

Advocate

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE B.C. FEDERATION OF RETIRED UNION MEMBERS

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PENSIONS

A challenge for young and old

THE CANADIAN LABOUR movement has launched an aggressive campaign to win “retirement with dignity” for all Canadians.

“There is a crisis in our pension system,” said Carolyn Rice, secretary-treasurer of the New Westminster and District Labour Council, as she opened a public forum on pensions Nov. 5.

As a result of the economic downturn, many have lost a large portion of their retirement savings and pensions are threatened, she said.

“Many, including those with good paying jobs, are wondering when or if they can retire,” she said.

Joel Harden, Canadian Labour Congress pension specialist, says the pension debate has been dominated by banks and life insurance companies.

“We need to pressure finance ministers to meet the priorities of people, not the wishes of banks,” he said.

Harden noted that governments have spent \$13 trillion – ten times the annual output of the entire Canadian economy – to bail out financial institutions which continue to collect disproportionately high management fees on workers’ RRSPs.

For workers nearing retirement, it’s a grim time.

“One third of workers have no retirement savings. Household debt is higher than it’s ever been,” said Harden. A majority of workers have no pension plan.

The labour movement’s pension proposals – based on the values of security, adequacy and fairness – would be phased in over seven years. While the plan addresses the retirement needs of everyone, the full benefit of the pension proposals would mainly be felt by workers who are under 45 today.

The plan would:

- Double CPP benefits, financed by gradually increasing worker and employer contributions from the current 4.95 percent of salary to 7.8 percent over seven years. This will benefit younger workers the most, and help ensure the next generation of workers can count on a dignified retirement.
- Immediately increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement by 15 percent to help lift seniors out of poverty. This would cost less than 3 percent of what is currently spent on tax subsidies for RRSPs and would immediately benefit the poorest seniors.
- Create a national pension insur-

See “Better pensions...,” Page 3



The kids are all right!

But we’re not sure whether BC FORUM member Wendi Lawrence should be teaching them to toss water balloons, even at the Labour Day Picnic. These two youngsters were the last ones to keep their balloon intact in the annual competition.

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A dispute that concerns us all

By Alice West, President, BC FORUM

THE SITUATION AT HandyDART is growing more and more disturbing. The drivers and other workers who went on strike Nov. 2 have spared no effort to try to get the service back on the road. They have even offered binding arbitration. The American company that runs the service for TransLink flatly refuses.

As a result, throughout the Lower Mainland, many seniors and people with disabilities are trapped in their homes, unable to go out for food or medical appointments.

I believe they are victims of a heartless government-inspired decision to contract out HandyDART to an American corporation.

Several years ago, I was one of those who needed help to get around. I relied on HandyDART to get to physiotherapy three times a week.

The drivers were unfailingly courteous and thoughtful. They picked me up at my door, and stayed with me until I was safely in the physiotherapist's office. I am very grateful for what they did for me, and all that they continue to do to improve the lives of so many others.

These conscientious drivers are also the victims of a government philosophy that values private profit more than service to people.

The American contractor, MVT Bus, is trying to take away the drivers' pension plan, cut hours, and reduce benefits by putting a cap on what they'll pay if premiums go up.

Small wonder ten months of negotiations have gone nowhere. And instead of negotiating, the company wasted a whole week by forcing a pointless 'final offer vote' on the same pension-busting proposals that caused its employees to strike. It was rejected by 94 percent.

For MVT, boosting profits for shareholders is more important than service to people, more important than allowing long-term workers to keep their pension plan so they can retire in dignity.

The company's chief negotiator has flown back to California, and refused any further talks unless the workers give up their pension plan.

I hope the company comes to its senses and returns to the bargaining table.

TransLink cannot duck responsibility. They are responsible for providing this public service. They should have a firm chat with this company, and tell them to get the service back in operation.

You can help by calling TransLink at 604 453-4611, or by sending an e-mail to board@translink.ca, or martin.lay@translink.ca. If you live in the Lower Mainland, you can also help by asking your mayor for assistance in getting this service back in operation.

Most importantly, the pattern of contracting out public services for private profit is a direction that has come from the provincial government. It's time for the government to change direction. Caring for people is more important than fattening the bottom line of a foreign corporation.



