

The Official Publication of
the Telecommunications
Workers Union

The Transmitter

April 2001
Vol. XXIII
No. 2



BROADWAY PRINTERS

Saturday, April 28

Day of Mourning

for Canadian workers

killed or injured

on the job

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Publications Number

1461214

VANCOUVER, B.C.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Financial advice welcome

Dear TWU:

I would like to express my appreciation for the article "Great Financial Plans" by Mr. Bill Biles, CFP of Van Tel Credit Union.

This article was extremely well presented. He brought up the important point of diversification in financial planning. I look forward to this kind of articles in your paper for managing our financial life.

**Victor Tang
Burnaby**

Scholarship thanks

Dear TWU:

Thank you very much for honouring me as a recipient of the Telecommunications Workers Union Scholarship. In the fall of 2000 I began my studies in the Bachelor of Arts program at the Okanagan University College and have advanced successfully into the winter semester. Your financial support toward the continuance of my education has proven to be very considerate and is greatly appreciated as the cost of tuition and housing can add up quite quickly. I would like to extend my thanks again to TWU for their generous financial contributions to post-secondary education.

**Sincerely
Laura Kehler, Kelowna**

Election thanks

Dear TWU:

Please accept my thanks for your contribution to my campaign during the recent Alberta provincial election.

I ran as an independent in Calgary Bow. TWU's contribution to my candidacy meant that our election committee, made up of members of our Local, could print and distribute several thousand leaflets, put up enough signs to establish a presence in the constituency, and spend time concentrating on advocating our program of building a workers' opposition in Alberta.

I ran as an independent as I feel the party system is archaic and our political system needs renewal. Even though the Klein Conservatives won 74 of 83 seats in the Legislature, less than 55 per cent of registered voters cast ballots, and only 36.7 per cent of registered voters voted for the Tories.

Due to a slow recovery from an injury last December, I did not decide until the last minute to run in the provincial election. Our campaign was short but we began the process of building a workers' opposition, ending our marginalization and becoming decision-makers ourselves. It was very encouraging to see the number of worker politicians who ran in the Alberta election.

Thanks again to all those in my own Local who assisted.

**Solidarity and best wishes,
Peg Askin, TWU Local 203**

NDP thanks

Dear TWU:

Thank you very much for your donation to my federal election campaign. It was greatly appreciated.

**In solidarity,
Garth Hardy**

NDP?

No thanks!

Dear TWU:

I would like to express my disappointment in hearing that the Alberta Convention voted in favor of supporting the New Democratic Party.

The NDP does not work for us in Alberta. I read in the February 2001 issue of The Transmitter that Rod Hiebert (your President of the TWU) supports the NDP and begged for everyone to vote that way. I then assumed that the same people who voted in favor for this financial support for the NDP are probably the same people who voted in favor for the TWU to be the Union of TELUS in Alberta.

The only saving grace in all of this is, that after I retire, I get this \$1,000 retirement gift from the TWU. That's great. I can use this money to pay myself back for the \$5.00 membership fee I was charged, and for all the money that was taken out of my dues to support the NDP.

I can only hope that the TWU doesn't screw it up for me so bad that I don't make it to my retirement.

This is my humble opinion.

**Dean Simpson
Long Lost Brother
Edmonton, Alberta
Local 208**

Sports thanks

Dear TWU:

Our first half of the 2000/2001 season is coming to a close and we are proud to say that we have not lost a weekend's play to bad weather. We are hoping that this season's second half will be as exciting as the first. Our Representative teams have started a new venture by playing in a separate league which will give them more playing time as a team.

Presently our development programs have produced some highly skilled players which will prove to be an asset when it comes to Provincial Cup playdowns.

Enclosed is a beautiful picture of the team that you have sponsored this season.

In closing we would like to thank you for sponsoring a team in our Association, without your help we could not operate properly. We hope that you will support us in future seasons.

**Yours sincerely
David Wood, President
Campbell River Youth Soccer
Association**

Dear TWU:

Saanich Peninsula "TWU Local 21" Owls wish to thank TWU Local 21 for their financial and active sponsorship for our soccer team in their competition of their very successful Year 2000.

**In solidarity
Lori Morgan, TWU Local 21**

Harrison thanks

Dear TWU:

I would like to thank the Union membership and Executive for the recent training I received at the Canadian Labour Congress Winter School at Harrison. I was part of the "Facing Management" course.

There were over 200 students from various Unions in attendance and I was in a class of 26 keen, aware, entertain-

ing brothers and sisters. There were several informative speakers such as Jim Sinclair, Joan Smallwood, Cham Toik and my favorite, Executive Vice-President of the CLC, Hassen Yussuff.

I hope to "never miss an educational moment" as encouraged by one of my instructors, Brenda Makeechak. I also wish to thank my TWU sister and instructor, Cheryl Tellier, for sharing her time and experience.

The CLC ran a well-organized worthwhile educational session.

**In solidarity,
Susan Welch
Surrey**

Dear TWU:

Just thought I would mention how much I enjoyed the Winter School. I am sure what I learned will help me deal with Union concerns in a new light. One of the great benefits is the interaction of all the Unions attending, not just ours. I met a lot of people from many different unions, and it was great to get a feel for their problems, and to realize that in solidarity we can accomplish almost anything. Thanks for the opportunity.

**Bill Russell
Local 16**

Retirement thanks

Dear TWU:

Thank you for the best wishes and the \$1,000 cheque presented by George Doubt at my retirement dinner February 2, 2001. I have enjoyed my years with BCTEL and TELUS and I am now looking forward to my retirement years.

**Sincerely
Linda Jackson
Kamloops, Local 15**

Dear TWU:

Thank you very much for the life membership and the \$1,000 cheque. I wish you good luck with your new contract.

**Sincerely
Barb Oliver**

Dear TWU:

Thank you very much for the \$1,000 cheque that you presented to me on my retirement from TELUS. Over the years I worked for Okanagan Telephone, BCTEL and TELUS I worked with many of you and would like to thank you for helping to make my career successful.

**Sincerely
Ian L. Swanson, Local 22**

Dear TWU:

I'd like to express my appreciation for the TWU Honourary Life Membership and cheque presented to me on my retirement in Kelowna by Bill Zawaduk.

I'd also like to thank the executive and bargaining teams for all their hard work over the years. You have an unenviable task before you, and I wish you continued success.

My congratulations go to the tenacious and dedicated Rod Hiebert on another term as President.

**Sincerely
Gloria Russell**

Dear TWU:

Thank you so much for the \$450 cheque, the TWU lifetime membership and last but not least your wishes for a happy retirement, I appreciate.

I also appreciate the support I received from a couple of Shop Stewards who handled issues for me in such a professional and swift manner.

**In solidarity
E. Wendy McEwen**

Dear TWU:

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for the Honourary Life Membership and \$1,000 retirement gift presented to me on my retirement.

**Sincerely
Joe Stankwich,
Local 6, Vernon**

Dear TWU:

Thanks for the \$550 gift on my retirement, after 10⁺ years with BCT/TELUS. The cheque, honorary lifetime membership, and the lovely letter were very much appreciated. I was proud to have been a member of the TWU and wish all the brothers and sisters the very best that life has to offer! It was very much my pleasure, as I have met some of the nicest people in the world in those 10⁺ years.

**In solidarity,
Lorne Hunter**

Dear TWU:

I have recently retired from TELUS in Victoria after 25 years of service and would like to say thanks to the TWU for the \$1,000 cheque and the life membership.

You have always stood behind those of us who would have lost our jobs through the Company downsizing. For me personally, you were there for me when our Local Duncan Office shut down in October of 1996 and it was much appreciated.

Keep up the great work.

**Yours truly,
Cheri E. Painter**

Heartfelt thanks

Dear TWU:

Forgive me for being negligent for this late thank you from the bottom of my heart. It has been almost two years since I have retired and over two years since my wife Shirley passed away with breast cancer.

On behalf of my family, I want to thank all our friends at BCTEL/TELUS for their support. Even after all this time, it is difficult to express my feeling, without teardrops all over this letter. It is people like you who make life worth living. Until the funeral, I had not realized that we had so many friends. For those of you who are concerned, my daughter Deborah is over her depression and is doing fine. After two back surgeries, I am on the mend with no pain.

There are too many to mention, but specifically, I want to thank the women at the TWU Pension and Benefits office for their help and patience. I also would like to thank Roy Olsen and Carol Nagy for their compassionate support. It is caring and sharing people who make this union strong, and may it last forever.

Thanks for all your letters, cards and gifts.

**With deep sincerity
Peter Zbrodoff
Prince George**

Human Rights Committee thanks

The following letter from Business Agent June Lewis was sent to Cathie Young on her decision to leave the Union's Human Rights Committee.

Dear Sister Cathie:

The Human Rights Committee would like to give you our sincere thanks for all that you have contributed to the Committee. You will be missed. Your contributions have been invaluable and we will continue to strive to make changes in the area of Human Rights in the workplace, disability issues, absenteeism and to further the aims of employment equity.

In closing, we wish you all the best in your future endeavours and again thank you for your hard work and contributions to the Human Rights Committee.

**In solidarity
June Lewis
Business Agent and
Human Rights Officer**

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Edmonton, Alta, T5P 4W2
Ph. 780-444-6945
Fax: 780-488-6911

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#255 - 525-28 St. S.E.
Calgary, Alta, T2A 6W9
Ph. 403-237-6990
Fax: 403-802-2381

TWU phone ... (604) 437-8601

TWU fax (604) 435-7760

**Pension Plan
office (604) 430-1317**

TWU hotline .. (604) 435-2224

TWU Website addresses:

TWU Home Page: <http://www.twu-canada.ca>
TW Pension Plan:
<http://www.twu-canada.ca/twpp/pptoc/htm>
TW Benefit Plan:
<http://www.twu-canada.ca/twpp/bphome/htm>
TWU Email Address (Union Office):
twu@twu-canada.ca
TW Pension and Benefit Plans:
twplans@twubc.com

The Transmitter

Member of

The Transmitter is the official publication of the Telecommunications Workers Union.

