



The Comp-Ten REPORT

FEBRUARY,
2010

Story ideas and comments for the Comp-Ten Report can be submitted to: comp10report@bcgeu.ca

An advocate for Component 10, Jeff Fox retires

By Mike Nuyens

I wanted to inform the membership of Component 10 that director of organizing and field services Jeff Fox has decided to retire from BCGEU.

For those of you who can remember Jeff was assigned to work with Component 10 just prior to privatization back in 1988, when he was the coordinator in the Kelowna area office.

It was there that I first met Jeff.

Jeff moved on from Kelowna to the position of coordinator in research and campaigns in Victoria. He also worked in the finance ministry. Then he moved into the position of director at BCGEU's Burnaby headquarters.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to continue to work with Jeff. I've watched Jeff at numerous meetings where he represented our members in Component 10 with unbelievable passion and dedication.



NUYENS



FOX



AIRCARE MEMBERS READY TO BARGAIN

BCGEU AirCare members are getting ready to bargain a new collective agreement for staff who monitor car exhaust emissions and improve air quality in the Lower Mainland. From left, AirCare inspector and Local 1003 chair Dave Cumming, BCGEU negotiator Barbara Crowley, AirCare assistant manager Toni Campbell and clerk III Gina Cherubini are putting the finishing touches on the union's bargaining strategy. Talks are expected to get underway soon. See a related story about extending AirCare beyond 2011 on page 2.

Jeff has always been there supporting the members, whether it was through some very good and tough bargaining sessions or representing us at meetings with government and the industry.

I have sat on the Provincial Executive with Jeff as one of four BCGEU directors. Jeff helped our component put together our groundbreaking bid to win a contract to prove that highways maintenance could be provided at a much higher standard.

That bid was torpedoed at the eleventh hour by the industry when it looked like we had a very real chance of winning the tender.

Brother Fox has always been there for the members of Component 10, and he will be dearly missed as he moves into his retirement.

Jeff leaves for Kosovo in early February to be with his partner Laura who has accepted a position of Regional Director of Kosovo with the National Democratic Institute.

Good luck Jeff into the future.

And on behalf of Component 10, thank you for all that you have done for our members and for the union movement.

-Nuyens is chair of Component 10

Remembering our Brothers and Sisters

Joe Hiebert: A great operator

By Sandy Fellers

Joe Hiebert was a guy with a twinkle in his eyes. He was either laughing at a joke or pulling one of his own.

He was a great operator who knew equipment and knew how to run it.

Joe worked at the Alaska Highway Mile 22 yard for more than 35 years, and made many a lifelong friend.

Although Joe retired in 2003 from highways, he continued to haul water and plow some snow with his own truck that he had spent many hours rebuilding.

Joe leaves behind loved ones: his wife Gail, sons Blake and Zane, and grandchildren Dana and Drew.

-Fellers is chair of Local 1010

Barney Weismiller dies in tragic accident

By Kevin Staneland

All of us in Local 1008 would like to send our condolences to the family of Barney Weismiller from the Invermere highways maintenance yard, where Barney was the senior auxiliary after 15 years of work there.

Last fall while Weismiller was operating a cement truck for a local company, he was struck by an out-of-control vehicle on Peters Hill in the Invermere area as he put chains on his truck.

After being in a coma for a couple weeks the decision was made to take him off life support and Barney passed away.

He will be missed by all that knew him. And may none of us ever forget him.

-Staneland is chair of Local 1008



NEW ON THE BLOCK: Chico Crossland, left, and Gord Selzler, right, from Local 1011 pose with the new 140M Caterpillar grader purchased by their employer, YRB. This grader is on the leading edge of technology, and most operators who have tried it seem to like it. Like anything new it will take time to adjust, but for now these operators are only too happy to see it in their yard.

UNION CAMPAIGNS TO KEEP AIRCARE FOR THE FUTURE

The successful AirCare program—which has improved air quality in the Lower Mainland since it was introduced in the 1990s—is being reviewed to determine whether it will continue past 2011, and if so, how the program that significantly lowers vehicle particulate emissions will be structured.

TransLink has hired a consultant to undertake the study and to make recommendations on AirCare's future. A report will be finished later this spring.

BCGEU, which represents AirCare staff, is hopeful that the review process will be the focal point for suggestions on how to improve the program.

Some possible improvements include testing for high mileage light duty commercial vehicles so that

these vehicles are tested on mileage thresholds rather than the seven-year exemption.

TransLink has the functional decision-making responsibility to determine whether AirCare will continue past 2011, but the provincial government has a significant say in what lies ahead.

