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Information picket held by Extendicare Nurses.

Health Care Under Attack

by Heather Smith, President UNA

Summer months are generally associated with relaxation, reduced activity and enjoyment. The time between active negotiations is generally less hectic for the Local Executive and Labour Relations Staff. But this year, the summer is not a time of relaxation, reduced work or enjoyment; not for UNA Local Executives, not for UNA provincially and certainly not for the individual members of the UNA. On the eve of commencing the bargaining process for the hospital collective agreement, the level of activity is at an all time high. Fear, anger and frustration abound at all levels of the organization.

This NewsBulletin is going to print on the eve of a provincial election. By the time you read this article, Albertans will have determined who will govern the province for the next four years. UNA made a special effort to inform and mobilize the membership to vote. An election brochure and button was sent to each member. A basic reason underlies this effort: health care is under attack.

Workers within the industry must force politicians and the public to examine the importance of health care of our society. All Albertans and Canadians must be willing to defend health care against the current assault or we will all lose. UNA members will lose jobs, clients will lose quality care.



UNA President Heather Smith speaking at rally against health care cuts.

Health care was once called a "sacred trust". In recent months hundreds of jobs have been eliminated. Hundreds of UNA members have experienced displacement. There are members on layoff. Nurses at Central Park Lodges confront a 5% rollback in wages. Federal and provincial politicians have suggested user fees. Has the value of health care changed?

The layoffs are not restricted to hospitals. At a time when community jobs should be expanding, health units and long term care facilities are also eliminating jobs. Two days after layoffs in the High Level Health Unit, the Provincial Government approved funding for a new building. Funding priorities suggest that a new building is more important than staff to provide preventative teaching and in-home care to clients.

It is rare to meet a nurse who has not been affected by service changes and consolidation



Heather Smith (front right), Sheila Pallier (front left) President Local #176 and UNA members participate in CPL info picket.

within facilities, or by service relocations between employers. My position at Grey Nuns Hospital has been eliminated. My active medical unit was transformed into a long-term care unit. The staff ratio of RN's to LPN's was altered from 75/25 to 25/75. UNA's Vice President, Sandie Rentz, has twice experienced position elimination.

From High Level to Taber, almost all practice settings have been affected. That means almost every nurse in the province has been affected in one manner or another. Whether it was your job that was eliminated, whether or not you were bumped, whether or not you moved; you said good-bye to colleagues. I believe every nurse is concerned that initiatives to reduce the 1993 provincial health care budget by \$144 million dollars may result in personal job loss or change.

There is a fundamental flaw in the reorganization that is currently underway. There is no plan. I equate this to starting out on a trip and not knowing your destination. The Department of Health is allowing employers (Board Trustees and administrators) in Calgary and Edmonton to determine the services to be relocated and the number of beds to be closed. Employers throughout the province are striking up new alliances and planning service changes.

Although we are affected by these changes, we have no input into the decisions. The Department of Health intentionally excluded unions from meetings held across the province one year ago. On May 6, the Provincial Treasurer, Jim Dinning, announced a \$127 million cut in health funding (revised to \$144 million). Mr. Dinning said the Department of Health would consult with the stakeholders, including unions. However, the Department of Health canceled a stakeholder meeting scheduled for June 28 and will not confirm participation by the unions when a meeting does occur.

What is UNA doing?

The staff of UNA, Local Executive and the Executive Board are working very hard in this time of uncertainty.

Each layoff requires many hours of work. Locals are battling Total Quality Management Programs, preparing proposals for negotiations (hospitals and health units), in the midst of bargaining (Central Park Lodges, Extendicare, Grande Prairie Care centre and Bethany Care Centre Cochrane) or, in the case of the Victorian Order of Nurses in Edmonton, just entering negotiations. This is in addition to the ongoing

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My Team is Team UNA



by Diane Poynter, SD Rep.

After 16 years with the same employer and four different positions in just over two years, I have personally been exposed to T.Q., or whatever it is called, in my workplace. There is a certain bit of irony in the whole matter of employer-imposed teams. For fourteen years, I worked on the same general surgical unit and with the same people. These coworkers, including nurses, unit clerks and housekeeping had all been together for probably a minimum of ten years and we had created our own team, a sort of 'work family'.

We all worked well together, knew one another's strengths and weaknesses and knew just how to make these characteristics work to the advantages of ourselves and our patients. We had over the years also developed a strong sense of family. We had all at one time or another been to one another's homes. We knew the name of each other's spouses, children, pets. We had seen each other through all personal family life stages (birth, death, marriage, divorce) and had shared parties, vacations and so on. Is this not what those team people are trying to create when they introduce team concept?

Our unit did have one drawback in our employer's eyes, we were an all R.N. unit and we were known as the "union" floor. We insisted on things like overtime payment and that the collective agreement be followed. Strangely

when other nurses or doctors or hospital administrators were coming in for surgery they insisted on being placed in our unit. We were good nurses and gave good care because we complemented one another. We were the best. Due to budget changes and other matters going on in our city, our employer decided to close down one of their three surgical units. On Thursday, March 28, 1991 they gave the dreaded letters to members of good old 3N (a.k.a. 2M). Our unit was closed. Our family was broken up and spread throughout the hospital but like weeds we flourished and spread our union ideals throughout the hospital.