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Canadian
Association
of Labour
Media
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canadienne
de la presse
syndicale

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Rally backs Shaw workers

On March 11, TWU members and supporters attended a rally in Abbotsford in support of Local 60 members, cable workers employed by Shaw at Abbotsford. The issue was lack of progress in contract talks. Outstanding issues include contracting out and jurisdiction, rights already won by cable workers in Vancouver and Surrey.

Guest speakers included David Rice of the CLC, Carolyn Chalifoux of the New Westminster and District Labour Council, and TWU President Rod Hiebert, who pledged the support of the 17,000-member-strong TWU in the Abbotsford workers battle with Shaw.

Telus talks set for May 3

In mid-March, the TWU bargaining team negotiating with Telus reported that bargaining had temporarily adjourned until mid-April. Bargaining was scheduled to commence April 18. However, by mutual agreement, the date for start of talks has been extended to May 3.

During the intervening period, Telus will be assessing its position.

Members are encouraged to attend Local meetings and watch for Union bulletins and hotline messages for information on progress of talks after May 3.

The Union bargaining committee is reminding members that their continued support and solidarity is needed.

Copies of old Alta. agreements sought

The Bargaining Committee negotiating with Telus is seeking copies of old collective agreements, especially those negotiated prior to 1990, for any Alberta certifications. These would include agreements with Telus, AGT, EdTel, and any others covering any of our Alberta members now in the TWU.

If you have such agreements, we would appreciate it if you could forward them to Myron Johnson at the Union office at 5261 Lane Street, Burnaby, B.C., V5H 4A6.

Outgoing Alternate B.A. says thanks

Dear TWU:

I would like to thank all the members of the TWU for the opportunity to serve you for the past two years as an Alternate Business Agent. During my service as Duty Officer I fielded numerous calls from both Provinces which proved to be an excellent learning experience. I can only hope the response to your calls and the information I offered was genuinely helpful to you.

I enjoyed my experience working with the Executives and members of Locals 2, 11, 21 and 31, handling grievances, daily phone calls and requests for help. I will take the experiences of the past year with me forever, which will give me greater understanding of all three appendices.

I must thank all the OTEU staff

for all the support and guidance they provided me during my time in the office (hopefully candy days will continue).

Once again I want to thank all members of the TWU for giving me the opportunity to really experience the workload and good times and well as the bad times of being a Business Agent.

I will continue to be an active member of the TWU as a Delegate for Local 8, member of the Constitution Committee and Convention Chairperson. If I can be of any further assistance please contact me at TELUS in Kamloops (I'll be the FSR with the big smile) (cell 250-851-1174) or look me up on the Web.

**In solidarity,
Rick Fleming**

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CIRB rules on scope of TWU cert

On February 9, the Canada Industrial Relations Board handed down a ruling on the TWU application that the Union's bargaining certificate apply to all Telus operations in Canada.

The CIRB ruled there are no geographical restrictions in Canada to the scope of the TWU certification, and that all Telus operations fall within the scope of the Union's bargaining certificate.

With newly-acquired Telus businesses, if there is a dispute on the question of whether they are in fact part of Telus, the Union may still have to apply to the Board to have the workers folded in to the existing bargaining unit.

The Board also ruled that all existing collective agreements remain in effect until a revised single collective agreement is negotiated. In other words, the Board declined to apply the existing TWU agreement to all employees in B.C. and Alberta. That means that the bargaining process toward one collective agreement will continue until an agreement is reached. The

Board rejected the Telus position that an entirely new Collective Agreement has to be negotiated.

With respect to Telesales and Field Sales personnel in Alberta, the Board did not issue a definitive ruling, but rather gave the parties 30 days to make additional submissions as to which Collective Agreements, and which provisions

thereof, will apply to all such personnel in Alberta.

Commenting on the ruling, President Rod Hiebert said the Union is particularly pleased with the decision that there are no geographical restrictions to the scope of our agreement, and we look forward to negotiations now going forward on an orderly and scheduled basis.

Tri-Com decert bid fails

An attempt to decertify the TWU as the bargaining agent for one of our smaller work groups has failed.

On March 26, the BC Labour Relations Board conducted a vote on a decertification application among unionized workers at Counterforce Inc. (formerly Tri-Com Services Inc.), a Burnaby-based alarm monitoring company.

Fifteen of 17 eligible voters cast ballots, and by a vote of 8-7, the workers opted to remain members of the TWU.

The TWU has represented the Tri-Com workers for a number of years.

Clarica problems reported largely resolved

During March, Union Officers met on a number of occasions with Telus management to attempt to resolve problems members were experiencing with the company's changeover from Blue Cross to Clarica as the health care provider. They report Telus has now resolved the majority of the problems.

Telus has assured the Union there will be no change in coverage.

If members have any questions regarding coverage, or are experiencing any difficulty with coverage, you should contact the Telus "escalation line" in B.C. at 604-432-8015 or in Alberta at 1-888-493-5588.

National Day of Mourning Saturday, April 28

April 28 has been designated National Day of Mourning in Canada for workers who were injured or killed while at work.

Health and Safety Officer Tim Williams is asking members to observe a moment of silence at 11 a.m. on Saturday, April 28.

This year, Union members in Canada will join together on April 28 to commemorate the day. Members and their families are encouraged to participate in local area events to demonstrate our commitment to the fight for healthier and safer workplaces. Check with your local District Labour Council for events in your area.

In Vancouver, the National Day of Mourning will be marked with a ceremony at the Memorial Plaque at Hastings Park, PNE Grounds, at 11 a.m. on Saturday, April 28.

TWU remembers lost Brothers

By *GEORGE DOUBT, B.A.*

April 28, the National Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job, has particular significance to the members of the TWU. In recent times, we have lost two of our members to workplace tragedies.

Brother Tom Davis died from injuries he sustained when a pole he was climbing fell. Brother Brian McDougall was killed at work when he came in contact with an energized powerline.

Tom was a lineman and died on March 6, 1997. Brian was a cable splicer and died on August 6 of the same year. Tom and Brian are very much missed by their families and fellow workers.

While we mourn the loss of our fellow workers and think of the pain and suffering caused to so many workers and families by workplace accidents, we must re-dedicate ourselves to creating a safe and healthy workplace — a workplace that we can all come home from at the end of the day.

Please take time on April 28 and remember Tom and Brian and the many other workers in Canada who are killed at work each year.

TWU SCHOLARSHIPS

Any daughter or son of an active, retired or deceased TWU member (with at least 12 months continuous service) intending to attend any university, accredited regional college, or BCIT in British Columbia in 2001 is encouraged to apply for these scholarships:

**TWU THOMAS WARD STANLEY
MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP \$1,000**

**TWU J. DOUGLAS BOOTH
MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP \$1,000**

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS WORKERS UNION
SCHOLARSHIPS (3) each: \$750**

The TWU Thomas Ward Stanley Scholarship is an award made by the TWU in memory of business agent and first secretary-treasurer of the TWU, Tom Stanley, who died in office in 1977.

The TWU J. Douglas Booth Scholarship is in memory of business agent Doug Booth, who died in office in 1988.

Application forms for these awards will be sent to all B.C. high schools in March, or may be requested anytime after March 1, 2001, by writing to:

**University of British Columbia
Awards and Financial Aid Dept.
Room 1036 - 1874 East Mall
Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z1
Phone 822-5111**

Applications must be returned to UBC no later than May 15, 2001.

Current assignments of the 22 Union Officers

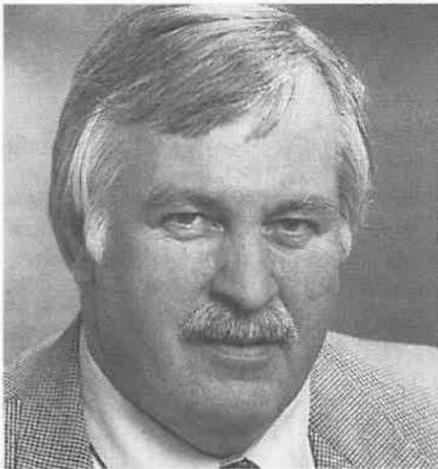
Following are the current assignments of the 22 Union officers. They include responsibility for servicing the various TWU Locals, work on Union and joint committees, and other related duties, for example, representing the union on committees of the BC Federation of Labour and CLC.

The four table officers -- President, two Vice-Presidents and Secretary-Treasurer -- have numerous duties as outlined in the Union constitution. The assignments listed below are additional responsibilities they have undertaken.

While bargaining with Telus is underway, officers on the bargaining committee are being assisted by Alternate Business Agents, so some of their Locals may be assigned temporarily to an Alternate B.A. Similarly with Officers from B.C. assigned temporarily to Alberta TWU offices.

Table Officers

President



ROD HIEBERT

TWU Pension trustee;
Bargaining Committee;
Federation of Labour Officer;
NACU and UNI representative;
Education and Pay Equity Committee

Vice-President



NEIL MORRISON

Grievance and Arbitration;
Work Jurisdiction Committee;
Pay and Employment Equity Comm.
Clerical Job Evaluation Comm.
Alberta Joint Labour-Manag. Ctte.

Vice-President



BRUCE BELL

Bargaining Committee;
COTC Committee;
Organizing, Education,
Apprenticeship Committees;
Local 63; WCB

Secretary-Treasurer



KATHY PEARN

TWU Pension trustee;
Finance Committee (ex-officio);
Pay Equity Steering Cttee.
NACU Committee

Edmonton Business Agents



ALISON KUZYK

Locals 205, 207 and 277



LEN STEPARIK

Locals 208, 210 and 211



MARJORIE SHEWCHUK

Locals 206, 207



RON WILLIAMS

Locals 9, 18, 26, 28, 33, 34, 37, 41,
209
Apprenticeship Cttee.
Operator Serv Cttee.
Alta Joint Labour-Manag. Cttee.

