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the Telecommunications
Workers Union

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Crucial Union vote for Telus workers

Unionized workers at Telus in British Columbia and Alberta are facing a crucial decision: Which Union do you want to represent you in your dealings with the company.

The choice is clearcut — the TWU or IBEW Local 348.

A mail-in vote, conducted and supervised by the Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB), is now underway to determine the representation question. Ballots are being sent out to all eligible Telus employees on April 12, and must be returned to the CIRB by May 24.

Because the ballots are being mailed, you must ensure you have them in the mail in plenty of time to reach the CIRB before May 24. The TWU reminds members to follow instructions carefully in marking their ballots and placing them in the proper envelopes be-

fore mailing. We urge you to mail your ballot back immediately.

There are approximately 17,000 workers eligible to vote — slightly more than 10,000 in B.C. and about 7,000 in Alberta.

All of the 10,000-plus workers in B.C. are TWU members. Most of the 7,000 Alberta workers are IBEW Local 348 members, but several hundred are members of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union (CEP) or former members of Civic Service Union 52 (CSU). The CSU and CEP have voluntarily withdrawn from the ballot, and are encouraging their members to support the TWU.

The vote came about as a result of a corporate merger in late 1998, when Telus in Alberta and BC TEL in B.C. joined forces to form the new Telus company. A short time later, in February 1999, Telus applied to the Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) for a merger of the unions. Telus applied for four separate bargaining units divided along business lines with each one covering the work-

ers in both B.C. and Alberta.

The TWU did not oppose the application for successorship and common employer status, but proposed one Bargaining Unit for all unionized employees. The CSU and CEP supported the TWU position.

Over a period of some months, concentrated in the fall of 1999, the CIRB held hearings into the application. Early in 2000, the Board suspended hearings to see if a mediator could bring about agreement between the parties. After weeks of difficult mediation, an agreement was reached on one bargaining unit, Scope as defined in the TWU collective agreement, and a representation vote. That was the position the TWU had advocated and maintained throughout the mediation.

TWU President Rod Hiebert is seeking support of all workers, those in Alberta and those in B.C.

"We are a democratic Canadian Union with a long and proud history," Hiebert says, noting we celebrated our 50th anniversary just last year.

"We also believe it is in the interest of all the workers to support the TWU, as we have the superior Collective Agreement."

Hiebert pointed out that the TWU agreement has strong language against contracting out of bargaining unit work. We also have strong protection against layoffs. Our contract is far superior to that of the IBEW in these two crucial areas. (See separate article on contract comparisons, page 3.)

The TWU also has higher wage rates than the IBEW in all three divisions, but the contrast is particularly striking in the Clerical Division, where TWU-bargained wages are from 30% to 50% higher than comparable IBEW wages.

Our benefit and time-off provisions are roughly similar, although the TWU agreement is better overall in these respects. For example, the TWU Collective Agreement gives all regular employees 12 ATO days per year, a provision not found in the IBEW agreement. The benefits offered (such things as vision care and dental care), are overall very similar. In almost all other respects, our Collective Agreement is superior to the IBEW agreement, and we see our agreement as a very sound reason for workers in both Alberta and B.C. to support the TWU in this vote.

Some opponents of the TWU have sought to paint our union as a "radical" strike-prone organization. In fact, Hiebert notes, the TWU has not been involved in a strike for almost 20 years, since 1980-81, and we have successfully negotiated seven first-rate collec-

tive agreements since that time without a strike. "We have achieved our gains through member solidarity and firm but fair bargaining with the company."

The TWU also became the Bargaining Agent for about 150 Rogers Cable Workers in Vancouver and Surrey, and after a long and hard bargaining session, we achieved substantial wage gains and other benefits and contract protections, without a strike — the first gains these workers have made since the 1980s.

The TWU conducted a leaders' tour of communities throughout B.C. in the fall of 1999, to allow our members to ask questions and receive information about the pending merger. In March of 2000, the table officers embarked on a tour of Alberta communities, to discuss the issues with the Alberta workers and to hear their views, so that we can address them.

The TWU is urging all eligible members in both provinces to mark your ballot carefully and to mail it back in according to the instructions you will be receiving with the ballot.

"It is important that every member exercise his or her democratic right. The strength of your Union depends on your democratic participation," says Hiebert.

"We hope the majority of workers will carefully consider the options and mark their ballot for the TWU. We look forward to welcoming thousands of new members from Alberta, and following that to their full participation in the one broader and stronger Union."

