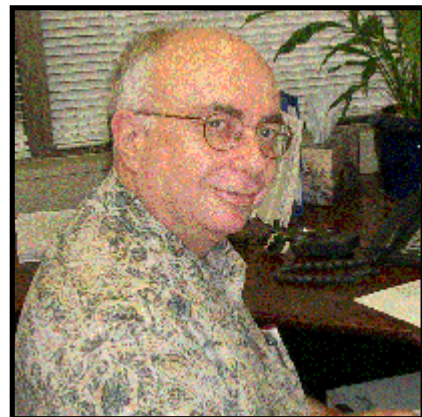




# Impact

FEBRUARY 2006  
COMPENSATION EMPLOYEES' UNION

## New business agent brings public and private sector experience to the CEU



Doug McCorquodale

Business Agent Doug McCorquodale began working for the CEU on January 3, 2006. Although Doug has worked as the Legal and Defense Coordinator for the British Columbia Provincial Council of Carpenters for the last 10 years, he has spent

more than half his working life as a worker or union representative in the public sector. His experience ranges from being a full-time, elected officer of a union at a crown corporation to being an employee of a union with many private sector bargaining units.

At the Carpenters Union, Doug did legal and servicing work for members in the construction industry. He also took care of five to seven bargaining units in the public sector. (The Carpenters Union has members working in school districts.) Other duties included communications, training, bargaining, organizing, and campaigns.

Organizing work in the gas and coalfields of northeast British Columbia kept Doug away from his home in Saskatchewan much of the time before he started working for the Carpenters Union.

Doug has worked in many occupations and industries. These include mining, advertising, public sector research,

health care, hospitality, retail, and graphic arts in four different provinces. He has organized and serviced collective agreements in most of the occupations he held. He has been an activist or representative in these unions:

- Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers' Union (OCAW)
- Energy and Chemical Workers' Union (ECWU)
- Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)
- Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union (SGEU)
- Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union (CEP)

In one job as a union representative, Doug was assigned to coordinate a strike of 400 union members. It lasted over a year. Doug described it this way: "It was ugly -- all strikes are ugly but sometimes necessary. However, not one member lost their home during that dispute because of the solidarity and strategy adopted in regard to the financial institutions. A strategy that did not require union funds!"

Doug has negotiated many collective agreements in his 30 years' experience. He had this to say about those agreements: "While I have negotiated hundreds of agreements, not one set of negotiations that I did from start to finish ever ended in a strike or lockout. It has been close a couple of times, but so far so good."

Because of his varied background, Doug is often asked which is more difficult -- administering a collective agreement in the private or public sector? Doug's first agreements were in the public sector. At that time, he thought the private sector employers would be the most difficult to deal with. But, after more than thirty years' experience, Doug says it's not the case: "The public sector employers are by far the worst." Doug offered this explanation as to why:

"In the private sector, labour relations is often driven by the bottom line. The public sector uses the citizens' money, without restraint, to drive an ideological agenda of exercising power and control in labour relations. When I

take away the exceptions in the private sector, like the Entwhistles, Pocklington, and the Conrad Blacks, I find the public sector employers are generally more mean-spirited. Deregulation and privatizations back up this view."

Doug hasn't pre-judged our employer, however. He also said: "Not all public sector employers are bad."

I'll let you know later on where the WCB falls within my benchmark on this question."

Doug says he's looking forward to representing and working with CEU members in the challenges that lay ahead. He remarked: "Labour relations is a never ending education for everyone."

## Saying goodbye was very difficult



Bonnie Pearson

On December 14, 2005, CEU staff, executive, shop stewards, and members gathered at the union office to say goodbye to Bonnie Pearson, a CEU staff member since 2001. She resigned her position with the CEU to

accept a senior position with the HEU (Hospital Employees' Union).

We all shared some laughs at Bonnie's reception, but it was pretty much a sad affair. That's because in the four years that Bonnie worked as a business agent for the CEU she completely wove herself into the fabric of the union. Not only did Bonnie capture our hearts, she also had a strong grasp of the issues facing the membership from day one. It felt like she had worked for the CEU forever.

Why did Bonnie make such an impression upon us? Because she has so many admirable qualities: tenacity in pursuing an issue ... an incredible work ethic ... a strong belief in doing what is right ... compassion ... commitment ... dedication ... energy ... and a great sense of humour.

Bonnie showed her passion and commitment to workers' rights in every issue she took on. But when she saw managers abusing their authority with clerical and support workers, she became a real fireball.

The ways that Bonnie fought for and advanced our rights are far too many to cover in this short tribute. Here are a few examples:

- 4 Bonnie made the CEU and the employer aware that the Collective Agreement did not fully comply with the Human Rights Code, particularly when it came to maternity leave provisions. We have Bonnie to thank for the improvements made over the last few years.
- 4 Bonnie's persistence on the pay equity front resulted in an agreement in the fall that will make the job evaluation plan gender neutral. Through all her hard work, we may finally be able to settle this issue.
- 4 Bonnie fought hard to ensure that members who lost their positions in the 2002 downsizing found alternate ones.
- 4 Bonnie constantly challenged us to look outside our four walls and take our place alongside the rest of labour. Not only was she vociferous in defending trade union rights, she was also a strong defender of a public workers' compensation system.

We hope that Bonnie is enjoying her new position with the HEU. We thank her for all that she has contributed to the CEU.

## Looking for a different point of view?

Searching for a different point of view to that of the mainstream (a.k.a. "junk stream" media)? Here are some alternative news sources for you to check out.