Calgary Business Agents



MICK SHIELS

Locals 36, 202 and 204;
Health and Safety Cttee.;
Alta Joint Labour-Manag. Cttee.



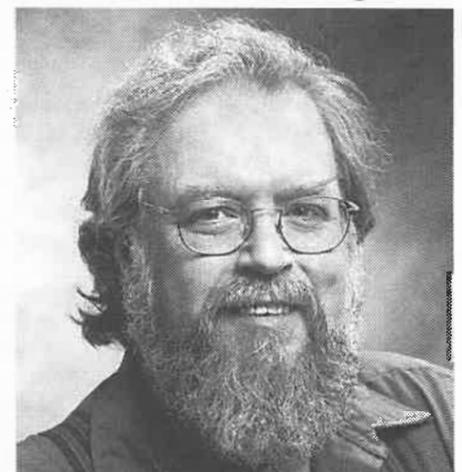
JOHN CARPENTER

Locals 201, 237



DAN LAKUSTA

Local 203



GEORGE DOUBT

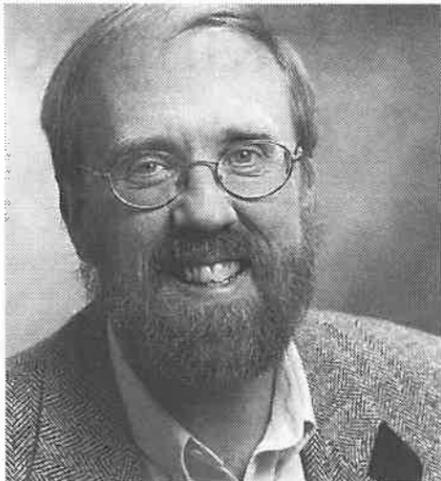
Locals 4, 6, 8, 15, 16, 22, 24, 25;
Health & Safety Cttee (back-up);
Compressed work week;
Kelowna WCB appeals;
Political Action Committee

Kelowna Business Agent

Burnaby Business Agents



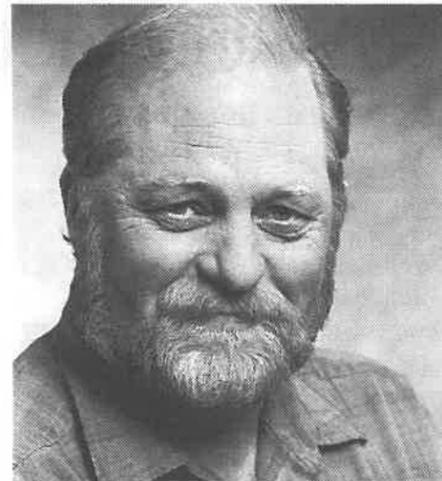
HOPE CUMMING
 Locals 20, 7;
 Bargaining Committee;
 COTC Committee;
 Alta Job Eval. Steer. Cttee.;
 Arbitration Assistance



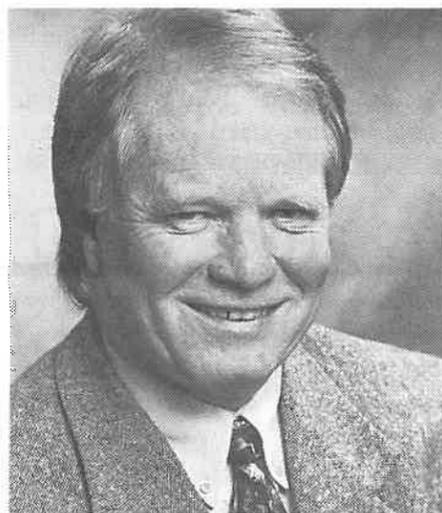
JIM CHRISTENSEN
 Locals 5, 7
 Work Jurisdiction Cttee
 MAP officer
 Organizing Cttee.
 Compressed Work Week Cttee.



BETTY CARRASCO
 Locals 50, 64;
 COTC Committee;
 Corporate Temp Cttee;
 Organizing Committee;
 Job Sharing Cttee



PETER MASSY
 Locals 17, 32, 51, 52, 53
 Bargaining Committee;
 Health and Benefits trustee;
 Oper. Services Cttee;
 Job Sharing Cttee.



BILL SILVESTER
 Locals 2, 11, 21, 31
 Compressed Work Week



JUNE LEWIS
 Local 43
 Human Rights Officer
 MAP Officer
 Workplace Harassmt. Cttee
 Alta Job Eval. Steering Cttee.
 BC Fed Executive Council
 Alta. Joint Labour-Manag. Cttee.



TIM WILLIAMS
 Locals 7, 30, 39, 60
 Health and Safety Cttee.
 Trade Advisory Cttee.
 Plant Job Postings;
 Apprenticeship Cttee.



KAREN WHITFIELD
 Locals 1, 38
 Pay Equity and Employment Equity
 Clerical Job Postings
 Alta Job Eval. Steering Cttee.
 Women's Rights (Fed. and CLC)



FRANGUILLET
 Locals 53, 23, 63
 Alta Job Eval. Steer. Cttee;
 Fed Women's Rights Cttee.
 Alta. Joint Labour-Manag. Cttee.
 Edmonton Office



SHERRYL ANDERSON
 Locals 51, 52, 53

NACU meet adopts reports seeking co-operation

On January 29, 2001, executive members of the various Communications Unions in Canada which comprise the National Alliance of Communications Unions (NACU) met in Montreal. Representing the TWU were our four table officers, Rod Hiebert, Neil Morrison, Bruce Bell and Kathy Pearn. Morrison and Hiebert have kindly provided their notes from the Montreal meeting to the Transmitter. Those notes provide the basis of this article.

Dave Halikowski, President of CAW 2000, reported his Union negotiated a new Collective Agreement with AT&T prior to expiration of the old agreement. He reported he was pleased with the three-year agreement, which provides raises of 2%, 2.5% and 2%. As part of the settlement, the Union accepted a bonus plan on a trial basis. It is the same bonus plan provided to management, which goes to a maximum of 4% of salary. The Union will monitor the bonus plan, and if it not deemed to be satisfactory, will not be included in the next agreement. The agreement also increased the defined benefit plan to 1.4% of YMPE and then 2% above YMPE. That translates into about \$1,300 per year more for someone with 35 years seniority. The Union is still plagued with contracting out issues. The Union will be applying to the CIRB to represent employees at Netcom, which AT&T recently bought. The approximately 300 to 400 employees do the same work as CAW members, mainly on IT platform.

Ervan Cronk, CEP Atlantic

Canada, reported his Union has been working hard on the Aliant merger. He said the membership at AC&TWU, and CEP, voted 95% to form a new joint bargaining council. The two unions are meeting with an investigating officer from the CIRB. The two biggest issues are scope and movement of work. With respect to scope of the bargaining unit, Cronk reported that out of 900 Clerical workers at NB TEL (non-union), the company recently made 350 first level managers, including two who were receptionists. He also indicated the company is aggressively moving work around. On another matter, he reported the Union achieved a good agreement for workers at Shaw Cable in New Brunswick because the company was swapping assets with Rogers and wanted to get the Collective Agreement out of the way.

Joel Carr, CEP Ontario Region, reported he Union recently reached a Collective Agreement with Entourage, but workers are still \$5 per hour behind Class II rates at Bell. He reported Bell sold off part of Operator Services for the visually impaired. Bell is also doing a major study with a view to re-organizing, but CEP is not co-operating until they get guaranteed training for members. Expertec has bought Nortel's installation arm, so there are not five agreements at Expertec. The Company has applied to the CIRB for consolidation to three CBAs, the Union is seeking one Agreement. At the time of the meeting, CEP had just submitted their brief to the CIRB and was awaiting company's response. Carr reported ongoing battles to keep contractors out.

Bruce Lambert and Gary Grant, AC&TWU, reported they are in the mediation stage at CIRB on the Aliant merger. Scope is the big issue, with the company proposing a ratio of two Bargaining Unit to one management, with the Union opposed.

They reported collective agreements in three of the four Atlantic provinces expire at the end of the year. They are going through the same battle as the TWU went through in B.C. and Alberta. The company is flagrantly ignoring the Collective agreement. For example, the company is contracting out new work, despite an agreement that new work would come under the CBA. The company is contracting out non-core stores work, and the union has gone to arbitration on the issue. They have also begun contacting out maintenance of vehicles, and have reduced number of mechanics to four from 17.

Ron Carlson, CEP Prairie Region, reported they have a tentative agreement at SaskTel, with 3%, 3% and 3% over three years, a pay equity adjustment of 39 cents per hour, 0.25% into the medical plan. There is a 2% COLA clause for pensions, with change from five-year averaging to three-year averaging. The Union is also doing a study to show that SaskTel should continue to be government-owned.

At MTS, where CEP represents Operator services and Clerical, morale is terrible because of a strike and downsizing. Union has to arbitrate everything in final settlement, and won all three. They are still fighting over pension from the time MTS was pri-

vated, with the issue currently at arbitration.

TWU, Rod Hiebert reported on changes at Telus, Neil Morrison reported on CIRB issues, and Bruce Bell reported on bargaining and contacting out. (We won't reprint their reports in this article, as they have already been reported in the Transmitter).