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VOTING INSTRUCTIONS

All eligible unionized employees of Telus in Alberta and B.C. are to receive a ballot to choose which Union they want to represent them, the TWU or IBEW Local 348, along with voting instructions. The ballots are scheduled to be mailed out on April 12 by the Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) and are to be returned to the CIRB by mail no later than 5 p.m. May 24. Counting of ballots is set for May 26.

Following are instructions for voting:

- Mark your ballot with an X beside your choice.
- Place the ballot in the envelope marked "secret ballot".
- Place the "secret ballot" envelope in the stamped or metered envelope which will be pre-addressed to the CIRB in Vancouver.
- On this pre-addressed stamped envelope, in the return address area, sign your name on the line indicated, print your name on the line indicated, and print your address on the lines indicated. *By all means, do not forget to sign the envelope.* You will note there is a tracking number on that envelope. Do not be concerned about that number. It is there for CIRB administrative purposes.
- Mail the outer envelope with the enclosed inner envelope and ballot back to the CIRB.

BE SURE TO VOTE

This is a MAIL-IN BALLOT
conducted by the
Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB)

Expected Dates:

Ballots to be mailed out April 12.

Ballots must be returned
to CIRB by 5 p.m. on May 24.

Ballots to be counted May 26.

MARK AND MAIL-IN YOUR BALLOT
AS PER INSTRUCTIONS

A Brief History of the TWU

In February, 1999, the TWU celebrated its 50th anniversary. To mark the occasion, the Transmitter published a brief history of the TWU. Following are excerpts from that article, which we reprint for the interest of Alberta workers, as well as B.C. members who may have missed it the first time.

The Telecommunications Workers Union (TWU) commemorates its 50th anniversary in 1999. Originally chartered as the Federation of Telephone Workers (FTW), the new name TWU was adopted in the late 1970's.

Historically, since 1949, the Union was exclusively the bargaining agent for the workers at the B.C. Telephone Company, or as it is now known, BC TELECOM. That has changed somewhat in recent years since the deregulation of the telephone industry in 1992. For example, in 1998, the TWU organized a few hundred workers at Rogers Cable television, as well as a number of smaller certifications, but well over 95 per cent of the current membership are BC TEL employees.

The TWU represents just over 10,000 workers in the telecommunications industry in British Columbia,

the vast majority employees of the provincial telephone company, BC TEL. The union represents all of the unionized workers in the telephone company's three divisions — Plant, Clerical and Operator Service. Membership includes workers in associated and subsidiary companies, such as the cellular telephone wing of the company, BC Mobility, ISM BC, and Advanced Com. There are approximately 5,000 members in Plant, overwhelmingly male, and approximately 4,000 in Clerical and 1,000 in Operator Service, both overwhelmingly female. These numbers will increase dramatically if the TWU is successful in the current representation vote taking place in Alberta and B.C.

The size of the unionized workforce has been relatively stable for the past decade and there have been no layoffs, due to strong no-lay-off language in our collective agreement. Small reductions in the unionized workforce have come about through early retirement incentives or a voluntary separation package, and those who left have largely been replaced through the hiring of younger workers.

The TWU is governed by a 16-member elected executive council

who take extended leave from the company to work full-time for the union during the course of their tenure with the union. The 16 officers include a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Secretary-Treasurer, and 12 Business Agents. All but two work out of the Union's central office in Burnaby. One B.A. is headquartered in the northern city of Prince George and services the North, and one is headquartered in Kelowna and services the Okanagan. The current table officers are Rod Hiebert, President; Neil Morrison and Bruce Bell, Vice-Presidents; and Kathy Pearn, Secretary-Treasurer.

The TWU has long been affiliated to the B.C. Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress, as well as the Union Network International (UNI), formerly Communications International.

For the first 20 years since 1949, and for most of the past 20 years, there were few major labour disputes between the Union and BC TEL. However, for about a dozen years in between, from 1969 through 1981, labour relations with BC TEL were rocky, to put it mildly. Major issues such as wages and working conditions during a time of high inflation, contracting out, jurisdiction, layoffs, and pensions, caused tensions between the company and union which resulted in a number of work stoppages.

Between 1949 and 1969, numerous contracts were negotiated without strike or lockout. The late 1960's saw the coincidence of rising labour militancy, generally and within the FTW, and rising cost of living. At the same time, the parent company, GTE, had embarked on an anti-union drive which led to labour turmoil in GTE units throughout North America. The TWU was virtually the only Union that successfully resisted their union-busting campaign. In the summer of 1969, Union members went out on strike largely over mon-

etary issues, seeking to protect their standard of living through fair wage increases. The strike lasted six weeks, and ended with a 20 per cent wage increase over two years.