That's because it's provincial legislation that requires automobiles and light duty commercial vehicles to be tested. Surrey mayor Dianne Watts chairs TransLink's council of mayors.

BCGEU is reaching out to a number of environmental and community groups. We are urging them to support a continuation of the program for another five years so that vehicle emissions are lowered even further.

Canadian Labour Congress presses for action for better CPP and OAS benefits for seniors

Ken Georgetti, the president of the CLC is calling for major changes to the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security that would help all those who retire from the workforce.

Basically the CLC is pushing for three key reforms:

- double CPP benefits (phased in over seven years);
- increase OAS and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) benefits by 15 per cent for seniors right now; and
- create a federal pension insurance system.

Endorsed by the former chief actuary of the CPP, the proposed plan calls for increase of contributions to a maximum amount of \$7,000 from the current \$3,500.

So by doing this it would increase a pension from the maximum of \$800-plus per month to \$1,600 monthly.

This significant change to our CPP would ensure the next generation of retiring workers in Canada both union and non-union would have a decent pension in place for when they finally do retire.



GEORGETTI

As well the CLC is proposing a 15 per cent boost to the OAS/GIS benefits to ensure a stronger foundation for Canada's pension system.

Presently our public pensions are too modest and expose those most vulnerable to greater hardship, particularly single women, First Nations, and seniors with disabilities.

These groups deserve better!

And finally, we need pension insurance.

A lot of company pension plans (not the BCGEU Pension Plan) use these pension funds that workers have worked their asses off for, as a liability asset.

Simply put, a lot of plans are not protected against creditors should the worst ever occur.

And if it does occur pensions are the first place creditors look. Workers need to be protected from this.

We have insurance for many things, our homes, our mortgages, our bank deposits, our vehicles, so its now time that we required the same protection for our pension plans.

The BCGEU Pension Plan is protected against creditors unlike most other company RRSP plans.

For more information on pension reform go to www.canadianlabour.ca

HST: Is it good tax policy for B.C. or not?

By Kelly McDonald

Well I am sure glad the Liberals won another election last May, otherwise we might not have had the HST rammed down our throats!

Unless things change by July 2010 get ready to spend more of your hard-won earnings. Restaurants that currently charge five per cent on the food portion will add the combined PST and GST of 12 per cent to the bill.

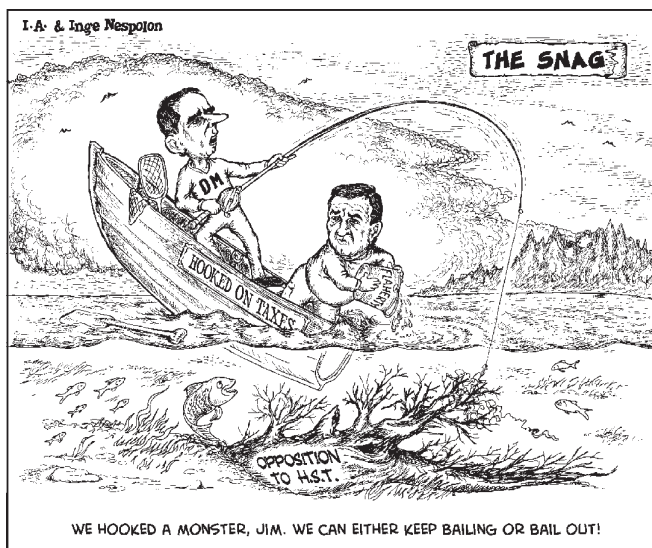
Not only that, going to a theatre will cost you more, as will school supplies, snack foods, soda pop, dry cleaning, haircuts, repairs to household appliances, cable, residential phone, hydro, natural gas, and airline flights and booking fees.

These are only some of the new items that will be provincially taxed—and there are many more.

We need to fight back on this new tax.

My wages are not going up to compensate for the HST and neither are yours.

The following websites have petitions against the HST. So please take the time to sign up on one or more of them:



CALM

- www.facebook.com/group.php?gid
- www.saynotohstinbc.ca/
- www.bcnep.ca/hstpetition
- www.petitiononline.com/lgflgf/petition.html

-McDonald is chair of Local 1006

Remembering our Brothers and Sisters

Doug Cronin will be missed

By Fred Street

Long time Merritt resident and Area 14 highways maintenance worker Doug Cronin passed away while living in Australia.

Doug took early retirement a few years ago after meeting his wife Trine and having a daughter Amelia, who needed to get to know her grandparents and cousins in Australia.