Alice West, President, BC FORUM



Joel Harden of the Canadian Labour Congress outlined labour's campaign for retirement with dignity at a public forum in New Westminster Nov. 5. The proposal, phased in over seven years, would double CPP payments, immediately increase the guaranteed income supplement for low-income seniors, and introduce a national insurance plan to protect private sector pensions.

Better, more secure pensions the goal of labour campaign

Continued from Page 1

ance fund – similar to the insurance that protect deposits in banks or credit unions – to ensure workers' defined benefit pensions are not at risk if their employer goes under or a speculative bubble bursts.

"No bank, bond holder or special interest should be able to take your pension away from you," said Harden.

Jim Sinclair, President of the B.C. Federation of Labour, told the crowd that 70 percent of B.C. private sector workers have no pension plan, the worst level in the country.

He also noted that today's workers change jobs frequently – they're not with a company long enough to build up a pension, and frequently have no belief the company would

be there for them in 30 years.

"Workers today need portability, and that's good for the economy as a whole," he said.

"No bank, bond holder or special interest should be able to take your pension away from you."

– Joel Harden

The CLC is organizing lobbies of Members of Parliament to urge them to support these pension reforms, and Sinclair says the labour movement will make pensions an issue in the next election.

"It'll be a long fight, but it's worth fighting," he said.

Campbell's HST will be yet another burden for retired workers and their families

Members attending the BC FORUM members annual general meeting, held in Burnaby in September, voted to oppose the introduction of a Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) in British Columbia, and to put pressure on governments to protect the dignity and economic security of retired workers and their families.

"Many retired workers are struggling to make ends meet," said the resolution.

"On top of inadequate pensions, many have lost thousands of dollars in the world-wide financial turmoil caused by government deregulation and the unchecked greed of corporate executives who grasped for private rewards at the expense of the public interest.

"Premier Gordon Campbell – already the poster boy for deregulation privatization, and shifting public funds to the bottom line of large corporations – has announced a further massive shift of taxation away from corporations to individuals and families.

"He has announced a Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) will take effect July 2010. This will shift \$1.9 billion in taxes from corporations to consumers. Mr. Campbell describes this as "revenue neutral."

"For retired workers, it is far from neutral. "

It will take even more money out of their pockets.

"It will increase the cost of services and products including such basics as home heating fuel, telephone service, household repairs, cable TV, hair cuts, flights to visit our grandchildren, and non-prescription drugs."

BC FORUM Board of Directors pays tribute to the inspiration provided by Joy Langan

ALICE WEST, President of BC FORUM, opened this year's annual general meeting with a heartfelt tribute to Joy Langan, who died in July.

"As our President, Joy was our inspiration. No one has given more of her heart and soul to advancing the cause of working people," said West.

"She was always on the front line. And she continued her tireless advocacy for people, even after retirement, even when she was very ill, as President of BC FORUM.

"As we meet here today to plan for the future, we cherish her memory. We cherish her spirit and commitment.

"And we ask ourselves: 'What would Joy want us to do?'

"Your Board of Directors is clear on the answer. She would want us to continue her work – to spare no effort to make BC FORUM a stronger, more effective advocate for older workers, retired workers and our families.

"That's the best way we can honour Joy's memory. And with your support and participation, that's what we will do," said West.



Opportunity and challenge

The massive socio-economic shift now taking place is a serious challenge to the labour movement, said the Board of Directors in its report to the membership.

Thousands of workers in the "baby boomer" generation are nearing retirement. Strong union sectors of the economy – both public and private – have been hammered by layoffs and downsizing.

In short, even as key activists are retiring, the changes in the workplace mean there are fewer young people in many unions.

The challenge and opportunity that faces our movement is to build solidarity across generations.

We must involve and mentor young activists, while retaining the benefits of the knowledge and ex-

"When you look at the actions of the Campbell and Harper governments, and their impact on seniors, it is clear that the need for solidarity across generations has never been greater," said the report presented by BC FORUM President Alice West.

perience of activists who are retiring.

It is for this reason that the B.C. Federation of Labour and Working Enterprises worked together to establish BC FORUM.

We thank them for their foresight, and for their on-going participation, guidance and support in helping to give older workers and retired workers the opportunity to remain active and involved in the movement.

As Joy Langan wanted it to be, BC FORUM can be a powerful voice for retired workers, older workers, and our families.

We appreciate your membership and participation. The more we are, the stronger we will be, and the more we can accomplish together.

