



Your job evaluation questionnaire has arrived!

THE WEB-BASED STEELWORKERS/ UOFT JOB EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE IS being rolled out to groups of staff every three weeks beginning from August 1 to mid-October. It is very important for you to complete your questionnaire because nobody knows your job better than you do.

The information you provide will enable the job class and rating committees to accurately rate your job.

The university has provided release time from work so that you can meet with a member of the USW job evaluation committee who will guide you through the questionnaire by clarifying questions and probing to help you describe the work you do. Your manager knows that you are receiving the questionnaire and that she/he must arrange release time for you to complete it.

It is true that the questionnaire is coming at a poor time for many of us who are so busy now with the new school year. We all want to do the best job possible for U of T, its faculty, students and our colleagues. However, we need to make completion of the questionnaire a priority too.

It is your only opportunity to describe the work you actually do at U of T.

Even if the level of skill, effort and responsibility is the same, women can still get paid less for their work than men. If you think you are being underpaid because you're a woman, check out the facts at www.eoc.org.uk/timetogeteven or call our Helpline on 0845 601 5901.

**WHAT'S A
nice girl
LIKE YOU DOING
IN A PAY GAP
LIKE THIS?**



Women. Men. Different. Equal.
Equal Opportunities Commission

It's time to get even.

The final stage of data collection

The first group of USW members received their web-based version of the Joint University of Toronto/ USW Job Evaluation Questionnaire on August 1. During August, September and October the questionnaire will be sent to all USW staff.

This is your opportunity to make visible all aspects of your job and to give information essential to its evaluation.

The questionnaire sums up years of

research by Local 1998's Job

Evaluation Committee; it was refined through more than 1600 interviews and in-depth reviews of job descriptions with our members. Then the questionnaire was shared and revised with the University before being adapted to a streamlined, online format.

We thank all members who participated in interviews using earlier versions of the

questionnaire, and suggest that you use your

previous questionnaire as a guide to complete the online version.

If you are unable to find your copy of your questionnaire, please contact us at jec@usw1998.ca and we will send you a copy.

Posters shown from the UK EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION.

**We need to hear from you now.
It can't be put off until later.**

We need to document your duties, skills and experience. The job descriptions issued by Human Resources are sometimes unreliable regarding the level of independence, judgment and expertise of a position. Many job descriptions are inaccurate, incomplete or out-of-date. Few describe working conditions.

We have uncovered problems with classifications the University has been using for more than twenty years. Too wide a range of responsibilities and requirements often exists within job classes.

For example, the generic job description for the Clerk III, 05N level, calls for high school graduation and two years of basic clerical experience. However, members working under this same classification fill jobs that require university degrees and experience managing

experimental laboratories. This winter, a position at this level was posted which detailed conventional reception duties and then

"The job descriptions issued by Human Resources are sometimes unreliable regarding the level of independence, judgement and expertise of a position. Many are inaccurate, incomplete or out-of-date. Few describe working conditions."

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on the move

Local news for members of Steelworkers Local 1998



Financial Secretary Linda Wilding models the latest Steelworker Labour Day denim jacket. March in the Parade with the Steelworkers on Labour Day and receive a free Steelworker jacket along with admission to the Exhibition grounds! Spend the day at the Ex, then catch the Steel bus back to the Steelhall for a BBQ dinner and more family friendly activities.

The *Youth Union Movement (YUM)* would like to invite members of Local 1998 and their families to an afternoon of free performances on Saturday September 1st by up-and-coming local artists, performers and entertainers celebrating the Labour Movement, Youth Activism and the RESPECT Campaign. The event kicks off at 1pm at Nathan Philips Square.

YUM is a Toronto & York Region Labour Council initiative.

Local 1998 has joined the neighbourhood friendly community initiative known as *Pedestrian Sundays* in Toronto's historic **Baldwin Village**.

Pedestrian Sundays take place the third Sunday in July, August and September from 11a.m. to 10p.m.

While there, be sure to visit the Local 1998 table and speak with your fellow members (members **Lori Wells** and **Victoria Iglaacs** pictured).

Explore shops and food from around the world or simply help celebrate **Baldwin Village's** vibrant culture!



Jim Loney speaks to attendees at a lunchtime meeting on *The Dynamics of Violence and the Struggle for Social Change*.

Loney was a member of the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) delegation that was kidnapped in Baghdad in 2005. CPT Iraq team member Tom Fox was murdered two weeks before Jim, Harmeet Singh Sooden and Norman Kember were rescued. Jim has been a member of CPT since 2000 and has served on projects in Palestine, Esgenoopetij/Burnt Church, NB; Kenora, ON, and Iraq.