This past spring I received my annual letter of position elimination and bumped onto a new geriatric assessment and rehabilitation unit. The last week in April was spent with the entire staff of this unit being inserviced on the operation of this unit. We learned the various functions of the various disciplines working on the unit. We learned about TEAM WORK. At first I believed in how these disciplines were to work to establish patient care plans. Indeed that was a small part but it means more.

The consultant, Dale Heyland, leading the teamwork portion of the workshop, started by talking about a functioning team and how team members must always support one another, have a common goal, work together and so on. It wasn't until he got to "the team must also have fun together" that I clued in. He implied that outside work as well we must stick

together. There were little exercises about what kind of animal you wanted to be, what our personal mottos are and what we value most. And so now we were into headgames, and expressions like "belief windows," "Metanoia," "Win-win," "emotional bank accounts" were bandied about. The main idea is that, since the team is greater than any of its parts, an individual must not express any individuality if it would be counter productive to the team. Most important everyone on the team would be equal.

That last bit sounds nice eh? But, come on, we all know that he who handles the money is boss. On the last day we were given case studies of three team members who weren't quite pulling their load from a team point of view. What should the team do? Ultimately we were told that it should be up to the team to discuss, discipline, set personal goals and expectations and if, the team felt it was necessary, to fire. A nice union-busting tactic if there ever was one. Have us ratting on one another and fearful of one another. At this point I said, "No, no. That is all covered in our contract. Evaluations are to be done by a superior as is discipline." I did, during the workshop, tell people this is dangerous stuff and would lead to great personal sacrifice with poor working conditions, wage rollbacks and big brother running your personal life.

Funny how a team that naturally evolved is abhorred but one superimposed by management is beautiful.

Read the books "1984" by Orwell and "A Brave New World" by Huxley and fear these big brother mind games. Be true to yourselves. Get active in the "Union Team".



HEALTH CARE UNDER ATTACK

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collective agreement administration, professional responsibility and occupational health and safety concerns.

The Executive Board has been busy developing political action initiatives, communicating with locals and preparing an organization plan to enhance services and respond to the needs of members (including promotion of professional responsibility, occupational health and safety, benefits, pension plans, education, communication strategies and developing a UNA plan for health care).

UNA staff have been exceedingly busy with Labour School preparation; providing education seminars (Total Quality Management workshops and a special presentation on the North American Free Trade Agreement), producing a new video on parliamentary procedure, publication production and organizing election mailouts. Labour Relations staff have been supporting the Locals and members with layoffs, mergers and transfers, grievances, arbitration's, complaints before AARN, appeals to the Workers' Compensation Board, organizing new locals, negotiating contracts, and helping to frame out a plan for health care "reform".

Our computer network has continued to expand, approximately thirty-five locals are now linked to the Edmonton and Calgary offices.

Staff Mix

Many locals are experiencing changes in the staff mix as well as decreases in the number of staff. Employers are unilaterally altering the ratio of RN's or RPN's to LPN's, some are deleting LPN positions in favour of nursing attendants. I know that many UNA members have questioned the ability of employers to eliminate jobs or designate jobs to lesser skilled providers. The simple answer is that employers do have the right to make these changes. There are no rules or guidelines regarding staff mix. Quality of care is not a consideration, the priority is to cut staffing costs.

Sandie Rentz and I are involved in discussions with employers, unions and professional associations in an attempt to investigate staff mix and develop a discussion paper on utilization of nursing resources.

Creating A Plan - What Do You Think The Plan Should Be?

As health care is reshaped, whether by cutting beds or altering service delivery, a lot of questions need to be answered. Priorities must be determined. Financial support and appropriate allocations are essential. In an attempt to frame out a plan which respects the needs of consumers and health care workers, UNA has called together representatives of other unions, the Consumer Association of Canada, and seniors' groups to formulate a plan to shape the future direction of health care.

Internally we have dubbed this group "United for Health Care". An initial meeting was held May 29 in Edmonton and work will continue over the summer. Local presidents will be asked to contribute information, ideas and criticisms to the plan. Any UNA member is welcome to participate. It is important that

nurses from all health care settings assist in the formulation of what an ideal health care system would look like and develop a strategy to achieve it.

I will be involved with other unions in discussion to secure Federal and Provincial dollars to support workforce adjustments and retraining in response to the downsizing in institutions and anticipation of expanding community roles.

There are many more issues and many more activities. If you desire information about any of the items mentioned in this article or any activities listed below, please call the UNA Provincial Office.

- Provincial Nursing Action Plan
- Local Authorities Pension Plan Stakeholder Meetings
- Special Committee on Compensation - WCB
- Staff Abuse Task Force
- UNA/SNAA/AARN Liaison Meetings



UNA members participated in anti-NAFTA rallies on May 15.

UNA Joins Battle Against WCB Cuts

by Dale Fior, Secretary Treasurer

Over the years, UNA members have experienced a number of problems with the Workers' Compensation Board's (WCB) interpretation of its policies. The Board's change in focus from worker compensation to employer assessment rates has forced an increasing number of UNA members to jump a series of hurdles in order to get the compensation they are entitled to for workplace injuries and illnesses.