When you look at the actions of the Campbell and Harper governments, and their impact on seniors, it is clear that the need for solidarity across generations has never been greater.

As working people have always done, we must stand together. We thank you for your involvement, caring and activism through BC FORUM.

As Tommy Douglas said, it's never too late to build a better world.

We would add that it's never too late for older folks like us to do our part. And that's what we intend to do.

The full text of the Board's report is available at www.bcforum.ca.



BC FORUM Annual General Meeting participants pay close attention during debate on some of the key issues that affect the lives of retired workers and our families. The AGM was attended by about 100 BC FORUM members.

Poverty and isolation of seniors in B.C.

WITH MORE AND more seniors living in poverty and isolation, the B.C. Federation of Retired Union Members has called on the Campbell government to restore funding for seniors' outreach and support services that help retired workers live in dignity.

Members who attended BC FORUM's annual general meeting also demanded an immediate end to the eight year freeze in the minimum wage, and an increase to \$10 an hour.

"The Campbell government is creating a profoundly unequal society," said the resolution.

Large corporations and a privileged few get more and more. Workers, retired workers, and those who can least afford it are paying the price in regressive taxes and the loss of vital public services. The Sept. 1 budget continues the pattern by embracing the HST – a \$1.9 billion tax shift from corporations to individuals and families.

B.C.'s minimum wage has been frozen for eight years. Formerly tied for worst with New Brunswick, where the cost of living is one-third less, B.C. claimed sole possession of the last spot on Sept. 1.

While Gordon Campbell has frozen the wages of the lowest paid – including retired workers who take part-time jobs to supplement inadequate pensions – he has given himself and his highest paid government insiders huge raises.

In the budget, Campbell elimin-

ated funding for non-profit services that support the most vulnerable seniors, effective Sept. 30. This will isolate thousands of seniors, including one in seven older women who live alone in poverty.

Even while Campbell ensured that the salaries of the highest paid government officials soared, B.C. workers have lost ground. The average income of working people after inflation was driven down 3.4 percent,

wiping out the gains achieved during the 1990s. Under his leadership, B.C. is the only province where workers were hit with such a decline during a time of economic growth.

It's small wonder, considering his actions, that B.C. has recorded the worst child poverty rate in Canada for six straight years. Gordon Campbell has systematically eroded the income and earning power of their parents and grandparents.

Health cuts must be stopped

HIGH QUALITY HEALTH care must be available to all who need it, not just those who can afford it," says a resolution adopted unanimously at the BC FORUM annual general meeting.

The resolution notes that Premier Gordon Campbell – who promised to improve health care – has betrayed the trust of seniors and our families through his decisions to:

- Close, downsize or downgrade 71 public hospitals, leading to the closure of more than 1,000 acute care beds.
- Allow the number of acute care beds per capita to fall 40% below the Canadian average.
- Cut residential care beds by 800, driving beds per capita to second lowest in Canada.
- Cut long term care and home sup-

port for seniors and persons with disabilities.

- Throw open the door to rapid expansion of private, for-profit health care while degrading public health care.

Since the resolution was adopted there have been further cuts including cancellation of 10,000 surgeries.

BC FORUM members at the meeting resolved to:

- Stand with all who advocate for a strong public health care system, accessible to all who need care, regardless of their financial means.
- Fully participate in the B.C. Health Care Coalition's new campaign to defend Medicare.
- Work to defeat MLAs who are undermining public health care, and to elect MLAs who will strengthen it.

Government has “undermined social contract”

THE HARMONIZED SALES TAX proposed by the provincial government will dramatically increase inequality, increase poverty, and reduce the middle class, says Adrian Dix, NDP Health Critic.

It's part of a continuing shift in taxation that undermines our ability to support social programs, Dix told about 100 retired workers at the Annual General Meeting of BC FORUM in Burnaby Sept. 17.

“They shifted the burden. They increased the inequality. We have the highest seniors poverty rate in the country, and the highest child poverty rate.

“The HST – which they lied about during the election – is a dramatic extension of that, a dramatic shift in taxation from principally large corporations to working people,” he said. “It's a dramatic social change that we need to resist.”

The introduction of the HST and the plan to steadily increase MSP premiums over the next three years “come out of the blue,” he said.

“Mr. Campbell has been saying since 1997 we should never have the HST.