P RIDE PARADE TORONTO, 2007. LOCAL 1998 MARCHES (L TO R): TAMARA PRAVICA, MARTIN AIELLO, ALEX THOMSON, DAVID CHEW, AND ALEX THOMSON.

members

Newsletter Committee

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Allan Revich

Layout & Design

Kim Walker

Graphics

Kim Walker
Canadian Association of
Labour Media (CALM)

Photography & Images

Kim Walker
Linda Wilding

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All inquiries and submissions are encouraged. Submissions by email are preferred.

Non-email submissions should be on a 3.5" disk or CD accompanied by a hard copy.

STEELDRUM directory
t 416.506.9090 f 416.506.0640 info@usw1998.ca

who
we
are





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THE COUNTDOWN TO Bargaining 2008 at U of T has begun with nominations scheduled for September 10th. This will be the fourth set of negotiations for all the units in our local, and we want to build upon the gains that we've made in the previous three collective agreements.

Although the collective agreements don't expire until next June, we are starting to prepare now so that the negotiating committees that you elect will have plenty of time to find out which issues are important to you, do research and develop proposals. We will be sending out surveys and holding lunchtime meetings on all campuses so that we can hear your views.

The next release time local meeting for staff-appointed members will be on October 16th and the new negotiating committees will be at the meeting. Don't forget that staff-appointed members are able to leave work at 3 pm to attend the meeting. This time is paid work time and does not have to be made up. Managers are informed of the meeting in advance.

A major issue that will be on the table is the Pay Equity/Job Evaluation project. The work which is occurring now involves grouping similar jobs into Job Classes (see Job Evaluation report) and rating these jobs. A point score is the end result of the rating of jobs and this score lands in a band that is a range. An essential aspect of this process is examining the new job classes and the ratings and

ensuring that everything is compliant with the pay equity act. A very important component of the Job Evaluation project is wages and they will be negotiated next year.

Your input is essential to the success of the project as we need you to give us a complete picture of your job via the questionnaire. The examples you provide of the decisions you make, the responsibilities you have and other important features of your job, will be what the joint union and university committees use to evaluate the work that you do.

We've found that the interviews take about an hour and a half and filling in the online questionnaire takes about the same amount of time. Using your questionnaire from the interview and a brief log of your work to come up with examples is what takes the longest amount of time. While we know that for many people this is a very busy time of year, the university has granted work time to have the interview and fill in the online questionnaire. Technical issues beyond our control delayed the launch of the online questionnaire by a month, so we need your help in ensuring that we meet the deadline of January 1, 2008.

Another major issue that we're currently working on in the staff-appointed unit is ensuring that good jobs remain in the bargaining unit. Many members have told us that they are concerned about jobs either moving out of our bargaining unit or seeing new jobs created as excluded jobs that should be in the union. A broad and diverse bargaining unit creates many opportunities

for advancement for union members and members want to maintain this. We have had several meetings with U of T and are working with Lawyers Mary Cornish from Cavaluzzo, Hayes, Shilton, McIntyre and Cornish, and

"Your input is essential to the success of the job evaluation project... The examples you provide of the features of your job will be what the joint union and university committees use to evaluate the work you do."

Marie Kelly from the Steelworkers. Marie was our lawyer for the certification process.

The new union cards are finally in and we will begin mailing them out to members very soon. You will also receive a local 1998 union card in the mailing.

The 2007 to 2008 school year will be an intense one for us as we'll be finishing the Pay Equity/Job Evaluation process, ensuring that good jobs remain in our bargaining unit, and developing proposals for the bargaining table that represent the priorities for members and protect their rights.

Above all, let us know what you think. Every member has a role to play over the next year. Participation can range from filling out the Job Evaluation questionnaire and the bargaining survey to attending a lunchtime meeting and/or other union meetings, joining the CAT team to ensure that your department is in our communication network, becoming a steward, a health and safety activist or a member of the negotiating team. We can succeed, but your involvement is the key that will ensure success.

■ Allison Dubarry, President Local 1998



BALDWIN VILLAGE PEDESTRIAN SUNDAY, AUGUST 26th, 2007. LOCAL 1998 MEMBERS GAVE OUT BALLOONS, STICKERS AND TALKED WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

on other fronts

relevant news
for steelworkers

Right to bargain a constitutional right

IN A HISTORIC MOVE, THE SUPREME Court of Canada has ruled that collective bargaining is a 'constitutional right'.

In 2001, the Liberal government in British Columbia passed a controversial law that nullified a number of collective agreement provisions (such as bumping rights and protection against contracting out) in the health care sector. The law also went on to ban employers and unions from bargaining on those issues in future.