Peter Murdock, CEP VP Media, reported on carrier and content. He note that some carriers are merging carrier and content, for example, Bell purchasing Globe and Mail, so for example newspapers are using pictures from TV rather than using their own photographers. The result can be two voices reduced to one voice. He also noted that at present the Internet is accessible to everyone, but carriers would like to set priorities on which can be accessed, and set it up similar to cable TV. At present, everyone owns Internet, but carriers will try to make Internet contract. He said the Globe and Mail is losing a lot of money on Internet access. In the U.S., cable is winning in the high end market, and are finding customers tend not to switch. He also noted that as a result of cutbacks in CBC news, CBC has lots 24% of its audience.

The Conference also considered and adopted a number of reports from sub-committees. A separate story in this issue of the Transmitter provides some details on the report of the sub-committee on "Short and Long-term Strategies." Rod Hiebert is a member of that sub-committee.

Committee proposes bargaining issues conference

The National Alliance of Communications Unions (NACU) at the January 29, 2001 meeting, considered a number of Committee reports, including the report of the "Subcommittee on Short and Long Term Strategies", a sub-committee established at the October 2000 meeting. The subcommittee, comprising Rod Hiebert, Dave Halikowski, James Kinkaid and Fred Pomeroy, met December 12-13 to draft this report. (A fifth committee member, Gary Grant, was unable to attend the December meeting, but provided input into the report via a telephone call prior to the meeting.)

A major concern of the sub-committee was to develop coordinating and support mechanisms to enable the various unions that make Up NACU to function like one integrated union, while maintaining each union's autonomy. To that end, the subcommittee recommends the following:

1. NACU should hold a "bargaining issues" conference soon enough before most bargaining units are up for renewal to be able to influence bargaining agendas.

2. Each affiliate of NACU should make a serious commitment to pursue

issues identified at such a conference.

3. There should be a well-coordinated effort to get line up the bargaining for the various bargaining units across the country.

4. To build solidarity on issues, the leaders of the various NACU affiliated should sit in at the bargaining table of other affiliates when they are getting into difficult bargaining with an employer.

5. A common strike fund was considered but it was deemed not feasible. However, affiliated NACU members, as well as Locals of affiliated unions, should be asked to make interest-free loans and financial donations when a member Union is in a dispute.

6. To build and maintain morale on the picket line, messages of support should be sent from the Unions, Locals and members.

7. Scabs for the employer in a dispute should be kept very busy through a "super service" campaign by NACU affiliate members

8. A coordinated message designed to keep members of NACU-affiliated unions abreast of the issues and progress of the dispute should be placed on each NACU affiliate web site, as well as the NACU web site.

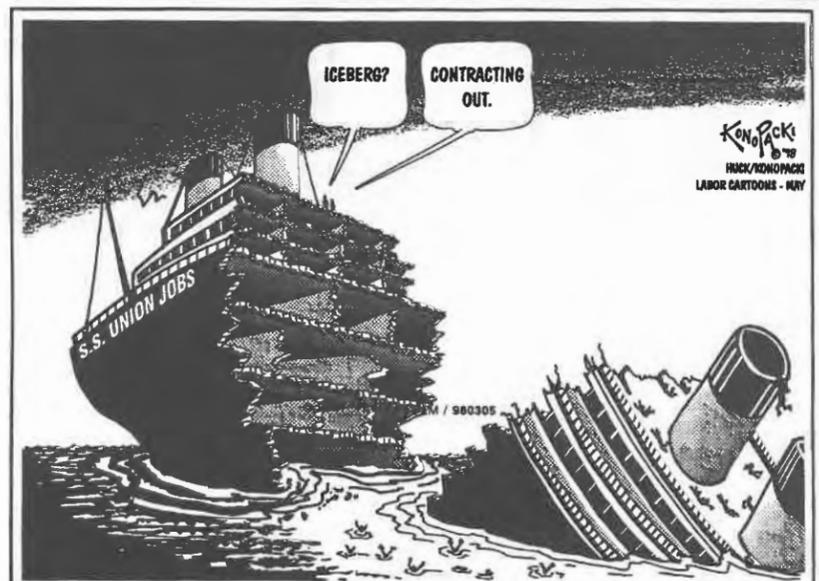
9. Coordinated special bulletins should be prepared for the Locals of each NACU affiliate in the event of a dispute.

10. Servicing staff from every NACU affiliated union should be required to push for support from the Locals they service.

11. Coordinated short-term job

actions across the country needs further study by the sub-committee and/or NACU officers.

12. As a last resort only, NACU should consider a campaign to boycott or have customers switch to another carrier - and only after close consultation with and the agreement of the affiliate who has the dispute.



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Telus gains ground in Central Canada

From a report in the March 28 Vancouver Sun

Telus Corp. gained ground in central Canada on Tuesday (March 27), buying companies that serve more than 2,500 corporate customers in Ontario and Quebec and lighting up its new cross-Canada data network.

Telus also unveiled a massive new line of bank credit and continued to liquidate its real estate holdings by selling its Calgary office tower.

"This further advances our expansion into Central Canada," Telus president and CEO Darren Entwistle said. "It also strengthens what we're doing in the data and IP space, and that's very important for us."

The multiple deals will help Telus in its race with Bell Canada to expand across the country and capture customers – especially for data services – in each others' home territories.

Until now, Bell appeared to be winning the race, said telecom consultant Iain Grant.

"Bell's inroads in the West and the noise they're making in both the Alberta and B.C. markets are much more substantial than the noise that Telus has been making here in Ontario," Grant said. "This might redress the balance. A lot depends, of course, on follow through."

Among the day's announcements:

- Telus has agreed to buy Williams Communications Canada Inc. from Williams Communications LLC of Tulsa, Okla., which is selling some of its business to concentrate on operating broadband data networks. The Canadian operation sells communications equipment and provides data and voice services to 2,500 customers with 13,000 locations, three-quarters of them in Ontario and Quebec.

- Telus will buy Columbus Group Communications, an Internet professional-services company with offices in Vancouver and Toronto.

- Telus has activated or "lit" its cross-Canada fibre-optic backbone network, which stretches from Vancouver to Quebec City with U.S. connections, and will eventually be extended to the Atlantic provinces.

- Telus has arranged for a \$4.5 billion line of credit with the TD bank.

- Telus has sold its 27-storey Calgary office tower for \$120 million to an undisclosed buyer and will lease back the space. It has already sold its Burnaby head office building, two Edmonton office towers and a smaller Calgary building.

Grant said the deals make Telus a more serious national competitor, in part because Williams and Columbus both bring "A-list" customers into the fold who might be willing to buy additional services from Telus.

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

All Indonesian Products

CLC re: East Timor

Philips Electronic Products, Quebec

CLC/USWA 7812

NORPAC Products

CLC/PCUN

Hallmark and United Chicken

BCFL/UFCW 1518

Great Financial Plans



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

In this issue of "Great Financial Plans" I'll address four questions I've encountered over the past month or two. For future columns, please feel free to forward your own questions.

1. Could you explain the new Retirement Options and Survivor's Benefits available through my Telecommunication Workers Pension Plan? – from G.K.

Answer: as of March 1, 2001, your Telecommunication Workers Pension Plan (TWPP) offers a greater selection of retirement payment options and a much better residual pension for the survivor spouse in the "Joint and Survivor – Level Income" options. The standard annuity options (which provide a constant monthly payment for the rest of your life, or your spousal survivor's life, if elected) remain the same.

The "Level Income Options" (which provide greater pension payments before age 65 with an offsetting reduction when you turn 65) have changed. The offset election used to be limited to the approximate value of your Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Old Age Security (OAS) payments combined, so you would see your pension decrease by almost \$1200 upon turning 65. Regardless how well explained and anticipated, that drop in pension often caused great concern. The TWPP now offers this Level Income Option with offsets set to CPP only, or OAS only, or both (as originally offered), so you can still choose more pension up front but with less reduction at age 65.

Choosing the option that suits you best depends on many factors, including your age and your spousal, financial, activity and health status. Everyone's overall situation varies, so the option best suited for you may be quite different from your retired pals'.

The Joint and Survivor – Level Income Options now take far better care of the surviving spouse, providing a pension equal to the straight annuity option (i.e. without the increase before age 65 or the offset after). Confusing? Come and see me to discuss these options or for examples, your spouse will appreciate it!

2. What are the advantages of making Voluntary Contributions to my pension plan? – from B.T.

Answer: these contributions are tax deductible, just like your TWPP or RRSP contributions, and can be made by payroll deduction to avoid withholdings and reduce taxes paid immediately. These voluntary contributions may be withdrawn from the plan or transferred to your own RRSP once per calendar year, and are invested just like the dollars in the main TWPP. Professional money managers invest the funds in bonds and cash equivalents and your contributions are guaranteed – you'll never have a negative rate of return. The limitation to investing in bonds can reduce the long-term returns on your funds, however (a hard concept to believe given the markets of the past few months). But if you limit your RRSP contributions to fixed income investments (term deposits and bonds) anyway, why not have these excellent money managers doing the investing for you?

When you retire, you can lump the voluntary contributions in with the pension stream you'll receive from the TWPP or transfer the funds to your own RRSP or RRIF.

3. How can I have taxable income and capital gains from my mutual funds when I've lost money on them during the year? – E.B.

Answer: mutual funds are often made up of 30 to 100 different investments, each possibly earning interest or dividends and moving up and down in price. The fund manager may buy and sell these individual investments within the fund at gains or losses during the course of the year. These incomes and net gains are distributed (often at year-end) to unit holders and are taxable outside of an RRSP or RRIF. Just like shares of TELUS, you could purchase throughout the year at an average cost of \$40 per share and see them fall to \$38 at year-end. The dividends paid by TELUS are still taxable, even though your net investment may be worth less at year-end than what you paid for it. But remember, you haven't really lost anything until you actually sell your investment at a loss.

4. Who came up with the name "Great Financial Plans" anyway? – L.B.

Answer: the name is just a play on words, kind of tongue-in-cheek. As my wife will tell you, I'm actually a pretty humble guy!