More than sixty unions have united to form a special committee to respond to challenges and potential threats to the system of workers' compensation in Alberta. As a representative of United Nurses of Alberta, I sit on the twelve-member Steering Committee which oversees the activities of the larger Special Committee. The Committee, which has met a number of times with the WCB, has been effective in stopping some of the more regressive changes to WCB policies.

Documentation of problems or concerns with the WCB is important in order to have any influence on the changes to workers' compensation legislation and policies. UNA members at all Locals must ensure that their Local Executives are aware of any problems that members are having with the WCB. The information that is gathered by the Local Executives will help this committee protect this important support system for nurses who have become ill or been injured as a result of their work.

Four pages of this NewsBulletin are dedicated to the defense of our workers' compensation system. Workers' compensation was instituted as a form of social insurance which protected employers from the threat of lawsuits and protected employees from the loss of income due to workplace injuries and illnesses. The present Board's preoccupation with the employer's assessment rates threatens the integrity of the workers' compensation system. We cannot afford the social and economic consequences of the destruction of this system. As a union and as members of a caring society, we must fight against further attacks on the working people of this province.



The "30/70" Policy

In December, 1991, labour representatives and WCB advocates were shocked to learn that the WCB had unilaterally implemented a change to compensation policy. They were sending injured workers home with only 30% of their pension awards, reserving the remaining 70% as an Earnings Loss Supplement. WCB had decided to implement a "dual wage loss system"!

The Alberta Federation of Labour and the Building Trades responded immediately by calling for a meeting of all unions with WCB Chairperson Vern Millard, VP Ian Sinclair, Manager Des Harte, and Board Member John Booth.

After pointed and heated discussion, Board officers agreed to "go back and think about it". ... When they returned to the next meeting on January 15, 1992, it was to announce their decision to **completely** scrap the "30/70" policy, to return to the status quo, and to recompense immediately all workers who had been "short-changed".

Labour unions had won a decisive victory, worth millions of dollars annually for our members (annual WCB pensions are worth \$500 million). However, with that battle won, the war to prevent drastic erosion of the WCB had begun. Over the next fifteen months labour's Special WCB Committee was reconvened on five separate occasions to respond to changes, especially proposals to implement "dual wage loss".

The latest challenge has come with the complete reorganization and "downsizing" put into effect by new WCB President John Cowell. The Steering Committee has already met on one occasion with Cowell and Board officers (April 2, 1993), but it is apparent that our concerns about the impact of these changes have not been satisfied.

For his part, Cowell has promised a series of Roundtable discussions involving the Committee.

The larger task of defending the WCB will require a strong committee. If you or your union have not been participating, consider joining. Call Dale Fior at 425-1025 (1-800-252-9394).

Major changes threaten future of WCB

Since January 1, 1993, significant reorganization has occurred at the Workers' Compensation Board. It has been spearheaded by an important shift in the Workers' Compensation mission statement itself. The former goal of the WCB was to **"serve workers and employers by reducing injuries, compensating workers while disabled, and rehabilitating workers to re-employment or self-sufficiency"**. However this mission statement has now been amended so that the Board will now focus on **"balancing the fair and reasonable needs of injured workers with adequate funding from employers based on realistic employer assessment rates and careful control of WCB costs"**.

This new approach, announced in a press release by newly-appointed President and C.E.O., Dr. John Cowell on January 20, 1993, represents the first time that the Board has publicly admitted that the goal of justly compensating injured workers will now be compromised by a concern that employers not be asked to pay increased assessment costs. (It is worth noting that Alberta employers now pay the lowest assessments in Canada).

Despite the outright shift in the Workers' Compensation Board's focus, Dr. Cowell has promised representatives from labour that no changes in policy would be made before consulting with them.

However, even if policy has not officially changed, we know that the methods of administering it has - substantially. In a March 1993 Workers' Compensation Board publication, Dr. Cowell is quoted as saying **"...we are going to tighten up interpretation of existing policies by front line staff. We are going to take a hard look at how we handle benefits, particularly, Vocational Rehabilitation benefits."**

Since January 1993, the WCB has laid off approximately 130 staff, at least 40 of whom were front line staff. At the same time, the Board has eliminated the Vocational Rehabilitation Department and folded it into the Case Management Department. Case Managers will be asked to take on the workload and responsibilities of Employment Counsellors and Employment Counsellors will be asked to take on the duties of Case Managers.

In addition, most Board employees with significant vocational rehabilitation experience are being assigned to the section of the Claims Department which deals with workers with remaining disability. The section of the Claims Department which will now deal with workers with no assessable remaining disability (i.e. those worker who remain limited in their ability to work but have not had the Workers' Compensation Board assess a permanent pension on their behalf) is now staffed primarily by people with only case management experience. This arrangement raises the possibility that Vocational Rehabilitation will only be offered to those people with "assessable disabilities".

Another facet involves a new emphasis on employer services, in particular, an enhancement of the PILR (Post Injury Loss Reduction) Department, which, in the words of Board officials, is designed to "keep the employer in touch with the injured worker". The theory is that the Board will encourage employers to take injured workers back. However, this is the same department which also teaches employers how to manage claims, cut costs, and appeal claims if necessary. This, without first putting into place a clear mechanism to guard against possible abuses of this program by employers, the program is a potential danger to injured workers.