“It's a decade long commitment from the BC Premier and the Leader of the BC Liberal Party not to introduce the harmonized sales tax,” he said.

Because the province has increasingly privatized long term care and home care, the HST will add 7 percent to the cost.

“It's going to cost seniors more. And it's going to mean that agencies with contracts with government will be able to provide fewer hours of care.”

As another example of the tax shift, Dix said the 2008 B.C. budget cut taxes on banks by \$120 million, and now the government is closing seniors centres, closing care home spaces, and cancelling 10,000 surgeries.

“This government has undermined the social contract between working people and their government. We have to oppose it. We have

to stop it,” said Dix.

“The changes that are happening right now – in our tax system, in seniors' care, in health care and in public education – are things that if we don't rise up and fight them we will not be able to reverse in this province,” he said.

Dix pointed out that the last provincial election was decided by a two percent swing, an extremely close election in historical terms.

“They don't have a mandate to cut health care. They said they wouldn't.

“They don't have a mandate to cut public education. They said they wouldn't.

“In the days and weeks following the election, we've seen an absolute betrayal of everything they said in the weeks before the election, to an extent we've never seen before.”

Dix said it's the first time he can recall when a government has behaved in such a way – to lie during an election campaign and then immediately abandon everything they said.

“These guys have behaved in a way that diminishes our democracy.”

He added that we must talk about how we as a community can fight back, “because seniors are the biggest losers. Retired people, people on fixed incomes are the biggest losers in what's going on.”

Over the years, the tax changes imposed by the Liberal government have broken the social contract that

led to Medicare, expanded public education, and other initiatives that serve the public good.

“People in this room, working people, paid for that expansion through a progressive income tax.



Government policies have dramatically increased inequality and undermined the social contract with citizens, Adrian Dix, NDP Health Critic, told the BC FORUM Annual General Meeting.

They paid for it. That was their commitment. That was their part of the deal,” said Dix.

“We have a government today that has profoundly changed the way we finance it.

“They shifted systematically from progressive income tax, from taxes on capital, and from taxes on corporations to what we generally describe as flat taxes,” said Dix.

“The effect has been to increase dramatically the inequality we see everywhere in society.”

He noted that despite economic growth, B.C. experienced a dramatic increase in poverty between 2002 and 2007.

“It's the first time that's ever happened in the good years,” said Dix.



Lew MacDonald, Coordinator of the B.C. Health Coalition

B.C. leads the country in privatization of health care

WE DEFINITELY HAVE our work cut out for us," Lew MacDonald, Coordinator of the B.C. Health Coalition told delegates. "It's a challenge to defend public services such as health care."

MacDonald said health care privatization is occurring at an ever increasing pace in B.C. It's taking place in many forms, including contracting out important workers, private cleaning, turning over long-term care and seniors' services to the private sector, for-profit testing, and so-called market-based funding.

Private care is a growth industry, and you see the whole gamut here, he said.

"B.C. has the distinction of being at the forefront of that industry nationally. The private sector in our province are organized, and there's a drive by them to open up our health care system to further expansion of these facilities.

"In the last five years, the number of private clinics has grown dramatically. It has more than doubled. There are now 73 clinics which provide service on a for-profit basis," he said.

Ironically, this booming industry is only financially viable if it is publicly subsidized.

"Many of these facilities charge user fees, facility fees or membership

fees to allow people to queue jump.

"This is a clear violation of provincial legislation that's designed to protect equal access to health care on the basis of need, and not on the ability to pay. This is happening. It's illegal. The provincial government is essentially not doing anything about it," he said.

MacDonald said even if there were no laws against them, for-profit clinics are just bad for British Columbia and bad for patients.

"They cost more. They cherry-pick. They increase wait times, and they reduce patient care and quality.

"The hourly rate they charge is far more than in public facilities. They choose the patients they can turn over quickly and leave the more complicated patients for public facilities.

"Despite the claims of private for-profit operators, there's clear evidence wait times overall increased with the establishment of these facilities in the health care system (because they drain resources from the public system)."

MacDonald said the number of private clinics are increasing in B.C. because the provincial government has a privatization agenda, and a health minister who has publicly supported health care privatization.

He said the B.C. Health Coalition is calling for an end to public funding of private clinics, complemented by an immediate expansion of not-for-profit surgical and diagnostic facilities.