You can call Bill Biles at (604) 656-6289, by email at bbiles@vantel.com, or contact a Van Tel Financial Service Representative at (604) 656-6200 or toll free at 1-800-663-1557. You can visit Van Tel's website at www.vantel.com.

Call centre staff face stress, burn-out

From: Vancouver Courier

December 3, 2000

Reprinted with permission

By Kevin Kinghorn

The cherry of an Export A cigarette flares and crackles softly as Terry Johnson takes one last haul before heading into the ground floor of a Cambie Street office building. It's a crisp and sunny autumn afternoon, but Johnson will spend the next six hours on the telephone in a tiny cubicle in a bunker-like room, far from the sun's rays. Packed with 30 other operators in an office the size of most living rooms, Johnson will call up to 1,000 strangers, most of whom openly disdain him.

"Any time I'm not talking to somebody is wasted time to the company," said Johnson, who's in his late 30s and looks like a high school math teacher with his tinted glasses and shock of grey-brown hair coiffed à la mad professor. "I'm expected to be dialing or interviewing the whole time. I've talked till I've lost my voice."

Supervisors monitor his calls through a computer terminal linked to his phone. If the number of people he convinces to participate in his survey drops below a predetermined average per hour, that shortcoming will be pointed out to him by the on-duty manager. Low production is grounds for dismissal. After five days of exhausting phone work, Johnson will take home less money than most teenaged busboys.

Johnson is a call centre agent at a market research firm, a person widely despised by almost everyone who's ever been phoned at home and asked their opinion on a company's latest ad campaign or governmental policy. His working conditions bear a striking resemblance to industrial-era assembly lines. Like those early 20th century factories, the sweatshops of the information age have inspired a push to minimize.

Call Centres are a \$15-billion industry in Canada and provide approximately 30,000 jobs in Vancouver alone. The city's time zone makes it ideal for this type of work. Survey and marketing companies can employ shifts of workers throughout the day – an early shift for prime eastern hours and later shifts for the West Coast. And because of a large multicultural population, the supply of workers who can communicate in several languages is almost endless.

As many as 100 large call centres in Vancouver employ 100 to 500 agents each, while the number of small call centres approaches 1,000 according to the BCIT Call Centre of Excellence training facility. While many employees are in technical support or customer service positions that pay \$15 to \$22 per hour, the industry has an ugly underbelly: outbound call centres like Johnson's that do telemarketing or public opinion polls for large corporations or political parties. These firms use phones linked to computer terminals to pressure cheap labour into working beyond what critics see as reasonable limits.

Derek Thompson, a consultant at the unionized market research company Campbell Goddell Traynor, calls it the "warm bodies on seats" approach.

"These guys don't care who sits in the chair as long as they can make the calls," said Thompson. "They have no vested interest in taking care of their employees. It's a huge problem in the industry right now."

Ironically, Thompson says companies that constantly turn over burned-

"Telemarketing and survey companies are popping up in Vancouver because of an abundance of cheap, desperate labour, thanks to a weak B.C. economy"

"Organizing (call centre) employees has been a tough slog because of high turnover"

out staff spend more money on training and hiring than it would cost to scale back production and pay workers a decent wage.

Raymond Chretien is a 25-year-old TELUS employee with a neatly trimmed goatee and impeccably styled brown hair. With his exemplary posture and polite, controlled tone, he looks every bit the model hotel employee he was before landing a job in a landing a job in a Burnaby TELUS call centre.

He's also an organizer for the Vancouver-based Telecommunications Workers Union on an indeterminate leave of absence to bolster union membership in call centres. Although 25 per cent of the TWU's 10,000 B.C. members work for call centres, most are technical support operators, not telemarketers.

Chretien says telemarketing and survey companies are popping up in Vancouver because of an abundance of cheap, desperate labour thanks to a weak B.C. economy.

I can't give you specifics because new shops open overnight. They're fly-by-nighters and are gone again in a month, but these operations are definitely growing," said Chretien. "They always need fresh blood. As fast as bodies are coming in the door, people are leaving because they can't stand the pressure and constant monitoring.

"It's basically a race to see who can screw people the fastest – it's a race to the bottom, who can pay the least and who can treat people the worst."

Chretien freely admits unions won't make the job a "cakewalk," but thinks they give operators security and an avenue of recourse when problems develop. So far, however, organizing employees has been a tough slog because of high turnover.

Hired this summer, Terry Johnson is one of a handful of "long-time" employees – most quit after the first paycheque because the stress is too much to handle. "It's very difficult to call people in their homes," said Johnson. "People get very mad at you. And if something upsetting happens, you can't get up and take a minute to walk around and catch your breath – you're forced to take the next call. You're made to feel like a machine."

Of the eight people he was hired with, three lasted the month. He estimates only 10 per cent of his co-workers stay longer than a year. "It's funny because if you go into the lunch room there nobody will talk," said Johnson. "You just get so burned out from talking on the phone so much that you don't want to speak anymore." Johnson tells

of a co-worker who goes drinking with his friends to relieve the stress built up by a day in the phone room, but can't do anything but sit and listen because he's so tired of talking.

The problem isn't just psychological. Johnson estimates at least one-third of the workers in his call centre have lost their voices from overwork. He calls it "call centre throat."

Johnson, who took the job when his fledgling writing career failed to cover the bills, is helping organize the union at his office because he says the ownership is abusing a class of workers that can least afford it. "A lot of my co-workers are in their 30s and 40s and have families. They're usually immigrants or they've just lost another job and it's the only thing they could find right away. One guy was laid off from ICBC and now works here to support a wife and three children.

The structure of outbound call centres is geared to maximum efficiency. Large computers called predictive dialers are increasingly being used to do the dialing for an entire call centre. Faster and more efficient than human fingers, they're able to screen out voice mail and fax machines, and dial multiple numbers at once.

Automated dialers typically phone 10 numbers for every three available operators, because on average, only three out of every 10 calls will be answered. When the dialer detects a live human voice on the line, the call is immediately passed to a waiting operator in front of a computer screen. Without hearing a "hello," the agents launch into their spiels.

The instant the operator wraps up the call, a new "live" line is passed through to his or her headset. Chretien says most phone room workers will field calls this way for up to four hours at a time before being allowed a half-hour break, the minimum required by law.

Computers also allow supervisors to tightly monitor entire banks of operators to ensure operators' call volumes remain high. If respondents trail off or give long-winded answers, the agent is expected to bring them back on topic. Supervisors also monitor "wrap times" – the time it takes the operator to submit the survey or enter data once the call is completed.

In more strict centres like Johnson's supervisors patrol the phone room, walking up and down the aisles watching for infractions like talking to co-workers or reading while phoning.

Each employee's statistics can be called up and analyzed at any moment. On the basis of these stats, the supervisors set performance objectives for

the group. It's an atmosphere described by one call centre worker who wished to remain anonymous for fear of losing her job as "Orwellian." "I feel like I'm being punished for something I didn't do," she said. "I'm constantly being watched and forced to take calls. I get sick every time I go into work because I'm so stressed.

Gillian Dean has been working in call centres for more than 10 years. Her telephone voice is confident, with the soft British accent and mellifluous tone of a nanny.

Now employed by a unionized market research phone room that pays well and provides medical coverage, Dean has worked in non-union "sweat shops." She was paid a little over minimum wage and offered incentives based on "flow rates" – the number of sales or survey responses an operator can generate per hour. "They just wanted me to dial as much as I could, all the time."

Dean still makes up to 2,000 calls in an eight hour shift, and her computer terminal still tracks the number of calls she makes, their average length and how much time she spends away from her terminal. But the information is used largely to keep track of break time and calculate incentive payments. Use of monitoring to discipline employees is the reason most telemarketing and survey companies have such high turnover, she said.

"At the end of the day, they would look at your stats, and if they weren't high enough, they would say you're not good enough to do the job," said Dean. "They might put you on less lucrative surveys that dragged down your flow rate, [or] they could fire you just like that."

Not all operators think the job is a bad one. Anita Parvez, like Johnson, is a middle-aged employee who's worked at the same public opinion polling company for a few years. She insists she could get a job doing anything she wants but she enjoys the call centre atmosphere, and it pays better than a fast food restaurant.

"I enjoy it because I'm a talker," said Parvez. "People always say I talk too much but I guess I'm just like that."

Parvez finds the work stimulating and doesn't mind being monitored. "I think [the monitoring] is good. It weeds out all the people who can't handle it. I guess I just naturally have a thick skin so it doesn't bother me."

Charles Miron is another operator who spent 12 years as a ship's cook and part-time musician before finding work conducting public opinion polls two and a half years ago. Though he made the minimum rate of \$8 an hour

for a year before he qualified for a bonus of about \$1 per hour, he said the pay is a reality of the 90s.

"It's something different every day," said Miron. "Sure there are \$15 and \$20-an hour jobs out there, but are you guaranteed to get the hours? I can work all the hours I want here. Some people work 11 days straight before taking a day off and then do 11 more."

MarkTrend Research Inc. refused to speak to the Courier about hiring practices and working conditions at the company's market research phone room. Messages left at Dylan Ryan Teleservices and other telemarketing and market research firms were not returned. Calls were transferred to lines that were never answered, phone numbers were offered that were no longer in service, and voice-mail messages were not returned.

Moira Silcox, vice-president of Canadian Facts, was one of the few who did respond. Silcox said while she can't speak for her competitors, her company has made a concerted effort to improve working conditions. "I would say that five years ago we lagged behind and were maybe guilty of obsolete business practices, but we've improved," said Silcox. "We have pizza days and things like that. We try to make it a fun and friendly environment."

Canadian Facts pays more than minimum wage – although Silcox wouldn't specify – and offers standard performance incentives and a medical plan for employees.