The year 1973 saw a strike at OK TEL, a subsidiary of BC TEL, over the issues of pensions and wage parity with BC TEL. That was the only strike in the history of OK TEL. The settlement which resulted, and a later merger with the OK TEL and BC TEL units, resulted in the negotiation of a very sound pension plan for all members, a defined-benefit plan jointly trustee and jointly funded, with the company contributing the lion's share to the plan.

The issue of contracting out members' work, along with other concerns such as wages, led to a strike-lockout at BC TEL in 1977. The result was a mediated settlement which included one of the strongest contracting out clauses among telephone companies in North America. It includes a clause which specifically and severely limits the amount and type of work that the company can contract out, and established a joint Contracting Out and Technological Change committee with an independent chairperson with power to impose settlements where negotiations fail.

The last major labour dispute occurred in 1980-81. Following that strike, the telephone company began to take steps to improve the labour climate, steps which included pensioning off some of the management "dinosaurs" in Industrial Relations. Since then, the TWU has successfully negotiated seven collective agreements including substantial wage increases without losing any time to strikes or lockouts.

Beginning in the late 1980s and into the 1990s, the Union made a major push for pay equity for female members. Through collective bargaining, in three rounds of negotiations, the Union narrowed the wage

gap considerably, and in 1994, the Union followed that up with a pay equity complaint to the Canadian Human Rights Commission. That complaint is still pending.

While this was ongoing, the structure underwent a major change. For nearly the first 30 years after 1949, the FTW was known affectionately as the "three-headed monster", as it represented the three divisions (Clerical, Plant and Operator Service) separately, with separate executives and divided memberships. By the 1970s, it was becoming apparent that such division and relatively small membership was not in the best interests of the members. In the mid-1970's, serious efforts got underway to merge the three divisions into one union, which resulted in the eventual formation of the Telecommunications Workers Union or TWU. The One Union Concept gained gradual acceptance, and in June 1977 the TWU held its first convention.

The President of the newly-formed TWU was Bob Donnelley. He was replaced during the 1980 dispute by Bill Clark. Clark retired in 1987, and his place as TWU President was taken by then-B.A. Larry Armstrong. When Armstrong retired in 1991, then Vice-President Rod Hiebert took over as President. Hiebert continues to serve as President.

One other gradual change in the union's structure and operation is the increasing role played by the female members. During the first decade as the TWU, the three table officers were all male. But in 1988, the union elected its first female table officer, Doreen McMillan. Since then, the position of Secretary-Treasurer has been filled by a woman, with McMillan succeeded by Cathy Henderson, Henderson by Carol Nagy, and Nagy by the current S-T, Kathy Pearn. Now nearly half the 16-member executive position are filled by females.

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TWU Website addresses:

TWU Home Page: <http://www.twu-canada.ca>

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TW Benefit Plan: <http://www.twu-canada.ca/twpp/bphome/htm>

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Member of

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

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TWPP first-rate pension plan

In addition to receiving good wages while working, TWU members can look forward to enjoying the benefits of a first-rate Pension Plan on retirement.

The Telecommunication Workers Pension Plan (TWPP) is a jointly-trusteed plan, with four trustees from Telus and four from the TWU. The Union trustees are the President, Secretary-Treasurer, and two delegates elected by Convention. The Plan is in the TWU-BC TEL Collective Agreement, which prevents the Company from making unilateral changes to the contribution rate, or the benefit formula, or from taking a "benefit holiday".

The TWPP is fully funded and has a surplus. Several thousand retired members are currently receiving their pension benefits, and all working members are enrolled in the

plan and accruing credits for future retirement.

The TWPP is a Defined Benefit Plan. That means that benefits are not directly tied to an individual's contributions. Rather, there is a defined level of payout, tied to a formula based on age, years of service and wage.

Specifically, the TWPP formula for benefits is as follows: **Years of service X 1.75 X average regular salary for final three years.**

The fund is invested by professional money managers, and is invested fairly conservatively to ensure preservation of capital. It continues to grow through a combination of employee contributions, employer contributions and investment growth.

Questions have been raised about the status of the TW Pension Plan when the merger of the Alberta and B.C.

Unions is completed. The answer is that nothing will change. B.C. members of the TWU will remain members of the TWPP, and current IBEW members in Alberta will remain members of their Pension Plan.

It may be beneficial to merge and enhance the Plans at some point in the future, but that would only take place after negotiations by both parties, and only if approved by majority vote by the members of each Plan. In other words, it would be possible to merge the Plans only with a "dual majority" vote of support.