Although these changes may not be as blatant as an outright change to the legislation to cut workers' benefits, they may be just as effective. Workers and unions across the province must organize and let both this government and the Workers' Compensation Board know that they are not willing to accept this new attack on Alberta's workforce.

WCB: Justice for workers with injuries!

Editorial

Workers' Compensation... the next victim of Free Trade?

"Re-organization of the WCB?". Bureaucratic double-talk. What it really means is "cutback", in service and in benefits.

We can't let this happen. Unfortunately, even if we win this battle, the "war" is far from over.

In the final analysis, what we are fighting is *harmonization* of all of our services and programs with those in the States (for now!).

You see, it doesn't matter that Alberta's assessment rates are the lowest in the country. According to Free Traders, they're still too high!

The fact is that our system is still a plush "cadillac" system, when compared to Workers' Compensation in the U.S.A. That's why Workers' Compensation across Canada is under attack!

As business leaders such as Tom D'Aquino of B.C.N.I. or politicians such as Klein will tell us, the economic environment created by Free Trade means that we have to lower labour costs to the lowest common denominator, which is the southeast U.S.A. because, under Free Trade, that's who we have to compete against! (Maddening, isn't it, that the same business lobby that initially told us that we would have nothing to fear from Free Trade is now lecturing us about our "duty" as workers to accept lower pay and working standards as the price of "competitiveness").

Almost all of Canada's social services and programs are superior, and they are all on the table - or have been destroyed - under Free Trade.

Remember Unemployment Insurance? First there was Bill C-21 (1991) which cut benefits in half, reduced federal funding to zero and made the UI Fund pay for training.

Then, this year, Bill C-113 was brought in as part of Don Mazankowski's "Restraint Bill", which cut benefits further, and completely excludes benefits to fired workers or "voluntary quits". Canadian UI has been cut almost to the American level.

Does the same thing have to happen to WCB? You bet!

It won't be Dr. Cowell, or the Industry Task Force which will destroy our system. It will be the relentless pressure created by Free Trade.

Now they want us to believe that NAFTA will be good for us. Have you seen how Workers' Compensation works in Mexico?



Injured workers speak out *Justice for workers with injuries*

If we examine the way that claimants are treated with respect to their work-related injuries, we could very well conclude that WCB is prejudiced against claimants. The fact is that claimants, who are put through so much, get far less than they should for a work-related injury sustained while in the employment of the employer. Things such as 'Deeming' and 'earnings loss supplements', and claims that are accepted then reversed when a new case manager is assigned to the claim, leaving the worker to sort out the mess, impose relentless strain on the claimants concerned.

The deeming process as some vocational rehabilitation counsellors explain it, seems quite fair; however, the way it is implemented and the end result are seldom as first anticipated. For example, an injured worker may enter into training on the job at \$9.00 per hour. Earnings at the time of accident were \$16.00 per hour. After he starts the new job, however, WCB "deems" him to have the potential to make \$15.00 per hour, *therefore no earnings loss supplement is payable* to the claimant. He is deemed at a wage that is *nonexistent*, one that he is definitely not receiving.

If he disagrees, he is told to go to appeal. If successful, this little deed that the vocational rehabilitation counsellor did is corrected and the proper course of deeming takes place. If not, he is out of lunch! The point is, that all of this should never have taken place; it only puts an extra strain on the claimant. The WCB is well aware of this, but does not take steps to stop this practice, as the Board is the beneficiary if the claimant does not launch a proper appeal.

The practice of Medical Documentary

Reviews also poses major problems to claimants. Medical practitioners cannot have a true grasp of the injured worker's real situation. Documentaries are based on what is on file - what everyone has put into the file - and there are often derogatory remarks by case/managers and vocational rehabilitation counsellors which give a very negative view of the worker and his problems. The medical department is there for the benefit of the Board, as it is this same department which overrules the opinions of specialists so the board can pay less or nothing on claims. This process of documentary medical review has to stop, as it is of no benefit to the claimant, whom this Board claims is its number one priority.

The third problem is the overturning of a claim which occurs when a new case manager is assigned to a claim. There have been cases where a claim was accepted for two years, and a new claims manager has suddenly disallowed it. Once a claim is accepted, nobody should have the right to undo it. The turmoil of going through this system is nothing less than a nightmare, and the claimant who usually knows nothing of the pitfalls can go through pure hell. This Board has a responsibility to claimants to uphold the quality of life at where it was before the accident ever took place. Claimants have the right to fair treatment and respect as human beings, not to be treated as "low life", and told that they really don't have an injury anyway. We must always remember that all claimants who end up in the WCB system, were all working and contributing to society before the injury. They do not owe any debt to their employers, the Board, or to society.

Unions worry about 'dual wage loss'

Last Spring, the Workers' Compensation Board presented both labour and employer groups with a package of proposed legislative changes to the Alberta Workers' Compensation Act. These changes were sweeping in their nature, representing the most substantial change to the Workers' Compensation Board since its inception in 1918. The most radical change was a proposal to implement a dual wage loss system to replace the traditional pensions presently received by permanently injured workers.

As a result of the united opposition by labour, the Board backed off on these proposals. However, the legislation has only been moved to the back burner. It is important that we understand the significance of the proposed changes as the issue may well be reactivated following the provincial election.