The for-profit clinics are aggressively pursuing more expansion.

"This January a group of them, led by Brian Day, launched a lawsuit to challenge the constitutional validity of our laws," said MacDonald.

"They're contending that our health care legislation, which prohibit the clinics from charging the kind of fees I've just outlined, is unconstitutional. They're also contending that government has no statutory power to audit or inspect them.

"This case is a crossroads for Medicare. It will likely end up in the Supreme Court of Canada.

"What's very troubling is that the lawsuit casts the B.C. government as the major defender of Medicare.

(In a decision announced Nov. 17, Madame Justice Smith of the B.C. Supreme Court granted the B.C. Health Coalition and their pro-Medicare partners the right to participate as intervenors in the case.

(Justice Smith also announced that the Medical Services Commission will be allowed to audit Dr. Day's Cambie Surgery Center and Specialist Referral Clinic. Day, who was seeking to prevent his clinic from being audited, has admitted to unlawful billing practices but has not disclosed the nature and extent of that unlawful activity.)

MacDonald said the case was a serious threat and a serious challenge.

"We're hoping that we can continue to raise awareness of the real agenda – nothing to do with patient care, all about private profit, and opening up our public health system to private insurance companies.

"If they can legalize private insurance, then that's where the money is.

"They'll force all of us to start paying private insurance corporations for what was previously public insurance, and they'll get access to that money through private insurance companies. That's the real agenda," said MacDonald.

What kind of society do we want to live in?

FAIRNESS, RESPECT for others, and the causes of the global financial meltdown were among the issues discussed by Jim Sinclair, President of the B.C. Federation of Labour, in a thought-provoking speech to the BC FORUM AGM.

And, he suggested, the battle for fair, progressive taxes will define what kind of country Canada will be.



Jim Sinclair, President, B.C. Federation of Labour addresses BC FORUM members.

"We've seen what some call the biggest crisis of the capitalist system for the last 50 or 60 years. We've seen that if you let the capitalists take control, and let them do whatever they want, they'll not only wreck our lives, they'll wreck their institutions," he said.

"They'll actually engage in what I consider criminal activities that will ultimately sacrifice hundreds of thousands if not millions of working people's jobs.

"They will put at risk and sacrifice the dreams of working people to retire with dignity by engaging in fraudulent activity with their money.

"And you know at the end of the day, they will demand to be paid bonuses after they did this to us. 95% of them will never see the inside of a jail where they belong."

It's atrocious, said Sinclair, that these same people are now blaming workers for the problem.

"If you pick up the paper, you might read about their greed, but

you're more likely to read about how we get paid too much, and that our pensions are too high," he said.

"This is where the blame lies: on governments that believe deregulating and privatizing public health care, or education or the financial sector is the road to prosperity.

"Well, it was. For their friends. The rich have never been richer. And the poor, well we have the highest child poverty in the whole country. We've got more poor people, and working people are sliding down from what we used to call the middle class to the lower class.

"That's going on every day as we speak, and the challenge is to have a vision for working people again that they can rally around and go forward, and take back this country from the people who have now taken it over," he said.

The latest example from the Campbell government is the HST, which fails every test of fairness.

"A fair tax goes after all those folks with the big bonuses first before it comes after us.

"A fair tax is progressive, so the lower down the economy you go, the less you pay.

"A fair tax is one that goes to pay for the things we need... health care, education, taking care of the environment, all those sorts of things," he said.

The HST, however, is hardest on working people, poor people and seniors, and none of the money goes to pay for needed services.

"This tax is going to give tax relief to the very people who are at the top. It will cost about \$2 billion for the rest of us. The government will turn around and give it to corporations.

"This is absurd," he said.

Sinclair said what's needed is fair taxes, not taxes that shift more wealth to the wealthy.

"You're the people who create wealth. The question is what's the money we spend on ourselves, and what's the money we spend on each other. It's that simple.

"And when you draw that line, you're deciding the kind of society you have."

The pattern is that the share of money we spend on each other is getting smaller.

"And as we spend less on each other, we've got a bigger pool for ourselves, but guess what? The people at the top are taking all that. The middle class is sliding down, the poor are getting poorer."

It's a problem, and a debate we can't shy away from, said Sinclair if we want health care and education to be available to all.

"We have to go out there and say, we want proper care for seniors. We want a Pharmacare program. We want a home care program that works. We long term care facilities.