Silcox admits, however, the nature of call centre work makes for high turnover rates. "We don't hire people thinking that they'll be telephone interviewers for the next 40 years or anything. We'll always have people doing it as a bridge between jobs, but we have put people through college. There are a lot of actors and people in transition working here, which is ideal for them because the hours are very flexible."

One reason the exact number of outbound call centre employees in Vancouver is difficult to track is because the industry expands or shrinks according to the work available. Phone rooms survive on contracts, bidding on jobs conducting surveys for ICBC or selling health magazine subscriptions to baby boomers in Seattle. Some operations rent office space for only a few months at a time.

In those conditions, high employee turnover is an advantage – some firms even use temps. Several have ads perpetually listed in the back of newspapers. In the span of a few hours, the Courier made appointments for job interviews at three call centres.

Thomas Lemieux, a UBC economics professor, said jobs in the burgeoning outbound call centre industry are unlikely to disappear even if conditions and pay standards are raised. "Whenever there's talk of unionizing or raising wages in bad-paying jobs, businesses say it's bad for them," said Lemieux, "but the evidence for this is not overwhelming." He said research shows improving wages and working conditions can help the industry by making it more stable and viable.

Chretien plans to soldier on in his unionizing drive, but says some companies will always want to make fast money on the backs of workers who can least afford it. "There are people out there who just thrive on abusive relationships," said Chretien, "and there are call centres out there that will force others to compete on that level. Not that they have to do business that way, but because they choose to do business that way."

U.S. Union membership in 2000 fell to 13.5%

The percentage of American workers belonging to unions fell in 2000 to its lowest point in six decades, according to the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

BLS said 13.5 per cent of American workers were in unions last year, down from 13.9 per cent the year before, a year that labour had hailed as the beginning of a big turnaround after years of decline.

In 1983, 20 per cent of all workers were union; in the 1950s, it was 35 per cent.

Economists offered several explanations for the decline, including retirements by union members and layoffs of many union workers because of foreign competition.

Some 160,000 manufacturing jobs were lost in 2000, union leaders pointed out.

Unions did a lot of organizing last year – 400,000 new members, the AFL-CIO says – but the gains were not enough to compensate for the losses.

AFL-CIO president John Sweeney says that to replace members lost to retirement and layoffs, and show growth, unions must recruit 500,000 to one million new members a year.

Some unionists said labour would have a better organizing record for 2000 if it hadn't been sidetracked by the presidential election, which consumed huge amounts of volunteer and staff

time and resources. With no big election set for 2001, they predict the focus will return to organizing.

Particularly hard for labour to

take in the new BLS report was the revelation that membership among private-sector workers had fallen to just nine per cent, down from 9.4 per cent in 1999.

In contrast, membership among government workers at all levels rose to 37.5 per cent, up from 37.3 per cent the year before.

Some facts about Right-to-Work laws

The AFL-CIO has made some comparisons between right-to-work states and free-collective-bargaining states.

- Workers in non-right-to-work states make on average \$4,343 or 18 per cent more annually than their counterparts in right-to-work jurisdictions.

- Not one of the 21 right-to-work states is among the top 15 states that have the highest average annual pay, and not a single one has a pay level above the national average.

- When they passed their right-to-work laws, 20 of 21 right-to-work states were below the national average for per capita income. By 1993, 19 of the 21 states were still below the national average.

- Of the 15 states with the highest average hourly earnings for factory workers, 14 are free-collective-bargaining states. Of the top 25, 22 are free-bargaining states.

- Weekly paycheques for production workers in free-bargaining states are on average \$68.56 or 16 per cent higher than for workers in the 21 right-to-work states. Meanwhile, 13 of the 15 states with the lowest weekly pay in manufacturing are right-to-work jurisdictions.

- Right-to-work states lag far behind the rest of the country in terms of minimum wage legislation. Seven of the 21 right-to-work states

don't even have a state minimum wage law. Of those that do, only nine have minimum wage rates at least equal to the federal minimum of \$4.25, versus 23 of the free-bargaining states.

- Jobless workers struggling with unemployment are treated better in free-bargaining states than those in right-to-work states. On average the unemployed in the free-bargaining states receive \$31 or 20 per cent more in weekly benefits than their counterparts in right-to-work states. Meanwhile, of the 15 states with the highest level of weekly benefits, all are free-bargaining states.

- In right-to-work states, workers injured on the job get on average nearly \$110 or 20 per cent less in maximum weekly benefits for temporary total disability than injured workers in free-bargaining jurisdictions.

- Workers in right-to-work states suffer job fatality rates far above those in non-right-to-work states because there are fewer unions to help enforce job safety standards. For example, of the 20 states with the highest rates of on-the-job fatalities, 15 were right-to-work states. Among the 15 states with the lowest on-the-job fatality rates, 14 were free-bargaining states.

- Right-to-work states invest far less of their public resources in education, despite the fact that

survey after survey has shown that a state's commitment to education is key to attracting new economic investment and maintaining businesses. On average free-bargaining states invest nearly \$1,300 or 30 per cent more per year per pupil in public education than do right-to-work states.

- Of the 10 states investing the least amount of public dollars annually per pupil, nine are right-to-work states. Of the 25 jurisdictions investing the highest amount per pupil, 23 are free-bargaining states. And school drop-outs rates are nearly 15 per cent higher in right-to-work states than in free-bargaining states.

- Individuals and families are more likely to live in poverty in right-to-work states than in states with free collective bargaining. According to the latest U.S. government statistics, poverty rates for right-to-work states are 15 per cent higher than for free-collective-bargaining states.

- Infant mortality rates are usually associated with poverty, poor nutrition and lack of access to prenatal health care services. According to recent children's health statistics, babies born in free-bargaining states have a better chance of survival than those born in right-to-work states. Of the 10 jurisdictions with the worst infant mortality rates, eight are right-to-work states.

Telus sets 37th Annual First Aid Team Competition

On May 12, 2001 the TELUS First Aid Team competitions will take place in Surrey, B.C. The specific location will be announced closer to the date of competition.

Last year's competition involved First Aid Teams from B.C. and Alberta, and included a Car Show and Shine, pony rides and face painting, to make it a family event.

This year's event promises to be bigger and better.

For information on this event contact Ed Gilbert at TELUS Corporate Safety (604)432-2482
e-mail ed.gilbert@telus.com

Fishing Derby June 8-10

On June 8, 9 and 10, the fifteenth Annual Harold Reid Memorial Fishing Derby will take place at Roche Lake, B.C.

This is put on by Local 8, and all members and friends of the TWU are welcome.

Roche Lake is located 40 miles south of Kamloops off Highway 5A.

For more information please call Harvey Simpson at 250-579-8801 or Rick Fleming at 250-573-5776.

BC TEL EAST KOOTENAY REUNION

Anyone who has worked for BC TEL in the East Kootenays is invited to attend a reunion:

**Saturday, September 1, 2001
Cranbrook,**

Town and Country Inn

Cocktails 5 p.m.,
Buffet dinner 7 p.m.,
Dance 9 p.m.

Tickets: \$25

Contact persons:

Debi Hart: Telephone: (250) 489-6756 or 489-1144

Mail: 45-12 Ave. S., Cranbrook, VIC 2R8

Sandy Hunter: (250) 489-6787 or 426-2379

Mail: 1325 Industrial Rd. No. 2, Cranbrook, VIC 5X5

Town and Country Inn is offering a special room rate for out-of-towners attending the reunion.

GOVERNMENT BENEFITS 2001 As of January 1, 2001

Canada Pension Plan

	CPP
1. Contribution Rate	4.3%
2. Year's maximum pensionable earnings	38,300
3. Basic Exemption	3,500
4. Maximum premiums for employees	1496.40
Maximum premiums for self-employed	2992.80
5. Benefits (maximum for new recipient)	775.00
6. Lump Sum Death Benefit	2,500
7. Disability (max.)	935.12
8. Dependent children's benefit	178.42
9. Surviving spouse 65 and over (max.)	465.00
10. Surviving spouse under 65 (max.)	428.70

Old Age Security (effective Jan. 1, 2001 – adjusted quarterly)

1. Old Age Security	431.36
2. Guaranteed income supplement (max.) single	512.65
couple	333.92
3. Maximum spouse's allowance (Age 60-64)	765.28
4. Maximum widowed spouse's allowance (Age 60-64)	844.88

From CAW "Contact"

Expansion of Free Trade raises many concerns

(Business Agent and Political Action Co-ordinator George Doubt has requested that the following speech by NDP MP Bill Blaikie be reprinted in the Transmitter)

KEYNOTE ADDRESS ON THE THEME OF A JUST ECONOMY

(At a conference entitled "Globalize This")

Sponsored by The Ontario Public Interest Research Group
University of Windsor
February 3, 2001
Bill Blaikie, MP

On Tuesday of this week a new Parliament was opened, and in the Speech from the Throne the government spoke of its commitment to successfully completing a Free Trade Area of the Americas, as a follow on and expansion of the North American Free Trade Agreement. In that Throne Speech mention of the FTAA, and the Summit of the Americas meeting this spring in Quebec City, there was not even the slightest hint that any Canadians had any concerns whatsoever with the prospect of an FTAA, and the further entrenchment of the ideology already enshrined in existing regional agreements like NAFTA, and global agreements like the WTO. Indeed, when Alexa McDonough asked the Prime Minister why there was no acknowledgement of such concerns, the Prime Minister replied that he didn't know there was any problems. One was reminded of the casual way in which he once dismissed the pepper spraying of students at the APEC meetings in Vancouver a few years ago. It can only be hoped that this is not a sign of things to come in Quebec City.

In any event when it comes to free trade, Canadians have a government that has, shall we say, a countenance unclouded by thought. In that sense, we live in a time of great danger, plagued as we are by governments who have given themselves over completely and uncritically to a view of the world that is ultimately anti-democratic and subversive of the very democratic power that these same governments claim to value and to exercise in the public interest.