The pension credits accrued by members of each Plan will remain intact and members approaching retirement age can look forward to receiving benefits on the same basis and at the same rate that would have occurred if there had not been a merger.

TWU/IBEW CONTRACT COMPARISONS

The following contract comparisons are based on the collective agreements for the TWU, IBEW Plant and IBEW Clerical and Operator Services, as of the year 2000. They are highlights and not an exhaustive list of contract clauses.

The following information is not intended to be a legal interpretation of the three contracts or provide actual specific wording. If there are any conflicts or discrepancies between this summary and the respective collective agreements, the latter shall prevail.

TWU

Contracting Out

No contracting out of work regularly performed by the Bargaining Unit. The independent chairperson of the joint Contracting Out and Tech Change (COTC) Committee can hear disputes on contracting out and make binding decisions.

Technological Change

No layoffs due to tech change for members with two or more years service

Wages - Operator Services

Progression to top wage rate: 25 months
Starting wage: \$117.21 per day
Top wage rate: \$151.39 per day

Wages - Clerical

Progression to top wage rate: 37 months
Six wage groups A to F
Top wage rate for Group A: \$153.58 per day
Top wage rate for Group F: \$210.19 per day

Wages - Plant

Plant wages determined at bargaining table
No lower paid Craft Classifications

Wages per month:

| | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Craft: | \$4,596 |
| Stores: | \$3,761 - \$3,974 |
| Technician 1-3 | \$4,723 - \$5,168 |

Hours of Work

Clerical and Plant:

7.5 hours per day

Operator Service:

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Day shift: | 7 hours |
| Sunday Shift: | 6 hours |
| Late Shift: | 6.5 hours |
| Night shift: | 6 hours |
| Holiday shift: | 4.5 hours |

Job Postings

Clerical: All TWU members including temps eligible to bid on job postings.

Plant: Positions awarded on basis of seniority. Training to be provided by company.

Bridging of Service

Former employees eligible to bridge previous terms of employment after 5 years.

Vacation

- * 5 days after 6 months if hired before Nov. 15
- * 10 days after one year
- * 15 days after two years
- * 20 days after 10 years
- * 25 days after 20 years
- * 30 days after 25 years

ATO

12 days per year for regular employees

Benefits

Medical (company pays 75% of premium), Extended Health (75%), Dental (100%), Vision Care (75%)

All employees covered, temps after nine months

Paid Sick Leave

Regular employees go in four stages from:
3 months to 2 years: 10 days full pay, 65 days at two-thirds pay to UIC max.
2-5 years: 25 days full pay, 50 days at two-thirds
5-10 years: 75 days full, 60 days half pay
10 years or more: 75 days full, 190 days half

IBEW

Contracting Out:

Management may contract out work where it deems necessary

Technological change

No guarantee of any layoffs due to tech change

Wages - Operator Services

Progression to top wage: 52 months
Starting wage: \$95.76 per day
Top wage rate: \$121.31 per day

Wages - Clerical

Progression to top wage rate: 52 months
12 wage groups (40-51)
Top wage for Group 40: \$102.60 per day
Top wage for Group 51: \$159.60 per day

Wages - Plant

Plant wages determined by Job Evaluation
More than one Craft wage rate

Wages per month:

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Craft: | \$4,289 |
| Carpenter & Mechanic: | \$4,191 |
| Stores: | \$3,385 - \$3,571 |
| Technician: | \$4,430 |

Hours of Work

Clerical and Plant:

7.5 hours per day

Operator Service:

| | |
|------------------|-------------|
| Day shift: | 7 hours |
| Sunday shift: | 7 hours |
| Afternoon shift: | 7 hours |
| Evening shift: | 7.5 hours |
| Night shift: | 7 hours |
| Holiday shift: | 7-7.5 hours |

Job Postings

Clerical: Applicants for job postings are considered in the following order:

First, regular & part time; second, occasional; third, casual; fourth, outside hires.

Plant: Craft positions awarded on basis of seniority, ability and qualifications.