The Present System

Currently, a worker who suffers a permanent disability as a result of a work-related injury will receive a permanent pension from the Workers' Compensation Board. Board doctors examine the worker and assess the degree of disability that is suffered by the worker. This disability is measured in terms of a percentage disability. The percentage is then multiplied by the amount of the workers' pre-accident income in order to determine the amount of monthly pension. (i.e. a worker who made \$1000/month prior to the injury who is assessed at 15% disabled will receive \$150/month).

In addition, the Workers' Compensation Board currently has a policy of providing an Earnings Loss Supplement to injured worker who lose their jobs as a result of the injury. (i.e. the worker who made \$1000/month will receive a \$150 pension, the Workers' Compensation Board will determine that the worker is still able to make \$500/month despite the injury, so the Board will pay an additional \$350/month as an Earnings Loss Supplement to bring them up to the \$1000 pre-accident rate).

Labour generally prefers the current situation despite its significant problems. For instance, the Earnings Loss Supplement is discretionary and under the current legislation may not be a requirement. Indeed, during the course of last spring's legislative discussions, labour representatives were advised by the Board that the current situation (pension plus Earnings Loss Supplement) is too costly and may have to be eliminated.

In most cases the worker is deemed capable of making a certain amount of money in a job that he has never been offered or which does not even exist.

Without the addition on an Earnings Loss Supplement, the pension system is highly problematic. Often a worker will lose her employment because of the injury and because of the residual disability, she is unable to find comparable work. The pension system on its own is not equipped to address this problem. Pensions rarely reflect the actual earnings lost as a result of injury. From the employers perspective, the argument is often made that the pension system provides a "windfall" to the permanently injured worker who is able to return to work without a loss of earnings (i.e. a computer specialist who permanently injures his foot might receive a 10% pension in addition to the normal salary he receives while still at work).

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Occupational Health & Safety on the Block

In early March, Alberta trade unionists monitoring the rapid changes to the WCB found that they were facing a second shock.

All of these changes to the WCB had been occurring at the same time as Labour Minister Stockwell Day was making plans to virtually eliminate the funding and the programs of the Occupational Health and Safety Division, and to fold what is left directly into the Department of Labour. According to an internal document, Department of Labour, Business Plan, remaining services would then be supplied on a fee-for-service basis.

If this all is allowed to happen, Alberta will be in the position of having the second lowest WCB assessment rates in Canada, at the same time as it provides the fewest occupational health and safety programs.

The AFL was initially alerted to these changes when a copy of a "secret" Departmental document entitled "Business Plan for Alberta Labour to 1977" was leaked to its officers in early March 1993. This Paper begins by referring to declining government resources, specifically a structural deficit resulting from six years during which the shortfall between revenue and expenditures has been in excess of \$2 billion (out of a \$10 billion budget) per annum.

Put simply, orders have come from Premier Klein and his Cabinet to "save money whenever possible", and **Worker Health and Safety has been targeted** as an area where major savings may be made. Specific areas include:

- **Merging of the Division of Occupational Health and Safety into the Department of Labour**, all "in a bag" with the Safety Standards division. The Public Services Employee Relations Board, Professions and occupations, and various other functions. Curiously, it will begin with an amalgamation of OH&S with PSERB.
- **Transferring of all "non-essential services" and educational services to "professional" associations and to other Departments.** Certain functions and services will be phased out completely.
- **Increasing revenues** by charging on a fee-for-service basis for such services as: building standards, employment standard, fire-training, safety standards for regulations. The eventual goal, according to the document is "full cost recovery" for all services formerly provided by the OH&S Division as well as other agencies related to worker or public health and safety.

Labour Minister Stockwell Day has already begun to implement these changes. His first step was to fire Division Head, Hugh Walker, and to leave his position vacant.

Clearly organized labour has no choice but to fight this latest government assault on our rights to safety and health. The Alberta Federation of Labour has already called for a meeting with Day and his cohorts and will be organizing further action.

DUAL WAGE LOSS

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In response to the ongoing concerns set out above, several Canadian provinces have adopted Dual Wage Loss. In theory the system could address the concerns of "both sides". A dual wage loss system eliminates pensions altogether. It compensates a worker for the amount of earnings actually lost by the worker as a result of the accident. A worker who has a permanent disability but is able to return to work will receive nothing.

However, as with most programs that work in theory, the experience of injured workers in dual wage loss provinces has been a very negative one. This is because the Workers' Compensation Board does not simply compensate a worker for earnings lost. Instead, the Board engages in an extremely discretionary process whereby they decide how much money the worker **should** have lost. More specifically, the Workers' Compensation Board utilizes a deeming provision wherein they estimate that the worker **could** have a job which pays him 'x' amount and based on this calculation, the Workers' Compensation Board only pays the difference between the hypothetical earnings and the pre-accident earnings, if there is one. (this is not unlike the process used with the



Success for the Employer Lobby

We expect business to lobby for lower WCB assessment rates. It was no surprise, therefore when the Alberta Federation of Labour received a copy last November of a pamphlet that had been widely circulated by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (Alberta) urging the employers to:

"Telephone or fax the WCB, your MLA, and the Honourable Peter Trynchy, Minister Responsible for WCB. Tell them that the WCB must join the real world along with small and medium-sized employers who foot the bill for the WCB".