I don't think it was a hard decision at the time. What an adventure!

Doug and family loved it there but he did miss working with his old highways maintenance buddies back here in British Columbia.



CRONIN

He would call often and talk for hours. I am a little mad at him because I was supposed to go and visit him. We had a good plan for a road trip.

He had a great sense of humour and was a treat to work with.

Doug will be missed by his son Ian Cronin who remained back in British Columbia and by all his BCGEU Brothers and Sisters as well as many others in the Merritt area.

-Street is chairperson of Local 1005

News from Local 1004 focuses on bargaining, workplace changes

By Rory Smith

2010 has arrived and with it comes many events and changes.

One of the first is bargaining for many of our BCGEU members in Component 10 and also many direct government employees under the public services agreement.



SMITH

We extend our support to them all and hope the best for them and much success in their bargaining.

In our local we have the AirCare members getting ready for bargaining and they have an extra issue hanging over their heads, the possibility of the program not being continued in the future.

We continue to work hard to lobby the government for the continuation AirCare. I will stay in close contact with Dave Cumming and the

bargaining committee and give any support that I can.

Our members at Cobra Electric are also gearing up for bargaining and it will be very interesting to see how the process develops for them in the near future.

I will stay in close contact with them to make sure that this process gives them the best result.

Closer to the Port Mann, our members working for Mainroad Contracting normally get to deal with heavy traffic and rush hour.

Now they get to work around the Port Mann project and of course the 2010 Olympic games. Orlando Bokor has been attending the cross component meetings and by late February or early March we hope to have a local meeting in Langley to address some of these issues.

In my workplace we have begun the process of amalgamating our yard with the construction branch of Emil Anderson.

It's been in the works for many months and a lot of discussion has

taken place at the labour-management committee to get to where we are now.

We feel that we have all come to an understanding to work through this transition and we will work through the issues that arise along the way.

This is a significant undertaking and was carefully reviewed by all parties involved to ensure as smooth a transition as possible.

The BCGEU Pension Plan Board of Trustees—on which I serve as a trustee—is reviewing what's called the immunization fund for the future.

It will be a great time to watch the BCGEU website for updates and look at the pension material that arrives at your door and read it carefully to fully understand the implications of the change that may take place.

Please stay in contact by email whenever you can, and get involved in any way to make the voice in your workplace heard.

*-Smith is chair of Local 1004,
rosmi@telus.net*

Have maintenance standards been lowered?

By Kevin Staneland

I KNOW I'VE SAID IT BEFORE, but when taxes are collected for services that the provincial, federal or municipal governments are to supply for their constituents, shouldn't they be obligated to supply that service with the maximum funds collected?

This was one of many concerns raised back in 1988 when B.C. high-ways maintenance in this province was first privatized.

We told them then it was a bad idea but they ignored us and here we are with their bad taste in our mouths even long after the demise of the Socreds.

Now the Campbell Liberals have taken it a step further and allow privatized contractors to bid on private work while contracting out

ProTrans bargaining making headway

Measurable progress has already been achieved as negotiations for a first contract for almost 200 BCGEU members who work on the Canada Line kicked off in early January.

To date, the union and the employer have spent five days in face-to-face discussions.

Given the pressures on transit that the Olympics will create in the coming weeks, no talks are being held in February and the two sides will get back to the table in March.

The union's chief negotiator Gary Bennett says agreement has been reached on a number of basic contract language provisions that are a key foundation of a collective agreement.

Bennett is joined at the table by BCGEU ProTrans bargaining committee members Kirsten Campbell, Ryan Hegg, Shant Khachadur, and Lana Vincent.

much of the work that highways maintenance workers used to do.

We all see things not being done to the standard we were once used to whether it be grading, sweeping etc.

A recent audit done by a firm hired by the BCGEU has suggested the government put one or two service areas back in public service so a comparison can be done on quality and cost to taxpayers.

But don't hold your breath, neither the Liberal government nor the road builders association has replied to the audit to my knowledge.

I remember when Kevin Falcon was Minister of Transportation and the NDP critic was quizzing him about maintenance deficiencies. Falcon replied that these were the same contractors that were in place when the NDP was in power.

However, the NDP did not slash the maintenance budget by \$30 million

"Where the public has noticed the biggest difference is in winter"

and cut the workforce by nearly 50 per cent when they were in power, so they may be the same but at a less than comparable degree.

The Liberal cuts changed the way contractors operated big time. Were standards lowered? In some instances like mowing I would have to say yes.

We have noticed the change, but where the public has noticed the biggest difference is in our winter maintenance.

