim Williams, TWU Safety Officer, cautions that the employee can be disciplined for abuse of the right to refuse. The location chosen to await the outcome of the bomb threat MUST be appropriate and reasonable in the circumstances. All employees in major work locations should consider the factors involved in fending for themselves in light of the emerging situation in which the employer is abandoning responsibility to them in the case of a bomb or terrorist threat.

The TWU Health & Safety Committee members, who are all members of the Telus Policy Committee, are still attempting to find a way to persuade the company to reconsider this irresponsible approach. In case they are not successful, they are preparing a campaign to have TWU members on local Workplace Committees develop lists of appropriate alternate locations, and a list of tell-tale signs that the employer is secretly reacting to a bomb threat, which could reasonably trigger a 'right to refuse' personal evacuation.

Employees who know of bomb threats should immediately inform both Tim Williams at the TWU office and the union co-chair of the local Workplace Health & Safety Committee. TWU-appointed Co-Chairpersons of Workplace Committees should immediately inform the TWU-appointed Co-Chair of the Policy Committee.

HRDC is responding to this problem, and it may take time, and so we need to be prepared to apply pressure and to look after ourselves in the meantime, Williams concluded.

Bell, Union agree on pay equity settlement

From September 5 Globe and Mail

Bell Canada announced yesterday that it is willing to pay \$180-million in cash and pension benefits to settle a decade-old pay-equity dispute with 29,000 mostly female clerical workers.

If ratified, the settlement will end a drawn-out court battle between Bell and the Canadian Telecommunications Employees' Association. But the company has yet to strike a deal with about 5,000 current and former operators, who are looking for a settlement of up to \$400-million.

The settlement was seen as an important issue for BCE chief executive Michael Sabia, son of Laura Sabia, co-founder of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. The pay-equity dispute also was a prominent topic at the last BCE annual general meeting.

"We are pleased that discussions with the [union] have resulted in a fair settlement of this long-standing dispute that enables us to move forward as a stronger company," Mr. Sabia said in a news release.

Earlier this summer, Mr. Sabia, who has held the position for less than six months, agreed to sit down with the union to discuss pay equity after it invoked his mother's memory in challenging the company's stand on the issue.

But Bell has yet to settle with its former and current operators, who

number about 5,000 according to their union. Most of those jobs have been transferred to an outside company, Nordia, where salaries are lower.

Joel Carr of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada, said he hopes that yesterday's deal with the employees' association means that Bell is willing to come up with the money to settle with the operators as well.

Current and former Bell Canada employees will vote on the settlement deal between Sept. 19 and Sept. 23. About 12,000 of the affected employees are still working at the company.

Depending on the number of years at the company, those involved stand to receive up to \$20,000.

Brenda Knight, president of the employees association, called the deal "a major landmark in our decade-long drive toward achieving pay equity for our members."

She said the \$178-million settlement brings total pay-equity-related adjustments negotiated between the union and Bell to more than \$480-million since 1993.

"I'm confident that our membership will ratify it because it serve their real interest," Ms. Knight said. "It provides them with substantial amounts of money in a very short time-frame, and it may end a long and costly litigation, the outcome of which has been highly uncertain."

June NACU meet in Burnaby gets bargaining updates

The TWU hosted a meeting of the officers of the National Alliance of Communications Unions (NACU) in Burnaby June 8-9. Representing our Union were the four table officers, Rod Hiebert, Neil Morrison, Bruce Bell and Jim Christensen. Other participants, from CEP, were Brian Payne, President, Ervan Cronk of Atlantic Canada, and Ron Carlson of Manitoba and Saskatchewan; Dave Halikowski and Brian Avery of CAW Local 2000; Marion Leskiw of CSU Local 52; and from AC&TWU, Gary Grant and Dean McDonald. Thanks to Vice-President Neil Morrison for his notes from the NACU meeting, for use in this article.

The meeting opened with bargaining updates. Bruce Bell led off with a report on TWU bargaining. He said bargaining with TELUS has been underway for a year and a half and has been "a grind", and has broadened beyond the bargaining table. Bell explained that Quality of Service actions were filed with the CRTC in June (just before NACU meeting), as members in Operator Service were being instructed to dump calls into IVR. He noted company had also just announced two buyout offers (the ERIP and Voluntary Departure), which Neil Morrison would be reporting on.