Entitled "CFIB Seeking Your Help in Fighting Rate Increases to Employers Proposed by the Alberta Workers' Compensation Board, the pamphlet gives "two main reasons why any rate increase must be fought:

1. **WCB must control spending before more rate increases occur.**

"WCB total spending continues to increase in spite of promises and expensive measures to bring their costs under control. The WCB, like so many public agencies, increases its spending year after year with no meaningful effort to reduce costs, because they can simply pass the cost increases along to business. WCB must demonstrate real restraint before they go to the employers' pockets for more revenue."

2. **WCB rates increases would do serious economic damage.**

"This proposed increase, which would be excessive at the best of times, comes at a time when the Alberta economy continues to be mired in a lengthy recession. Many small employers are struggling to survive serious cash flow problems, and the impact of a WCB rate increase at this time would be severe."

To the CFIB's credit, its pamphlet includes the caution that "this is not an attack on the injured worker, but on a bloated and rich bureaucracy ...".

However construed, they have been successful. The CFIB, the Chambers of Commerce, the Canadian Manufacturing Association, and numerous employer associations have exhibited much more solidarity and determination than has labour.

They certainly won the debate on assessment rates. Instead of raising rates to an average of \$2.20/\$100 payroll, with an addition \$.25/\$100 surcharge to reduce the \$500 million unfunded liability, the WCB increased rates to only \$2.03/\$100, far below the required level. Alberta now has the lowest assessment rate in Canada. Not bad for the lobby - considering that our Province has, at the same time, the most anemic health and safety programs in Canada!

As well, the 'bloated bureaucracy' was the first target pursued by Dr. John Cowell when he took over the Board this year. We have yet to determine how badly benefit levels and services will be affected.



Join the campaign to defend workers' compensation

When we organize, we win!

This is the most basic lesson the trade union movement has taught throughout history.

It's how we won our Workers' Compensation system seventy-five years ago. And, it's how we won the right to form unions and bargain collectively!

The challenge is once again before us! Can we organize a solid front of unions and workers to preserve the Workers' Compensation system we now have, and to fight for much needed improvements?

We have already made a start with the Special Committee on Workers' Compensation formed 1 1/2 years ago to stop the Board from implementing their "30/70" plan.

However, it is just a start. If we are going to protect Workers' Compensation from the fate of the UIC, we are going to need the participation of **all** unions and workers' organizations.

The Campaign Plan

At its April 22, 1993 meeting, the Steering committee formulated a campaign plan which included the following commitments:



1) *improved communication to raise awareness about developments and potential threats, and to provide basic information about Workers' Compensation. The Alberta Federation of Labour would coordinate this activity.*

2) *increase publicity concerning WCB developments and our Committee.*

This means distributing literature and making oral presentations at all major events; e.g. labour conventions and conferences, schools, Party meetings, etc.

3) *regular meetings with the WCB to maintain our presence and to counter the employer lobby.*

We have asked for an initial Town Hall meeting with Dr. Cowell and all of the unions in the Special Committee. Thereafter, the Steering Committee will meet regularly, unless a meeting of the whole is necessary. Cowell himself is initiating a series of Roundtable discussions.

For starters, please distribute these articles. Ask for additional copies, then, seriously consider joining the campaign. Call Dale Fior, UNA's representative on the Steering Committee. You owe it to your colleagues and to future generations of workers.

New Staff



Kris Farkas, an Edmonton labour lawyer, has joined UNA's staff as a temporary Labour Relations Officer.



Sharon Henderson is the new receptionist in the Edmonton Office.



Shelley Hodgson will now permanently occupy the position of Labour Relations Secretary for UNA. Shelley takes over from Melony Stewart who left UNA last month.

Local Authorities Pension Plan Board Established

by Keith Malkin, SCD Rep

One of the last Bills to pass through the legislative assembly during the spring sitting established a Board of Trustees for the Local Authorities Pension Plan. The Board will consist of nominees from the following groups: employees, employers and the Crown. UNA's nominee is Valerie Holowach from North Central District.

Responsibilities of the Board include:

- 1) Administration of the LAPP,
- 2) Investment and management of the LAPP fund's assets,
- 3) Contributions, including the initial contribution rates payable until July 31, 1994,
- 4) Participation requirements,
- 5) Benefits, including suspension of pensions and cost of living adjustments to pensions,
- 6) The allowing and the charging of interest,
- 7) Reciprocal agreements,
- 8) Beneficiaries, and
- 9) Basis for actuarial adjustments.

We expect that employees will be required to increase their contributions by mid-June to pay for the unfunded liability of the pension plan. UNA still maintains that the UNFUNDED LIABILITY IS THE COMPLETE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT. We have paid once! Why do we have to pay again?

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Keith Malkin at 248-8805.



Executive Board Meeting Summary

May 4, 5, 6, 7, 1993

by Sandie Rentz, Vice-President

Old Business

1. The Executive Board agreed to send one member of the Board to the National Federation of Nurses Union's Biennium in Winnipeg on June 9, 10, and 11, 1993. Keith Malkin, SCD Rep, will attend.
2. Heather Smith gave a report on the Manitoba Nurses' Union Annual Meeting, and Dale Fior gave a report on her visit to the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses Annual Meeting. The problems of lay-offs and government cut-backs to health care funding is evident everywhere, and all of our sister unions are experiencing increased workloads as a result.