The unions challenged the law, arguing that it violated the Charter's guarantee of freedom of association. The Supreme Court upheld the B.C. government's position. However, on June 8, 2007, the Supreme Court reversed itself, holding that "the grounds advanced in the earlier decisions for the exclusion of collective bargaining from the Charter's protection of freedom of association do not withstand principled scrutiny and should be rejected."

The Supreme Court based its decision on the following: Collective bargaining has long been recognized as a fundamental aspect of Canadian society; International law protects collective bargaining as part of freedom of association; and the protection of bargaining under section 2(d) of the Charter is consistent with the Charter's underlying values, including human dignity, equality, liberty, respect for the autonomy of the person and the enhancement of democracy.

However, the right to bargain is not absolute.



Section 2(d) of the Charter protects only against "substantial interference" with associational activity. The Court held that the government's legislation "seriously undercut(s) or undermine(s) the activity of workers joining together to pursue the common goals of negotiating workplace conditions and terms of employment with their employer that we call collective bargaining." By invalidating existing agreements, the law undermined the past bargaining processes that formed the basis for these agreements; by prohibiting employers and unions from bargaining on these issues in future, the law undermined future bargaining over these matters.

As a result, the Supreme Court ruled that certain provisions of the challenged legislation were unconstitutional. However, it suspended its declaration for 13 months to allow the B.C. government to address the repercussions of its decision.

Adapted from the June 2007 CALM Newsletter by Charlene Wiseman. Wiseman is a labour lawyer with Sack Goldblatt Mitchell in Toronto.



Make history: Make every vote count!

THE LABOUR COUNCIL OF TORONTO AND YORK REGION has officially endorsed the proposal for a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) voting system in Ontario and joined the "Vote Yes for MMP" campaign.

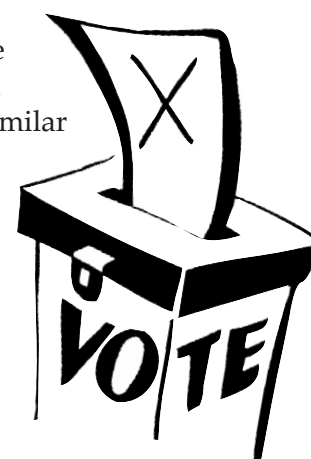
Five years ago, Labour Council came out in support of the need to reform the electoral system in Canada. It recognized that the results of our first-past-the-post system gave unwarranted majorities to political parties without the support of the majority of voters. Some form of proportional representation would be a much better way of electing our governments.

The Liberal government has followed through with its pledge to allow a full review of Ontario's electoral system. It created a Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform, an independent body empowered to study and consult widely with Ontarians. The Citizens Assembly has finished its work, and has recommended that Ontario should change its voting system to an MMP voting system similar to those used in New Zealand, Germany, Scotland and Wales.

This system combines strong local representation while ensuring that parties win seats in proportion to their overall voter support. Ontario would have 90 ridings plus another 39 at-large seats which would be filled from a list depending on the percentage of votes the various parties received. The Assembly picked this system because it gives voters more choice, fairer results and true majority rule, and has tended to produce legislatures with more women and diverse representation.

There will be a full referendum on MMP to coincide with the October provincial election. In order to pass, the MMP option will have to receive a double 60% majority and 60% of votes cast, and a majority vote in 60% of Ontario ridings. If the proposal fails, even by a handful of votes, it will quite likely be a long time before the people of Ontario have another opportunity to address the problem.

FIND OUT MORE: VOTEFORMMP.CA



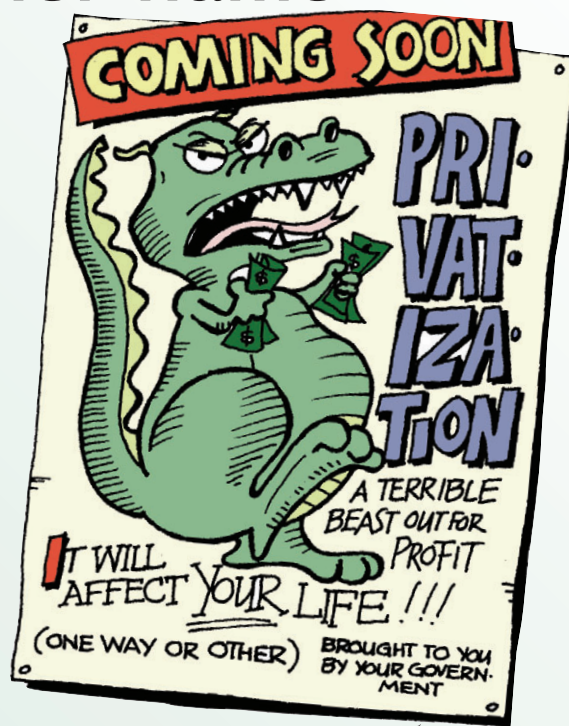
A rose by any other name

PRVATIZATION HAS SUCH AN UGLY connotation that its proponents often have to reword the word itself to make it more palatable.