- The Tyee: [www.thetyee.ca](http://www.thetyee.ca)
- Rabble: [www.rabble.ca](http://www.rabble.ca)
- Straight Goods: [www.straightgoods.com](http://www.straightgoods.com)

- Working TV: [www.workingtv.com](http://www.workingtv.com)
- Labour Start: [www.labourstart.org](http://www.labourstart.org)

# CEU supports labour's demands for action on logger deaths

Mainstream media and labour leaders alike described an emergency resolution on forest industry deaths as the most important debate at the BC Federation of Labour's (BCFL) annual convention. At the time of the debate, 41 forest workers had died working in the woods. (That number has now increased to 43.) This is more than double the number of forestry fatalities that occurred in 2004. The United Steel Workers (USW), the union that represents most of the unionized workers in the forest industry, put the emergency resolution forward. The resolution calls for:

- 4 Timely investigations of serious accidents and deaths
- 4 Immediate and mandatory coroner's inquests following fatalities
- 4 A Day of Mourning every time there is a death in the forest industry
- 4 More monitoring and enforcement by the Board
- 4 The creation of "implementation" committees with the authority to order immediate workplace change in response to fatality investigations and inquests
- 4 "Aggressive" enforcement of the Westray Bill - the 2004 amendment to the Criminal Code of Canada by which directors, officers, managers, supervisors, or anyone associated with directing the work of others, may be liable to criminal prosecution for failure to ensure a safe workplace
- 4 BCFL support for the Opposition's call for an independent review of government forest policy changes implicated in creating unsafe working conditions and recommendations for legislative change needed to improve forest industry safety

CEU delegates Jane Player and David Farrell participated in the debate on the resolution. Jane's remarks are reproduced below:

"I wholeheartedly agree with those in labour who say that

the WCB is not conducting enough inspections and doesn't have an effective enforcement strategy. This is especially acute in the logging sector, but is also true for other industries.

We, at the CEU, were glad to hear a week or so ago that about 17 additional officers will be hired. This announcement came following forest industry fatalities, which, once again, put the media spotlight on the industry and the Board.

But, the announcement of 17 additional officers is not enough. More officers are needed to prevent the deaths occurring in logging, and many other industries.

And, in the same way that it takes more than a carpenter to build a house, it takes more than health and safety inspectors to build and maintain an effective enforcement strategy and health and safety system in B.C.

Since 2001, we have seen redundancies at the Board in many areas that affect prevention and enforcement activities. What this means is that more and more work has been heaped on officers. And an officer can't possibly be an expert on every aspect of health and safety. I'll give you a few examples of what I'm talking about:

- 4 We used to have ergonomists in every region in the province, in the same department as the officers. Now, we only have four positions for the entire province, located in Richmond. And they are not in the same department as the inspectors, so they are not readily available to officers.
- 4 We used to have about five occupational audiologists who worked on hearing conservation. Now we have one.
- 4 Other positions we used to have included writers and editors dedicated to prevention publications, educators, information specialists, WHMIS coordinators, and more clerical assistance.

My last example is first aid officers. We used to have first aid officers in every region in the province. Now we have a first aid guideline and two certification officers for the

province. And what do people tell us about the guideline? Some employers and worker representatives tell us that they use the old regulation to help them determine what first aid services are needed on site.

So, to sum up: Yes, we need more officers; we need more monitoring and enforcement; we need to stop eroding our regulatory requirements; and, we need to restore the capacity that has been lost from our system. The capacity that supported officers and provided services to workers and employers in the province."

David Farrell also spoke in favour of the resolution. Although injury rates and deaths are increasing in forestry, David pointed out that the 2002 changes to the Workers Compensation Act mean that generally the costs of claims have been decreasing. Employers pay for the costs of claims through their annual WCB assessments. Over the last few years, assessment rates

have decreased or are lower than they would have been if benefits had not been cut. David pointed out that cuts in benefits mean that claim costs no longer reflect the costs of

fair compensation, livable pensions, and reasonable rehabilitation benefits, and there is less of an incentive for employers to prevent workplace injuries. He stated that fair compensation encourages employers to maintain safe workplaces.

The BCFL's 49th Annual Convention took place in Vancouver from November 28 to 30, 2005.

More than 1,000 delegates from all parts of the province attended the three-day event. Most of the CEU executive and staff attended all or part of the convention. Shop stewards Colleen Glynn (Richmond), Toni Murray (Richmond), Rachel Barbour (Courtenay) and James Morrison (Victoria) also attended the convention.



David Farrell



Jane Player

## Making a difference

This past holiday season, the CEU staff and executive donated a food gift certificate, wrapped gifts, and some cash to a family in need. The family, a grandmother and two grandchildren, experienced a tragedy earlier in 2005, and were facing a difficult holiday season.

On December 23, 2005, Bethany Calhoun, CEU Office Administrator, and Leanne Walsh, CEU Business Agent, delivered the holiday "goodies" to the grandmother. They also met the two children. They described them as "the sweetest little things". The grandmother's reaction to the staff and executive's efforts moved Bethany and Leanne to tears. In Leanne's words:

"The grandma was so very, very thankful. She cried as she thanked us, telling us that she was so worried how this Christmas would be for the kids and that now she knows everything will be fine. Bethany and I held back our tears as we said good-bye and told the Grandma how much we enjoyed doing this for her family. She gave us a card of thanks and a small angel. The card reads: To our Christmas Angels ..."

Like the many CEU members who participated in similar efforts at their work sites, the CEU staff and executive know that their donations very clearly made a difference to some very deserving people.