I wish they would put that forward in the bidding process and let the taxpayers of B.C. make their choice of who should be out there maintaining our highways, roads and bridges.

There is a minimum standard of maintenance we need to maintain, but surely we can all strive for a little better than that.

We need to establish a safety first policy with the traveling public.
-Staneland is chair of Local 1008



SANTA HELPS FEED THE HUNGRY: Santa was popular at the Area 9 Castlegar kids Christmas party in December. Santa (Mike Prystae, chair of Local 1009, says a record number of kids of kids attended and significant donations were made for area food banks. Well done Santa!

Why is foot comfort important?

THERE ARE here are two major categories of work-related foot injuries.

The first category includes foot injuries from punctures, crushing, sprains, and lacerations. They account for 10 per cent of all reported disabling injuries.

The second group includes those resulting from slips, trips and falls. They account for 15 per cent of all reported disabling injuries. Slips and falls do not always result in a foot injury but lack of attention to foot safety plays an important role in their occurrence.

There are also other conditions such as calluses, ingrown toenails or simply tired feet that are common among workers.

Although these are not considered as occupational injuries they can have serious consequences for health and safety at the workplace.

They cause discomfort, pain and fatigue. Fatigue sets up the worker for further injuries affecting the muscles and joints. Also, a worker who is tired and suffering pain is less alert and more likely to act unsafely—an accident of any kind may result

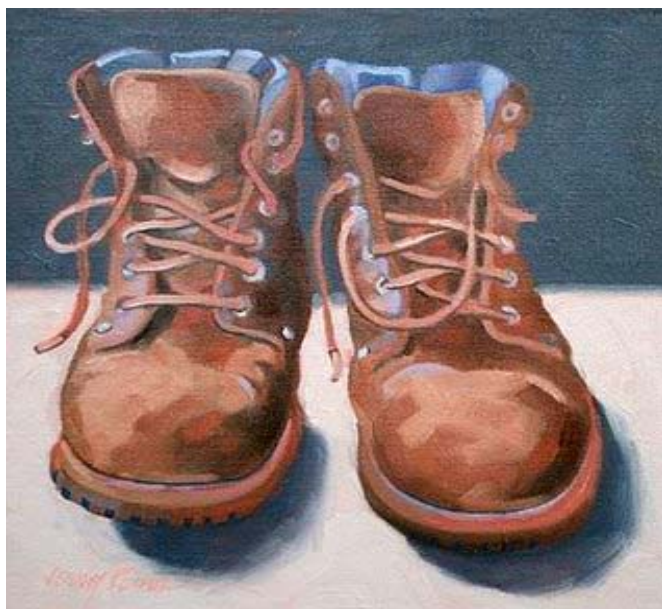
How does footwear contribute to foot problems?

Footwear that fits poorly or is in need of repair also contributes heavily to foot discomfort. Pointed toes and high heels are particularly inappropriate for working footwear.

Prolonged standing, hard flooring and inappropriate footwear are common working conditions.

Aching, flat or tired feet are common among workers who spend most of their working time standing.

Try to avoid fixed standing positions and vary tasks to change body position and use different muscles. Job rotation, job enlargement and teamwork are all ways to make work easier on the feet.



As the old saying goes, "When your feet hurt, you hurt all over."

Job rotation moves workers from one job to another, and shortens the time each individual spends standing.

Job enlargement includes more different tasks in a worker's duties. If

it increases the variety of body positions and motions, there's less chance of developing foot problems.

Teamwork gives the whole team more control and autonomy in planning and allocation of the work. Each team member carries out a set of various operations to complete the whole product.

Rest breaks help to alleviate foot problems where redesigning jobs is impractical. Frequent short breaks are preferable to fewer long breaks

What footwear is appropriate for the cold?

Working outdoors in cold weather poses a special requirement on selecting the proper footwear.

Foot protection against cold weather can be resolved by:

- Insulating the legs by wearing warmers, the "dancercise" type.

- Wearing insulating overshoes over work footwear.

- Wearing insulating muffs around the ankles and over the top of the footwear.

News from Local 1003

By Dave Cumming

Notices of election to fill the remainder of the local union executive positions went out in early January.

I urge members to put people forward so that we can have representation from ProTrans, Mainroad Contracting, Capilano Highway Services, and other employee

groups. I don't know if I will still be in the workforce when the next round of local union elections happens so I would like to have some people ready to take over.

Positions on the local executive are not overwhelming demands on your time.

So I would urge all activists to consider running.

-Cumming is chair of Local 1003