Finance Committee Report

1. The sum of \$2,500.00 was approved to provide funding for education for new Local Executives.
2. A motion was passed at the last Executive Board Meeting to donate \$1,000.00 to a film project "Caring for a Nation". The appropriate transfer of funds was approved at this Board Meeting.
3. The sum of \$13,000.00 was transferred to the Capital Acquisition Fund. This will provide funding for additional computers and to purchase "Ethernet" which is a technology designed to move information at approximately 4 times the speed of our current network system.
4. The Executive Board met for an additional day prior to the May Board Meeting to discuss Board strategies related to the Calder/Bateman Membership Services Report. Appropriate funding transfers were necessary to fund this additional day.
5. The Executive Board approved in one day **PRESIDENTS' MEETING** to be held on **June 15th in Calgary** in conjunction with the Labour School. More information about this event will be communicated to the Locals. The sum of \$41,000.00 was transferred for this meeting.
6. Directives "Finance-Contingency Fund" was amended to include the following:
"The Contingency Fund may be used to fund special U.N.A. projects that are urgent in nature and which are not funded from the yearly operating budget. Authorization for the use of the Contingency Fund must be obtained from the Executive Board."

Legislative Committee Report

1. The Legislative Committee will be proposing amendments to Article 3.2 of U.N.A.'s Constitution to clarify membership status for individuals performing out-of-scope duties.
2. The Legislative Committee developed a new procedure "HOW TO DEAL WITH CONCERNS RELATING TO DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES". This was endorsed by the Board and will appear in the changes to the Policy Manual under the Directives Section. Please contact your District Representative if you have questions regarding this process.
3. An amendment was made to "Funding 1-Attendance at Arbitrations." A new category was added entitled "Attendance at Arbitration Appeals and Grievance Appeals" and the following wording was passed:
"Provincial fundings is not available for attendance at Arbitration and Grievance Appeal Hearings heard by the Arbitration Appeal Board. If the Appeal Board requires the appellant to travel, the cost of the appellant's travel will be paid by U.N.A. (the appellant will be required to travel by the most cost-effective manner)."
The wording is not an amendment to U.N.A.'s past practice, but it was felt that this wording was necessary in order to avoid confusion.

Membership Services Committee Report

1. The policy "Meetings 1.3-Responsibilities of Voting Delegates" was amended to clarify that short absences from a delegate meeting will result in a reduction in salary replacement, unless the absence is approved by the Credentials Chairperson. If a provincially funded member is unable to attend an entire meeting, she will be paid salary replacement if she sends a letter indicating the reasons for such an absence to the Secretary/Treasurer. This policy will be included in the U.N.A. NewsBulletin prior to the Hospital Demand Setting Meeting. It will also be included in the memo to the Local Presidents prior to the Hospital Demand Setting Meeting.
2. The Membership Services Committee introduced a "draft" of a Discount Package for U.N.A. Members". It was agreed that companies which are unionized will be identified in the package.

Occupational Health and Safety Committee Report

1. The Occupational Health & Safety Committee will have an information and display table at the 1993 Annual General Meeting.
2. The Occupational Health and Safety Committee will invite a representative from the Department of Labour to the August Executive Board Meeting to discuss issues relating to occupational health & safety. At this Board Meeting, it was discovered that the Department of Occupational Health & Safety is now under the auspices of the Department of Labour.
3. U.N.A. will continue to participate and support the "Forum for Action on Occupational Health & Safety".

Education Committee Report

1. District Representatives will contact their Locals to remind them that funding is available for meeting room expenses and coffee for Mini-workshops.
2. The sum of \$2,500.00 was allocated to provide education on "How to Run a Local," for new Local Executive.
3. All Provincially and Locally funded participants in the June Labour School will be provided meals and accommodations.

Pension Committee Report

1. United Nurses of Alberta will send Val Holowach's name to the Alberta Treasurer as U.N.A.'s nominee to the Local Authorities Pension Plan Board of Trustees.
2. The Finance Committee will investigate the cost implications for U.N.A. if a policy was passed that required U.N.A. to pay the employer portion of the pensionable service which members lose as a result of having to take L.O.A. to perform union duties. This report will be presented at the August Board Meeting.

Steering Committee Report

1. The Steering Committee and the Political Action Ad-hoc Committee discussed various strategic options for the development of a "Health Care Model". United Nurses of Alberta will organize a broad-based health care coalition with other unions and social activists to discuss a preferred future for health care in Alberta. We will target a plenary session for May, with a date of June 5, for development for presentation to the Presidents' Meeting on June 15, 1993.
2. The Director of Labour Relations and Sheila Greckol, U.N.A.'s legal counsel will develop language and process for a Position Statement on "Employer Mergers and Seniority" for presentation to the Legislative Committee at their August "Constitutional Review" meeting.
3. United Nurses of Alberta adopted a Position Statement on "Quality of Worklife/Team Concept Programs". This Position Statement

will be included in the Policies and Procedures Manual, and will be published in a future Newsbulletin along with the background information related to Q.W.L. programs.