But in another sense, we live in a time not only of great danger, but also of great hope, for the corporate agenda is not advancing as fast and as easy as it would like. And the Americanization of the variety of political and economic cultures that are represented at trade negotiating tables in meeting with resistance, in the streets and within the negotiations themselves. The MAI was abandoned, although there will no doubt be new attempts at an investment agreement. It was killed by a combination of public opposition, and the position on culture taken by the French government. And the negotiations in Seattle failed, again by a combination of what was happening in the streets and what was happening inside, with the streets emboldening those on the inside who had objections to various aspects of the WTO agenda. I am

thinking here of Europeans defending their agricultural policies against the strictly free market approach advocated by the U.S.A., or developing countries objecting to the elitist anti-democratic structure of the WTO itself. Unfortunately these same developing countries continue to refuse out of hand to even discuss core labour standards, let alone build them into such agreements.

I had the good fortune to be in Seattle in 1999, to catch a little tear gas, and to be part of a great peaceful protest that was underreported, while what violence there was, was over reported, and became the justification for the mass harassment and arrest of peaceful protestors in what could only be described as actions akin to what one would expect in a police state. I remember a rally and march of some 50,000 people, trade unionists, environmentalists, aboriginal people, farmers, food safety activists, church leaders, etc. all marching together, united by one common theme, democracy. Because whatever disagreements such groups may have about various issues, they have this in common, they would like differences to be settled democratically and not by a trade tribunal that is mandated to take into account only whether something is a barrier to trade or not.

A society is not a democracy if trade is the measure of all things, and if the rights of investors and corporate profit strategies are given a place of privilege in our hierarchy of values. There is something perverse about a moral hierarchy that enshrines the rights of the powerful, and leaves the rights of the powerless, and of creation, to another day. And the fact that so many young people see this is also a sign of great hope. Imagine that. These young people actually believe what they were taught in school, that they live in a democracy, and that their elected parliament should have more power than trade rules which don't include labour, environmental or human rights standards. What a pity that the Prime Minister doesn't even acknowledge their concerns, and that a right-wing media establishment is more comfortable ridiculing them than listening to them.

And so when I saw that I was expected to talk about what might constitute a just economy, it seemed to me that the first task of such a discussion, and the one I intend to dwell on today, is, what would be a first principle of a just economy, not in the sense of a just economy's goals, which might be things like greater equality or environmental sustainability, but rather what is the pre-condition of a just economy, or as it used to be said in the 80's before the whole international economic idea became contaminated by corporate globalization, what are the conditions for a new, just, sustainable, and participatory international economic order.

The pre-condition that I want to emphasize is democracy, real democracy, where the policy options and policy choices of democratically elected governments are not

circumscribed and narrowed by free trade agreements that go far beyond what was traditionally understood by free trade. These so-called free trade agreements regulate domestic policy not just on tariffs, but in sectors like energy, investment, culture, drug pricing, water management, and environmental regulation. It is an irony of the 1990's that as democracy became more popular, in the sense of there being numerically more democracies in the world, the scope of what was within the reach of such democratically elected governments was drastically narrowed.

It's a question of whether the world, understood as ideologically neutral, was becoming safe for democracy, which would be the official version, or whether the capitalist world was becoming safe from democracy. Some of what used to be accomplished by imperialistic strategies, by authoritarian or dictatorial regimes, or by having to win real elections, can now be accomplished simply by pursuing the internal logic and dictates of free trade agreements. Democracies may be more in number, these days, but they are shadows of what some of them once were, and even paler shadows of what their citizens would like them to be.

In Canada these last few weeks, there has been much speculation in the media about parliamentary reform, with talk about how to redistribute power within parliament to give more power to backbenchers, and to the House of Commons itself over against the executive and the Prime Minister's office. What is too often left unsaid in such discussions is that the real issue is not how to redistribute what power Parliament has. The real issue is how to give back to Parliaments, to national and sub-national legislatures in many places, the power that has been usurped, or more often abdicated, by way of acceding to trade agreements whose very purpose is to limit the power of government and increase the power of the marketplace to control our lives.

If I may be permitted an aside at this point, I find it strange that many on the political right can be so concerned about the transfer of power from Parliament to the courts, thanks to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but totally unconcerned about the transfer of power from Parliament to the WTO, or the NAFTA. And the National Post can write editorials denouncing the idea that Canada should pay heed to or support things like an International Court, while at the same time making fun of protestors who think that whether a country imports genetically modified food or asbestos should be a democratic, national, decision, and not a multi-lateral trade decision.

We cannot have a just, sustainable, and participatory economy, nationally or globally, without a deepening and widening of democracy. We can't decide to price energy in a way that may help Canadians, and the environment, but not the oil companies' profits, if we have trade agreements, like NAFTA that prohibit such policies. We

can't protect our water from bulk export if we have agreements like the NAFTA which make that impossible. We can't protect the environment, if we are subject to lawsuits under Chapter Eleven of the NAFTA, whereby companies can use the investor-state dispute mechanism to challenge environmental laws and regulations that get in the way of their profit strategies.

We can't protect our culture and cultural diversity in general, if the American view of culture as entertainment, as marketable commodity and marketable commodity alone, comes to dominate all trade agreements. And we won't be able to protect, here in Canada, the non-free market ways of doing things we have developed in certain sectors, like health, education, and the selling of wheat, if plans now afoot at the General Agreement on Trade and Services, and other tables at the WTO succeed.

Indeed, if one believes, as I do, that an essential ingredient of creating a just economy is the ability to be able to regulate, limit, or even proscribe the role of the marketplace, as we have done in health care insurance for example, then the free trade agreements are truly an anathema. And not just because they get in the way of certain policies. What is even more destructive, as I see it, is the effect these trade agreements have on our way of thinking. They break down notions of community, the common good, the public interest, the integrity of the environment, and replace them with a borderless world in which every place is to be judged on its suitability as a profit generator. Things that would have been thought impossible, or not thought of at all, become possible. Free trade creates a moral void that remind one of Neistche's dictum that if God is dead, all is permissible. With free trade, attacks on policies that were once sacrosanct become permissible and justified in the name of market access, national treatment and level playing field.

In order to have a just global economy, we need to have a level playing field. Not the level playing field that is sought by corporate negotiators, who, incidentally are on both sides or all sides of trade negotiations, and are the real negotiators. At WTO negotiating tables it is partly an illusion that countries are negotiating with each other. What is also true is that the various national negotiators in any particular sector are being advised by the same multinational corporations.

We need a different kind of level playing field. We need a global level playing field in which all the citizens of the world, as citizens of the world, and as citizens of their various countries, have the same core democratic, human, and labour rights. It's not a level playing field if workers in Canada have to compete with workers who can't organize a union without ending up in the river. It's not a level playing field if the people of democratic countries have to harmonize with what is acceptable in non-democratic countries, or turn a blind eye

to human rights violations in the name of trade liberalization. In this sense, China is the worst offender, and with its ascension to the WTO will put at the table one of the worst political configurations yet, a form of one party totalitarian capitalism.

It is not true that trade makes them more like us. What is true that the current model of corporate globalization is making us more like them, as we see the increasing criminalization of dissent, and the transformation of our democracies into political monocultures where the only policy debate that can be taken seriously is that which takes place within the boundaries of the imposed creed. And this limited policy debate itself can only take place within artificially created situations, or temporarily gated communities rendered politically anti-septic. I used to joke, after Seattle, that the next meeting of the WTO would take place in the Falkland Islands. The fact that it now appears it will happen in Qatar, may be off the mark geographically, but not in terms of where the WTO is going. Its allergy to public access is an eloquent statement about itself.

All over the world, in various forms and in varying degrees, we need, in a catch 22 sort of way, more democracy in order to restore democracy where it has been abdicated, or create it where there has been a seamless transition from one form of authority to another. But herein lies the problem. The trade agreements have created a vicious cycle of despair and cynicism about politics. The perception that it doesn't make any difference is both true and false. It is true in the sense that the trade agreements, along with various other instruments of corporate globalization like the IMF, are doing what they were designed to do. They are restricting the policy choices of governments and reducing the differences to be observed between governments. But is false in the sense that there are still political choices to make, and in the sense that there are still political parties who want to resist, oppose, and replace the corporate globalization model. But they need help. They need for people not to give up on electoral politics, and put all their hope in protest or in NGO's or civil society. To do this is to do what the corporate globalizers want us to do. They want a world, in which political choice is negated, and the corporate boardrooms run the world by default.

There is a role for NGO's for civil society, for social movements, and for protest, but there is also a role for an electoral politics in which politicians and political parties are judged by whether they embrace or reject corporate globalization, and by the quality and quantity of their resistance, to corporate globalization, whether in opposition or government. To take a pass on such choices in the name of despair, or cynicism about the homogenizing power of the trade agreements, is to give free trade its ultimate victory. My message to you today is don't give it that victory.



Women's Day picket at Calgary Telus building

On March 8, International Women's Day, TWU Local 203 held an information picket in front of the Telus Len Werry Building in downtown Calgary, from 4-5 p.m.

The purpose of the picket was to pressure Telus and other companies which refuse to provide transportation for employees who work late evening and early morning shifts.

Women workers from many sectors carried banners and placards, demanding an end to the risk of violence. Hundreds of leaflets were handed out to the public. Anne-Marie Taylor, a member of TWU Local 203 executive, read a message from a Telus employee who was assaulted on the way to work a graveyard shift.

The hour ended with speeches from Eileen Teslenko, President of the Calgary and District Labour Council, three women candidates in the provincial election, New Democrats Susan Scott and Christine McGregor and Independent Peggy Askin (President of Local 203), and Joanne Miller,

President of Calgary Local of CUPW.