"And we'll pay for those with a fair taxation system, so that if we're paying more taxes, we'll know it's going to something we care about."

Sinclair added that there's a secret you won't be reading in the newspaper.

In a recent survey in Gordon Campbell's own constituency, the federation asked if the respondents would pay more taxes if the money went towards health care, education and dealing with homelessness.

"75% of people said, yes, they'd pay more taxes.

"These people are not being crazy. This is about the right-wing again misjudging our values, misjudging what we are willing to pay. We are not freeloaders. We know it costs money. But we want it to go to where it should go, not just to Gordon Campbell's pay increase and fattening up his pension.

"The question is whether the values we hold are the values that are going to run this country – justice, solidarity, equity. Or is it going to be run for greed. Is it going to be run so that governments are a tool for transferring wealth to the wealthiest people, out of our pockets.

"That's the battle that's going to decide our whole idea of what this country is going to be," he said.

BUDGET 2010

Please stop shifting taxes, BC FORUM tells provincial finance committee

BC FORUM HAS ASKED the provincial government to “please stop” shifting taxes, and to move B.C. towards a fair, progressive tax system.

“You are cutting the wrong taxes, and increasing the wrong fees,” said Alice West, President of the B.C. Federation of Retired Union Members, in a brief delivered to the Legislature’s finance committee Oct. 16.

“You have skewed our tax system to give more thousands of dollars to those who already have all the yachts and mansions they need, and forced the rest of us to pay for it in higher fees and lost services,” she said.

“So we ask you, please stop. We need to stop giving to the strong and taking from the weak. Please give us a fair, progressive tax system that puts people first – the principle that should guide every government decision.”

West said there is a malaise in B.C. politics. Voter turnout has dropped to new lows, weakening our democracy. Many people have lost faith that government has their interests at heart.

“We believe much of this is directly tied to budget decisions. It is a reflection of how government spends our money, and who it collects it from.

“In a civil society, the strong must support the weak, not take from them. We have a shared responsibility to each other.

“Establishing that sense of balance and fairness for all citizens is a primary role of democratic government. Government is the way all British Columbians can work together to achieve the things we cannot achieve alone,” she said.

This principle is sadly absent from many government decisions.

West said there are many areas where government decisions are making the difference between dignity and despair for ordinary people.

She criticized B.C.’s record of having the worst level of child poverty in Canada, large increases in fees for frail seniors in care homes, and cuts in grants to non-profit societies that help seniors who are isolated and alone.

The HST, she said, is another example of government transferring wealth from people to corporations.

“We do not object to paying more taxes to pay for services to people. We are far from alone in that. A recent survey in the Premier’s own constituency found that 75 percent would support increasing taxes to pay for public services.

“We do object to tax increases for which people get nothing in return, such as the plan to harmonize sales taxes, a plan the government disappointingly failed to tell us the truth about during this year’s election.

“The government now says the HST will save large corporations \$1.9

billion a year. It also says the HST will be revenue neutral for government.

“In other words, the rest of us will be paying more to give another tax break to the few. “We get nothing in return for this additional gift to the powerful, not even a thank you card.

“This latest huge giveaway – along with all the gifts that have preceded it – is profoundly unfair to the citizens of B.C.

“I ask you to halt the HST, and change direction. I ask you to move B.C. towards a fair, progressive tax policy that recognizes the needs of the weak as well as the strong,” said West.

The BC FORUM brief concluded that Mr. Campbell’s ‘new era’ has turned out to be an era of selfishness. “It is an era where unregulated greed is venerated and the public good is desecrated.”

“It has gone too far. It is time now for budget decisions that reflect the traditional values of British Columbians – concern for others, compassion, and simple human decency towards our fellow men, women and children.”

The full text of the BC FORUM brief is available at www.bcforum.ca.



Never missing an opportunity to promote the benefits of joining B.C. FORUM, Wendi Lawrence and Lorraine Logan volunteered to pass out membership information at this year’s Labour Day Picnic in Vancouver. BC FORUM was an active participant in planning and organizing the celebration, with Wendi serving on the planning committee.

Joy Langan (1943 – 2009)

IT WAS STANDING room only as hundreds of people filled the Operating Engineers' Hall Sept. 9 to pay tribute to Joy Langan and to remember her many contributions. The crowd included rank and file workers who she stood with on the picket line, leaders of the labour movement, as well as dozens of current and former MPs and MLAs.