Bell reported TELUS is saying they see no end in sight for bargaining, and the Union is prepared for a long continuing struggle, as long as it takes to get an acceptable agreement. At the time (early June), the parties were in the third pass over proposals, many of which Bell described as "ludicrous" items brought to the table by TELUS. However, he said the company seems to be shifting away from a tactic of getting the Union out on the street. A "bargaining in bad faith" complaint to the CIRB forced TELUS to put

proposals on the table. The company tactic now seems to be to grow the non-union sector in central Canada, and even though they will end up in the Union, TELUS is gambling the new employees will be more amenable to concessions, something the Union is determined to counter. And three other unfair complaints have also been filed with the CIRB.

Bell said the Union asked some tough questions at the annual shareholders meeting, seeking to alert the public to the damage the TELUS moves are having not just for their employees, but for their shareholders as well.

Neil Morrison explained the ERIP and Voluntary Departure proposals put forward by TELUS, and the TWU reaction. That matter is reported on extensively elsewhere in the Transmitter.

Brian Payne of CEP reported on the pay equity complaint with Bell. He said a tentative settlement three years ago fell through, and discussions with Bell are ongoing. He said Bell's strategy has been to drag the issue out into the future so nobody will be left to pay. CEP continues to apply pressure in various ways, for instance at shareholders' meeting, and there is cautious optimism the company may be prepared to settle.

Payne said CEP is facing buyback of shares from SBC and Teleglobe, which will indirectly affect union. CEP still has some members left in Teleglobe, and U.S. part of Teleglobe has filed for bankruptcy. He said the Bell Canada Collective Agreement expires in 2004.

Ron Carlson of CEP reported Northwestel workers (approximately 400) represented by IBEW went on strike May 27, with money the main issue. The company proposes that wages should be tied more to bonuses, which the Union opposes.

At Sasktel, the Collective Agreement does not expire until March 2004. The parties had negotiated a retention bonus and wage update to market adjustments for IT workers. Recent negotiations resulted in a 3% market adjustment for one group and 5% for another. The company wants it averaged over a one-year period, the Union proposes averaging on a project-by-project basis.

The company is doing some centralizing. Some job functions area being moved between craft and clerical, and issues relating to this are going to arbitration. Contracting Out is also a growing issue with the company, and is being arbitrated. A public campaign is underway to pressure Sasktel not to privatize. Privatization is not on the agenda currently, but is never far from the surface. SaskPower, SaskEnergy and Sasktel are all government-owned and provide \$1.5 billion per year to citizens of Saskatchewan. The campaign includes polling, and public meetings in 25 communities. It could be an issue in the next provincial election campaign.

Stress is growing in the workplace. Membership has gone to 3,600 from 4,600 a year ago. Monitoring is becoming intrusive, and company is tracking trucks through GPS technology. They are redesigning how they offer and sell goods and services to subscribers. Going more to inside sales.

Three changes to the pension plan took effect in April. They have negotiated indexing for pensions and northern allowance for northern workers.

On other issues, bundling of CATV service is being trialed again; issues with PDPs and PDO's are similar to TWU; the number of operators has been reduced to under 80, in seven centers, but CEP has a Letter of Agreement that operators can't be centralized.

At MTS, Carlson reports stress is also a problem. Clerical remain only in Winnipeg and Brandon, plus a few in Thompson. Employees are monitored on a 24-hour basis, and scheduling is a major problem in clerical. Technology is way behind at MTS, so this could cause financial problems as upgrades will be necessary soon.

Ervan Cronk of CEP in Atlantic region reported that when Aliant was formed, CEP and AC&TWU formed a bargaining council instead of having a run-off vote. They are currently in negotiations, and have signed off some items, but nothing on money (as of June). The company is trying to treat the Collective Agreement as brand new, rather than revising previous agreements. The Union was successful in seeking a ruling that the company couldn't consolidate the nine agreements without dealing with the Unions, and the issue has been resolved at arbitration.

They are contracting out a lot of work. Aliant has turned over all property management to Bell. People are still working for Aliant but reporting to Bell managers. Some 42 people are affected. Bargaining is scheduled through to mid-December 2003, and more union involvement in pensions will be an issue.