The speeches highlighted women's struggles for equality and rights and demanded that Telus and other large corporations such as Canada Post take responsibility for the personal safety of shift workers. Laws existed 30 years ago in Alberta compelling companies to provide transportation for women working late shifts. These laws should be re-enacted.

Peggy Askin stated: "There can be no compromise on personal safety. We want to bring an end to the situation in this society where women are considered fair game. Personal safety cannot have a price tag."

Telus' response during the picket was to lock the front doors and post security guards in front of the building. Their spokesperson said that they would have to discuss "what kind of solution is sustainable based on the competitive nature of our industry."

Brenda Vaile,
Secretary-Treasurer, Local 203



UN meet proposes global rules covering human rights, labour

By **PHILLIP JENNINGS**
General Secretary
Union Network
International (UNI)

Recently, on behalf of UNI, I was one of the three union leaders invited to participate in the Global Compact of the United Nations.

Convened by Kofi Annan at UN headquarters in New York, the event brought together leaders from global business, civil society and UN institutions. More than 50 multinationals were present.

At the World Economic Forum in Davos in 1999, Kofi Annan proposed that business leaders and the UN initiate a Global Compact of shared values and principles aimed at giving a human face to the global market. He observed that the spread of markets had outpaced the ability of political systems to adjust to them and that history taught us that such an imbalance between the economic, social and political worlds could never be sustained for very long.

Since the Davos Forum, the

Global Compact was fleshed out to contain nine principles as follows:

Human Rights:

1. Business should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.

2. Business must make sure they are not complicit in human rights' abuses.

Labour:

1. Business should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.

2. The elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour.

3. The effective abolition of child labour.

4. Eliminate discrimination in respect to employment and occupation.

Environment:

1. Business should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges.

2. Undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility.

3. Encourage the development and diffusion of environ-

mentally friendly technologies.

In my statement to the Global Compact, I made the following points:

1. That Union organizing initiatives faced massive resistance from governments and companies. That no worker should lose his or her life or livelihood or career because they either joined or helped organize a union. I stated that the corporate "shelling" of union organizing campaigns should stop.

2. That the UN Global Compact should conduct an independent audit of a wide range of businesses to verify compliance with the nine principles. Asking companies to post their own reports on the web site was not satisfactory.

3. The Secretary General should request all business present to begin the process of negotiating global agreements with the respective ITSS. I mentioned our experience with European Works Councils and the Telefonica agreement.

4. The Compact should support on-line rights for on-line workers.

False statements at bargaining likely to be deemed illegal

By **JUDITH McCORMACK**
CALM

Honesty may be the best policy in life, but collective bargaining is a different story. When it comes to negotiating a contract, the truth may not always be required by law, at least in regard to employers.

Collective agreement negotiations are like a high stakes poker game. Negotiators hold their cards close to their chests and what they say at the bargaining table may be unclear, or even purposely vague. What happens, though, when negotiating strategy crosses the line into misrepresentation?

To begin with, labour law

across Canada requires an employer and a union to meet in bargaining and attempt to negotiate a collective agreement. Usually this duty to bargain takes the form of a requirement to use either reasonable efforts or negotiate in good faith, or both.

Generally speaking, this means that outright false statements by an employer at the bargaining table are likely to be considered illegal by labour boards.

For example, a union proposes a "no contracting out" clause in negotiations and then drops it because the employer assures the union there is no

plan to contract out work. Two months later, the employer turns around and contracts out most of the operation.

That's the kind of conduct that may well be found to be a breach of the employer's duty to bargain.

The remedy? In at least one case, an employer was ordered to reinstate the workers laid off as a result of the contracting out.

But what if the case involves an employer who merely fails to volunteer important information? If the information will have a significant impact on terms and conditions of employment, such as the workplace

closing down or work being contracted out, most labour boards agree that the employer must tell the union about it in negotiations, whether the union asks or not.

What's the catch? This requirement only applies if the decision to contract out has already been made at the time of negotiations. If the idea is under consideration, the employer may not have to notify the union.

It is curious that an employer who is contemplating the possibility of shutting down the workplace may not be required to put this information forward in negotiations. After all, it can affect bargaining dramatically,

shifting the emphasis from pensions to severance pay, for example.

Unions can help minimize the chances of being caught in these situations by asking questions in negotiations, since outright false statements by employers are more likely to attract legal sanctions than withholding information. However, in the meantime, it's difficult to avoid the impression that unions in collective bargaining face a stacked deck.

Judith McCormack is a former chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board who practices labour law with Sack Goldblatt Mitchell.



Rod Heibert

President's Report

Pensions and the Stock Market crash

The TWPP Pension office in Burnaby has received a number of calls regarding the recent sharp decline of the stock market and the impact this will have on the Telecommunication Workers Pension Plan (TWPP). I am happy to report that the financial health of your pension plan has not been negatively impacted by the recent negative stock market performance. In fact the rate of return for your pension plan last year was 15.7% and continues to be positive as interest rates decline.

My comments apply only with respect to TWPP. We are unable at this time to comment specifically regarding any effect the downturn in the stock market has had on TELUS Alberta Pension Plans. This is because those Plans are currently outside of the collective agreement and we have insufficient information to comment on their specific investment performance. Based on the information we do have, it would appear there are significant stock holdings within the assets of the TELUS Alberta Pension Plans. If this is correct, then the current stock market activity will be having a negative impact on these Plans.

The reason that your pension has been secure in these difficult times can be attributed

to well thought out Investment Policy decisions made by your Pension Trustees. Over the last five years or more, the TWU has been concerned about a number of economic factors including the stock market, which appeared to be overvalued and even more importantly the trend of dropping long term bond and interest rates. We were cognizant of the real and potential negative impact that those factors could have on the financial health of your Plan. When Actuaries calculate the financial health of a Pension Plan they must use an assumption for future Plan earnings that is close to but usually just below the current long term bond and interest rates. When long term rates and assumptions are reduced by one percentage point you reduce your assumed earnings by one percent. For pension funds such as ours, you would have to have an asset gain of approximately 15% to offset a 1% reduction in long term rates to just stay even. In our view the risk that long term rates would continue to move downward and that stock market earnings would not be sufficient to offset the lower rates, or might even decline posed an unacceptable risk to your pension plan.

In the summer of 1998 the Union Trustees

pressed these concerns forcing a decision that altered the pension investment policy to reduce risk by moving remaining stock market assets into long term bonds. We took advantage of long term bonds, locking in future earnings at then existing higher rates. This not only lowered risk to the plan but has proven to be a very positive decision in retrospect because the value of long term bonds increase dramatically as interest rates decline. If the pension fund had remained in the stock market it would have suffered an inadequate return in 2000 to cover the increase in liability that occurred that year because interest rates declined. What is worse, these assets would have suffered a serious decline in 2001 while the Plan liabilities are increasing. This would have been a disastrous result, which has been effectively avoided by the Trustees.

Your Trustees continue to monitor economic indicators and advice from experts. Currently, virtually all experts agree that we are well positioned for the foreseeable future in longer term bonds.

This is another very positive example of why workers and their Unions must continue to gain control over their pensions, their capital, and their future.

TELUS appeals CIRB decision: They seek to strip you of your job security

The latest CIRB decision dealing with the Merger of TELUS in Alberta and BC Telecom in BC concluded correctly that there was no agreement by the parties to limit TWU scope geographically in the Kelleher mediation agreement. The agreement reads "one bargaining unit covering BC and Alberta pursuant to the current CIRB application". The Board states in their decision "Counsel for the TWU reminded the Board of previous meetings and hearings involving the parties in the Board's presence where reference was made to the National Build application. It is clear from the Board's notes and its own recollection of those meetings and hearings that the TWU was not abandoning its National Build application either through its agreement to enter into the mediation process or through its agreement on a single bargaining unit in the conclusion to mediation.

In examining the mediation settlement the Board stated that "it is clear that it was negotiated and drafted within a specific context. The parties were attempting to resolve a major issue facing the parties at the time - whether there would be one or more bargaining units." They concluded "There is nothing to indicate that either this agreement or the preceding

one in February was intended to consider the broader issue of the geographic restrictions to be placed on the single bargaining unit, as opposed to more than one bargaining unit structure. There is nothing aside from the context in which these were negotiated, to indicate that the parties meant to do more or less than deal with the stumbling block that was before them at the time."

The Board conducted a thorough analysis of the Kelleher mediation agreement, the conduct and positions of the parties at Board proceedings. They concluded "Accordingly, the bargaining unit description shall not contain any geographic restriction, but shall, by inference, incorporate potentially all of TELUS' Canadian operations."

We are very disappointed that TELUS is purposely misrepresenting what was negotiated and are appealing a decision which they know is correct. Why would they backtrack on what they agreed to? It is disappointing also that after moving bargaining unit work from BC and Alberta to Ontario, as well as all their statements and actions about expanding eastward, that they would now try to claim that "we have no employees that could be said to fall within the CIRB's definition outlined at para-

graph 29 of Decision No. 108" ... as existing operations expand eastward and are incorporated into the existing corporate structures, they are to be included in the single bargaining unit." Their position is clearly preposterous.

TELUS' actions speak louder than words. Their actions over the past few months and their decision to appeal Decision 108 are a direct attack on all TELUS employees in BC and Alberta, their job security, rights, benefits and their Union. TELUS has already moved some of your work to non-Union lower paid employees in Ontario. They are attempting to move work from province to province and contract it out or give it to non-Union employees. If they are successful in their bid, they could declare you surplus and lay you off while they give your work to lower paid non-Union employees in Ontario. They could move the head office and all computer-based jobs in the same manner. That is clearly not acceptable.

The TWU is adamant and will continue to work with you to protect those rights that you have worked for and fought for.

We must work together in the fight to maintain your jobs, your rights, your dignity and your standard of living.