"Joy was a true working class hero," said Angie Schirra, secretary-treasurer of the B.C. Federation of Labour.

As a friend, mentor and mother, she was inspirational, humanitarian, passionate and unselfish, said Schirra. She had "an acute sense of right and wrong" and was dedicated to her family, including her labour and NDP family.

Schirra recalled that as a young worker, Joy Langan was a leader for women's rights who stood her ground and rose to positions of leadership within the movement.

As the first woman vice-president of the BCFL, "Joy took me under her wing when I became the second woman vice-president."

"She worked tirelessly to strengthen the labour movement and the party," said Schirra. As a Member of Parliament, "she struck fear into the hearts of many cabinet ministers in Ottawa."

"Right up to a week before her death, she was chairing meetings of BC FORUM. The unyielding spirit Joy showed us all will not fade," she said.

Wendy Sol, administrative Vice-President of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union who flew in from Winnipeg to participate, said Joy was "an invaluable mentor" for many.

"She encouraged others to see the potential in themselves," said Sol.

Ken Georgetti, president of the Canadian Labour Congress, participating by video, described Joy as "tenacious and stubborn" – a true advocate for women's rights, workers, and the marginalized in our society.

"She just never quit."

Georgetti recalled that in Trail, Joy

was often his babysitter, so "she was used to cleaning up my crap from an early age."

"She has a special place in the hearts of everyone she touched."

John Webster and Susan Scott were part of the long and bitter strike



against the Calgary Herald, then owned by one of Conrad Black's conglomerates. Joy was their CEP staff rep.

"Joy would be happy to see us all here today," Webster said. "But she would also ask us, 'Isn't there a picket line, a protest or a demonstration you should all be at?'"

Recalling the extraordinary difficulties the strikers faced, Webster said, "Joy gave a damn about all of us." And as for Conrad Black: "We kicked his ass. Joy was our leader."

Scott described the aggressive police tactics, helicopters and truncheons that were evident during the strike. Joy met it all with "amazing good humour, compassion and extraordinary courage," said Scott. She embodied the belief that "real change must come through personal action."

Jim Sinclair, president of the B.C. Federation of Labour, said, "Joy deserves a medal for who she was and what she did. She spent her whole life getting stronger and more courageous."

And with her activism for women's rights, she helped to change the course of history. "Business, parliament and the labour movement needed that change and voice," said Sinclair.

While Joy was an inspiration to many, it was not a one way street, he added.

"She was inspired by the people she met. The Calgary Herald strike was a big struggle and she was proud to be part of it."

Sinclair announced that the BCFL is establishing a new award in her honour. "The Joy Langan Social Justice Award will be presented at every constitutional convention of the Federation," he said.

Audrey McLaughlin, former leader of the federal NDP, said Joy brought passion and principle to politics and every aspect of her life. Watching Joy in the House of Commons and in the NDP Caucus, McLaughlin said she often thought, "Am I ever glad she's on our side."

"Joy was a leader and a teacher. She was kind, supportive, and committed to the belief that every individual matters," said McLaughlin. "I have the deepest love and respect for all that Joy has contributed."

"The best celebration of Joy's life is to continue what she believed in. It will make Canada a better place, a place that recognizes the importance of working people, equality and social justice."

Carolyn Rice, secretary-treasurer of the New Westminster and District Labour Council, said she first met Joy when she was working at an Unemployment Action Centre food bank in the 1970s, the beginning of "a true, life-long friendship."

"Joy was always calm, reassuring and unflappable. She had a great way with people, and a real sense of what's right and wrong."

Rice, like other speakers, noted that Joy never quit, even though she was very ill. "She came in and worked every day in the 2008 federal election." She announced that the NWDLC is establishing a CLC Winter School scholarship in Joy's name.

Jack Nichol (1926 – 2009)

THE CANADIAN TRADE UNION movement lost a giant from its ranks with the passing of Brother Jack Nichol. Born April 6, 1926 in Hanover Ontario, he passed away in Vancouver November 6, 2009. Jack is survived by his beloved wife Rose, and seven children: Jim, Gail, Bob, Julie, Richard, John, and Cathy. A dedicated family man, Jack was especially fond of his grandchildren.