Aliant is offering selective ERIP, which the Union is challenging. Hearings have been held and a CIRB answer is pending. At the same hearing, the Union challenged a company poll of members on bargaining table issues. Cronk said it is possible they will be into conciliation this fall.

The company has taken the position that approximately 550 of the 4,000 employees are essential under the Canada Labour Code. Hearings will be held at CIRB, and other Unions are encouraged to intervene. The Union's position is that essential

services designation under the federal code should not apply to the union. Cronk concluded that the Council of Unions in Atlantic Canada is working very well.

Dave Halikowski of CAW said the CA doesn't expire until end of 2003; and several scope and contracting out issues are pending. When AT&T Canada brought Metronet they agreed to bring like positions in the bargaining unit. At Netcom which is the internet arm of AT&T Canada the Union is filing an application before the CIRB over scope.

AT&T U.S. has to buy all outstanding shares of AT&T Canada at \$60 each. That is why share prices have been going up (as of June). He said there are rumours that AT&T Canada and TELUS may be talking. He said AT&T U.S. will probably have to do a deal with one of the Baby Bells in U.S.

CIRB Updates: Bruce Bell of TWU: Bell reported on Decision 108, going to Federal Court of Appeal. Four weeks of hearings scheduled, to end in December 2002, but it could be some weeks or months into 2003 before a decision is handed down. The Union is optimistic Decision 108 will not be disturbed by the court.

Discussion on organizing followed. Participants noted the difficulty of organizing call centers, as many young employees there stay only a short time. Unions must make a better effort to appeal to young workers, and must have a broader approach to organizing. One suggestion was for the Unions to jointly fund a focus group to determine what young workers want. A sub-committee will be formed to investigate organizing and propose ideas.

The next NACU meeting will be held in Halifax November 22-24.



Rod Hiebert

President's Report

Massive and destructive restructuring

The Union Office is outraged that TELUS management is stepping up a campaign of intimidation and harassment of Union members as it tries to force you out of the Company.

Over the past two years, the new management has initiated changes that have lost members and shareholders tens of thousands of dollars as TELUS shares have fallen by 70 per cent in just one year. It is ludicrous that they are now attempting to blame you and trying to force you out of your job. We have been advised that TELUS managers have been telling members that they have only 45 minutes to make one of the most important decisions of their lives – whether they will take the package and leave TELUS or continue working. These actions are nasty, immoral, and nothing but intimidation and harassment, in our view. This massive and destructive restructuring of the Company is completely unnecessary and will be recorded as another major blunder of the new Entwistle style of management.

Members can be assured that the Union will do everything possible to protect you, your job, and your future.

The Company plan to cut 5,000 of their 17,000 unionized workforce in Alberta and BC is shortsighted, and they will learn the same hard lessons that many other companies have learned. You can't shrink to greatness. You cannot build a strong company by turning your back on loyal customers and attacking the employees and their Union. Reliance on EBITDA and projections of

gaining massive numbers of customers from the competition will just build in more insecurity and confusion.

What should TELUS be doing?

To begin with, as I said, TELUS must realize it cannot shrink its way to greatness. In sharp contrast to downsizing and closing of offices, Bell Canada is opening new Phone Centres in the same shopping malls that TELUS is abandoning. Bell apparently understands that it requires a physical presence in order to compete. Instead of abandoning its core telephone business, which involves dealing directly with the customers in Phonemarts, the Company should be expanding its offerings by offering a full range of products and services, including cellular phones, high speed internet services, sales and billing functions.

To prevent Bell from eating their lunch, TELUS should be offering the full bundle of services in every community that it is currently serving. In the alternative, if TELUS abandons them, customers will move all their business to Bell. Such an approach is not radical. It is just good business sense. In fact Verizon, TELUS's parent corporation, is opening up new stores in order to sell internet services, phones, cellular phones and service.

In short, instead of pushing customers to the competition by closing service centres and abandoning communities, instead of forcing customers to deal with answering machines and computerized voices rather than human beings, TELUS should be building customer loyalty and

retention by increasing service.