Bridging of Service

None

Vacation

- * 1.25 days per month in first year
- * 15 days after one year
- * 20 days after 9 years
- * 25 days after 16 years
- * 30 days after 25 years

ATO

Plant and Operator Service: None

Clerical: Six family days per year

Benefits

Medical (75%); Supplementary health (75%); Dental (85% basic, 50% ortho); Vision care (75%)

Only regular employees covered

Paid Sick Leave

Regular employees only (no provision for casuals), goes in eight stages from:
4-6 months service: 75 days at two-thirds pay to UIC max, after 2 weeks
Second year of service: 10 days full pay, 65 days two-thirds pay.
3-5 years of service: 20 days full pay, 45 days 70%, 10 days two-thirds
6-10 years service: 65 days full pay, 65 days at 70%
11-15 years service: 100 days full pay, 160 days at 70%
16-20 years service: 130 days full pay, 130 days at 70%
21-25 years of service: 195 days full pay, 65 days at 70%
Over 25 years: 260 days full pay



Rod Hiebert

President's Report

TWU offers workers best contract

Telus employees in Alberta and B.C. who are unionized are facing a crucial issue which will be resolved one way or the other next month. You will be deciding by mail-in ballot whether you want to be members of the TWU, or of IBEW Local 348.

I strongly support the TWU in this vote. I have been a member of the TWU for nearly all my working life, and have been an officer of the Union for almost two decades. We are a democratic Canadian Union with a 50-year history of responsible activism, and I believe we are one of the best trade unions in the country. I look forward to seeing the TWU expand to represent all Unionized Telus workers, so that they can all enjoy the gains we have made for our members.

What is really important is that each member in both provinces carefully weigh the choice and mark their ballot accordingly. However you decide, what is most important in the end is that you exercise your democratic right to choose.

If the TWU is successful, as I sincerely hope we are, we look forward to welcoming the thousands of new members from Alberta. And I can pledge to you on behalf of our entire Executive that there will be no second-class members of the TWU. We do not view this process as a take-over, but as a joint undertaking of equal members coming together in a common cause for a stronger Union and a good contract for the betterment of all members.

I think it is important to reiterate that the TWU has negotiated first-rate contracts for our members. We do not want to denigrate the IBEW Collective Agreement, but I believe a comparison of the IBEW and TWU contracts (see page 3) will convince you that overall the TWU Agreement is the superior Agreement. Wage rates are higher, and in particular Clerical wage rates. Of all the North American Communications Unions, the TWU has one of the best contracting out clauses in our contract. The contracting

out provision has worked very well to protect our members' work, and we look forward to extending that protection to the workers in Alberta. We also have a provision against lay-offs due to technological change, another very strong job protection clause we want to extend. Those provisions got us through deregulation without a single lay-off since the mid-1970s. And our pension plan, which is in the Collective Agreement so the company cannot unilaterally change its terms, provides benefits which are 10 to 15 per cent better than those offered by Telus in Alberta.

We intend to establish at least two TWU offices in Alberta, and to provide services that we currently make available to B.C. members: such things as the Grievance/Arbitration procedure, Employee Assistance (our Members and Family Assistance Program), assistance with WCB appeals, and other support and representation as required.

I also want to make it clear that all members, in both prov-

inces, will be guaranteed their seniority.

I want to say that I am pleased and proud to work with a top-notch 16 member full-time Executive Council, elected by delegates to our annual Convention, and there is no doubt in my mind that a representative number of Alberta members will be part of the Executive after our first joint Convention as an integrated union.

Every year we have a 5-day Convention of delegates elected by Locals, which not only elects the Executive and committee members, but also debates and votes on the entire range of Union issues. In years when collective bargaining is to start, we also hold a shorter Convention to review proposed resolutions and adopt a bargaining package.

We look forward to and invite full Alberta participation in that process.

DON'T FORGET TO MARK AND MAIL IN YOUR BALLOT IMMEDIATELY, AS SOON AS YOU RECEIVE IT!

REASONS FOR VOTING TWU

- * We have the better contract, including
 - Highest wages in Canada for telco workers
 - Contracting Out protection
- * We are a Canadian Union, responsive to the members
 - There is no foreign control of the TWU
- * We have a history of working with other Unions for members' benefit
- * Our focus is on telecommunications, not electrical work
- * Grass roots versus top down control
 - Locals elect delegates to convention, the highest governing body.
 - Shop stewards and Local executives are also all democratically elected.
- * We oppose contracting out members' work
- * We believe in fairness for all members
 - While the IBEW was calling for layoffs in B.C., the TWU sees no need for layoffs or downsizing. The contract clause which does not allow layoffs due to tech change has been a powerful tool in our fight against layoffs.
- * Our Pension Plan is a first-rate plan
 - Jointly trusteeed
 - In the Collective Agreement, so can't be changed without Union approval
 - Provides excellent benefits to members on retirement
 - Our pension plan is a founding member of Concert, an Development Corporation funded by pension plans, that invests in worthwhile real estate ventures and builds all-Union quality projects

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