Jack was a veteran of the Canadian Navy, serving for two years during World War II.

After the war he found work in the West Coast fishing industry as a cold storage worker for the Canadian Fishing Company.

Over the years Jack became increasingly interested in workplace issues and soon came to represent union members as a shop steward, bargaining committee representative and local union delegate to United Fisherman and Allied Workers Union conventions.

In 1963, he went to work for the UFAWU as a full-time organizer, and a year later, was elected as an officer, taking on the position of business agent. Jack's initial focus was on shoreworkers' issues, and he distinguished himself as a skilled negotiator on behalf of fresh fish, cold storage and cannery workers, tendermen, and whalers.

In 1967, Jack served time in prison, along with UFAWU secretary-treasurer Homer Stevens and president Steve Stavenes, for courageously defying a court injunction ordering striking fishermen at the Prince Rupert Fishermen's Co-op back to work.

In 1973, among his many career accomplishments, he negotiated a landmark collective agreement that established pay equity for women and men in UFAWU-certified fish processing plants.

In later years, Jack became deeply involved in the complex policies and issues facing the fish harvesting side of the industry.

In 1985 he was appointed as an alternate commissioner representing Canada on the new Pacific Salmon Commission. Shortly afterwards he was appointed to the minister's ad-

visory committee – the senior advisory panel on west coast fishing issues. Later, he co-chaired the Commercial Fishing Industry Council. In 1994,



Jack Nichol served as President of BC FORUM for four terms.

he and Don Millerd co-chaired the Fish Processing Strategic Task Force, a special task force appointed by the provincial government to look into fish processing issues. Three years later, he was appointed to the board of the Crown corporation, Fisheries Renewal B.C.

A long-time supporter of the New Democratic Party, Jack also served on countless labour committees and bodies.

In the mid 1980s he was elected to the executive council of the B.C. Federation of Labour and later became one of its vice-presidents.

Jack was also a strong supporter of environmental causes, well before the advent of today's environmental organizations. In recent years he was an active leader of BC FORUM, the coalition representing retired union members.

Jack will be sorely missed by his many relatives, friends, colleagues, and associates. His legacy in British Columbia is profound and will be lasting.

In lieu of flowers the family requests that donations be made to the B.C. Children's Hospital.

Join BC FORUM today

BC FORUM is a registered non-profit society for retired union members, and active members age 50 and over. We are dedicated to representing the interests and wellbeing of members, their families and spouses.

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There are more than 100,000 retired union members in BC. Together, we can be a powerful voice for the wellbeing of our families. Join today!

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A looming crisis in ambulance services

THE CAMPBELL GOVERNMENT must recognize the urgent need to improve ambulance services to meet the growing need throughout British Columbia, said members of BC FORUM at the annual general meeting.

Members adopted a resolution urging the government to negotiate a fair and just settlement with ambulance paramedics. (The government has ignored that advice and instead imposed a settlement after an all night sitting of the Legislature.)

“Ambulance paramedical professionals are usually the first responders to emergencies that threaten the health and well-being of retired workers and our families,” noted B.C. FORUM

The long strike by B.C.’s ambulance paramedics, who continued working under essential services legislation, called attention to the serious deterioration in our ambulance services:

In some parts of B.C., the number of calls has doubled in the last ten years.

Shortages of ambulance resources and trained paramedics have grown.

Response times, often the difference between life and death, have grown longer.

Recruitment and retention of paramedics is a serious issue. Wages have stagnated, eliminating the traditional parity with other emergency

workers. In rural and remote areas, paramedics are on-call and paid just \$2.00 an hour.

“As the population of B.C. increases, with the number of older retired workers increasing even more rapidly, our ambulance service must keep

pace with the growing demand,” said the resolution. It also encouraged members of BC FORUM to support paramedics by taking lawn signs, contacting their elected representatives, and helping to inform friends and neighbours about the issue.



BC FORUM’s Master Chef – Gord Larkin – served Fred Muzin, past president of the Hospital Employees’ Union, at the New Westminster and District Labour Council’s Annual Celebrity Chili Cookoff. Gord’s “Raging Cajun” chili was voted best in a blind taste test by an “expert panel” and placed second in popular voting. A vegetarian chili won the popular vote, leading some to wonder if chili con carne should be renamed chili sin carne.

Photo by Michelle Boudreau, Leopard Print Communications

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