Furthermore, TELUS should start acting as a member of the community instead of as a marauder on the rampage. The Company has a responsibility to provide employment to communities in return for the substantial amount of capital it collects in phone bills. Commitment to the wider community should be thought of as strength, not weakness. Why should communities support TELUS when the company exhibits no concern for communities' well-being?

As an alternative to getting rid of trained, loyal unionized employees in western Canada in order to hire new employees for its operations east of Alberta, TELUS should be using state-of-the-art technology to move work to the trained, loyal employees who are already on staff. Is it unreasonable to make that suggestion? Not when you consider the fact that TELUS is currently using technology to move work away from its existing employees in BC and Alberta by hiring new employees in Toronto and Scarborough, even though its core business is in the West.

TELUS must realize that they will not retain customers or gain new ones by having the glitziest advertisements or the most TV or newspaper ads. A major portion of the company's bloated advertising budget should be allocated to providing better service and paying down the debt.

TELUS should abandon the industrial relations programs which it seems to value so highly – programs which degrade workers by forcing them to participate in

elaborate but meaningless Personal Development Plans, Spark Plug Energizer programs, goofy cartoon team meetings, and so on. Those expensive programs are demeaning and counterproductive. They induce stress and destroy morale. Our members, who are customer service professionals, just want to provide good service to their customers. They are not interested in playing these degrading childish games. These programs should be put on the scrap heap along with the Sailing of Cardboard Ships from Port to Port Around the World, and so many other inspirational failures that TELUS has tried in its relations with its employees.

Moreover, it seems to me that the drastic cuts in personnel underway are short-sighted in the extreme. While I am not convinced of a need for any reduction in the workforce, it is clear the company could achieve a gradual reduction in a measured way, by attrition or by offering an early retirement incentive to workers who have reached the age of 55. That has been done in the past, without serious disruption to the workforce or the quality of work, and without creating a major burden for the pension plan.

Such an approach could achieve an optimum sized workforce, without shaking the company to the foundation, and without needlessly pushing employees out the door.

The Union is determined to fight back against this slash-and-burn company tactic. We are taking our concerns to

communities around both provinces which face loss of service, and we have again found high levels of community understanding and support for the Union's position.

The membership is solidly behind us. Although many are in personal turmoil as they are whipsawed by managers, they understand that it is the company and not the Union that is the cause of the disruption.

With respect to the buyouts being offered by TELUS, that has become something of a mess since first announced by the company. But my advice to members wondering what to do in the face of company pressure is simple. Do what suits you best, not what suits the company. If you are ready to retire and start the pension, or if you truly want to change careers, or leave the workforce, then a buyout may be for you. If you are not ready to retire, or change careers, you should not let yourself be pressured into leaving.

Managers would like you to think you can be pushed out the door if you choose not to take the buyout.

That is not the case.

Unless the company triggers the layoff clause, and then they would have to lay off by juniority, they cannot force you to leave. They may declare you surplus, and they may be able to force you to move, but in the end you have a right to remain in the workforce.

You should decide what to do based on your needs and desires.

The Union will stand with you in asserting your rights. In return, it is imperative that you stand with the Union.

Company tries to pressure members to quit

-from page one

Some managers continue to pressure members facing office closures into taking a buyout and leaving the workforce. They are telling members they face the prospect of layoff. Further, they are saying that if the member does not take the buyout now, the opportunity

to do so will be lost. *Both those threats are untrue.*

We advise members facing office closures not to feel pressured to leave, and not to take the bait. The facts are these. If your office is being closed, the company will have to find you a temporary re-assignment until surplus and vacancy numbers can

be identified and canvasses done of surplus employees, first in a headquarters area and then province-wide in each province. Moreover, at that point, if you don't like a position or location that your seniority will get you through a canvass, you will still have the option to take a buyout. Labour Relations has made that commitment

to the Union, and has recently re-affirmed it.

We have no indication at this time the Company plans to go the layoff route, but even if they did invoke the layoff clause, layoffs would not be on the basis of surplus but would be on the basis of juniority on a province-wide basis.

(The buyouts being offered

include an Early Retirement Incentive covering employees aged 55 or over by the end of 2003, and a Voluntary Departure Initiative for those under age 55. Specifics, particularly with respect to the VDI, have changed somewhat since the plans were announced. A separate story outlines details of the buyout initiatives.)