4. The Director of Labour Relations and the Vice-President will arrange a meeting with the Chairs of the A.A.R.N. "Task Force on Direct Access to Nursing Services" to have a discussion about U.N.A.'s concerns regarding this initiative. They will report to Senior Staff for further direction following this meeting.

Political Action Committee Report

1. A provincial election pamphlet will be produced and distributed to all U.N.A. members at the call of the provincial election or on May 25, 1993, whichever date is later. This project will be funded from the Contingency Fund.
2. Election posters and buttons will be distributed to all U.N.A. Locals. This project will also be funded from the Contingency Fund.
3. Weekly messages and posters regarding election issues will be E-mailed and sent out in the Friday Mailouts.
4. Following development of U.N.A.'s Health Care Model", pamphlets will be produced outlining our positions regarding health care and the problems with the current federal government's health care policies. This pamphlet will be sent to the Locals or distributed at the Hospitals' Demand Setting Meeting (distribution will depend on the federal election call).
5. The "NO" buttons will be made available at the Presidents' Meeting for distribution at the Locals.
6. At the Presidents' Meeting a plan will be developed outlining strategies for promoting U.N.A. to the rank and file membership, and to increase involvement in the union.
7. All Districts at their next meetings, will be asked to discuss strategies for electing union supporters to the A.A.R.N. Executive Council, and for increasing rank and file participation in the A.A.R.N. election process.

Publications and Communications Committee Report

In 1994, U.N.A. will publish 10 News-Bulletins per year. Starting in August of 1993, the NewsBulletin will be published in "magazine format".

Manitoba Nurses Reach Agreement

Nurses in Manitoba concluded 45 days of negotiations earlier today with a 24 month agreement which affords them protection from the government's Bill 22 and extends seniority and recall rights in the event of lay-off. Pay equity has also been achieved for all nurses.

The agreement calls for a 2% salary reduction effective June 15, 1993, with the 2% being restored Dec. 31/94. In exchange for this reduction, the nurses are completely exempt from Bill 22. Bill 22 allows the government to implement up to 15 days off without pay in each of the two consecutive years (15 days = 6% reduction).

MNU President Vera Chernicki said that although nurses may not be happy with the reduction, it was the best possible deal given the current circumstances.

"Bill 22 gives the government unprecedented powers. Given the fact, we have achieved the most protection for our members at the least cost. Bargaining under these circumstances is distasteful at best, but this agreement gives us protection against the worst-case scenario, that is, application of the legislation to the full extent".

Chernicki said, "Should our members ratify this pact in the next two weeks, we will direct all of our energies towards protecting our members from the Americanization of health care delivery".

The Bargaining Committee is recommending the tentative settlement to members. Results of ratification votes will be announced on June 8, 1993.

BARGAINING UPDATE

Killam Bargaining
First Contract Negotiations

by Kris Farkas, LRO

The General Hospital Sisters of St. Joseph and Killam General and Auxiliary Hospital and Nursing Home District #104 was certified as UNA Local #192 on April 20, 1993. UNA sent the employer a notice to commence collective bargaining on May 13. Local Executive members Carol Gillette, Brenda Granger and Loretta Oliver have agreed to form the negotiating committee for the nurses. The employer has notified the union that the AHA will represent the employer at the bargaining table. A date for the exchange of proposals has been tentatively set for June 14th.

Extendicare Nurses
Picket
Contract Talks Stall

by Richard West, LRO

Despite a lively information picket by Extendicare nurses, contract talks for UNA's five Extendicare Locals have reached an impasse over job security. Negotiations stalled when Extendicare continued to insist on weakening the layoff language of the collective agreement. The UNA Negotiating Committee views the employer's proposed language as a serious threat to the job security of its nurses. The parties have applied to the Department of Mediation Services (Alberta Department of Labour) for assistance prior to determining further job action.

VON

by Lesley Haag, LRO

The Edmonton Victorian Order of Nurses, UNA Local #61, will commence negotiations for a new contract on June 18, 1993. The current collective agreement in place at the VON expired on March 31, 1993. Local #61 represents 14 nurses who work in various community programs including: People In Crisis, Adult Day Health Care, Foot Care and Home Visiting. Further bargaining dates have been set for late June.



On May 6, Extendicare nurses demonstrated against their employer's proposed rollbacks to the layoff and job security provisions of the collective agreement.

Many of the following UNA-produced documents are now available upon request. Please contact Marian Bowman at Provincial Office for copies.

TITLE	DATE
A Union for Nurses Pamphlet	October 1992
Brief on Collective Bargaining	February 1992
Collective Agreements	Current
Education Program	1993
Employers' Shared Governance Program	August 1992
Grievance Bulletin	Most recent edition
History document	1993
Interpretation Manual	February 1993
Maximize Your Maternity Benefits Pamphlet	November 1992
Media Manual	February 1992
News Bulletin	Most recent edition
OH&S Notes	Most recent edition
Policy and Procedure	February 1993
Quality of Work Life/Team Concept Programs	February 1993
Roles and Responsibilities documents	February 1993
Strike Manual	1992
UNA Constitution	1992-1993
Who's Who in Health Care (UNA)/Health Care in Canada (CUPE)	February 1993



Penny Turner (on right), a University of Lethbridge nursing student, recently completed her one-month practicum with UNA.

Executive Board
and Staff

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