After all, who would have any problem with terms like 'partnership', 'cooperation' or 'alternatives'? Let us look at the real meaning behind the terminology.

Public-private partnerships

This is the most common term bandied about by proponents of privatization and it sure sounds good. Faced with increasing costs, governments at all levels and of all political stripes turn to the private sector for a joint venture or partnership. A company, or group of companies, bid on large government projects to finance, design, build and operate public facilities and associated services. The inevitable result is escalating costs, loss of public control, and poor service delivery. Despite the poor track record on these public private partnerships (P3s), some governments are now making the availability of public funds contingent on consideration of P3s. The desperate need for infrastructure makes this a ripe area for privatization.



Contracting-out

This is where employers engage outside suppliers or private companies to deliver services rather than doing it themselves. In order to turn a profit, the private company has to pay lower wages and has lower staffing levels. However, ...continued on page 7

Your job evaluation questionnaire

...continued from page 1

asked for the ability to edit correspondence in four languages!

All jobs need to be re-evaluated and grouped into appropriate new classes

Fair salaries and pay equity depend on each position being in the correct job class; it's the law that male- and female-dominated jobs of equal value must be compensated equally. To classify each job correctly, we need to understand the skills, education and experience your job requires as well as the scope of your independence and responsibility. We need specific examples, taken from your day-to-day experience.

Take advantage of the job evaluation interview

Interviews are recommended because staff often underreport their responsibilities and tasks. An experienced interviewer will guide you through the questionnaire by posing probing questions that will help you describe your job.

The interview will take about one and a half hours. At the end of the interview you will have a copy of the questionnaire with detailed notes that you can use when you prepare and submit the web-based version.

Your supervisor must allow you time to meet with a representative from the Union's Job Evaluation Team. It is in your best interest to do so. This is your opportunity to have input into the way your work is evaluated and compensated.

Some payslips are impossible to understand

Deductions		Amount
TAX		273.31
NAT INS		146.34
BEING A WOMAN		559.01

Sometimes women get paid less simply because they're women
To find out more go to www.eoc.org.uk/timetogeteven
or call our Helpline on 0845 601 5901

It's time to get even.


Women, Men, Different, Equal.
Equal Opportunities Commission

Does your job description capture what you do?

The following statements are excerpted from members' job descriptions:

"Under the direction of a manager or a senior team member, the incumbent performs simple to complex tasks with a level of competence relative to the level of the position."

"Effectively delivers user needs while ensuring that policies and procedures are adhered to."

"Exercises judgment in decision-making situations."

"The incumbent is responsible for running the office and supporting up to 7 different personality professors (sic)."

In order to rate jobs, examples of what you do are needed to illustrate statements like these, so make sure that you include specific examples.

Preparing for the interview and questionnaire

- Read the entire questionnaire before filling it out.
- Review your job description to determine if it is current and accurate.
- Note if there have been changes to your job description. The Union has observed that the educational requirements for many positions have been downgraded.
- Does it reflect reorganization that has taken place in your department?
- The questionnaire asks you to detail your tasks and responsibilities.
- In particular, you will be asked to provide examples of decisions you make, interactions with others and activities that require sustained concentration.
- Keep a log of your activities for a week or two; it will suggest many of the examples required by the questionnaire.
- A review of your calendar, appointment book, client log or Corporate Time will remind you of your many activities.
- Many departments in the University have unique yearly cycles. Therefore, it is helpful to review your own yearly calendar. Note peak times and duties that may be characteristic of particular periods.

QUESTIONS? jec@usw1998.ca 416. 506. 9090

Five steps for the Job Evaluation/Pay Equity Process

- Review the questionnaire and your job description.
- Meet with a member of the Job Evaluation team.
- Enter your information online by the deadline.
- Your manager will review your information and may add comments.
- Read your manager's comments and make a final response if necessary.

Next Steps for the Job Evaluation Committee

The Job Class Committee sorts jobs into job classes. A job class is defined as one or more positions which:

- have similar duties and responsibilities
- require similar qualifications
- are filled by similar recruiting procedures
- have the same compensation schedule, salary grade or range of salary rates

The questionnaires for each job class are sent to the Rating Committee, resulting in a point score for jobs. Jobs will be placed into bands and the Negotiating Committee will negotiate the salary level for each band.

QUESTIONS? jec@usw1998.ca 416. 506. 9090

Tips for Applying for a New Job at the University



AMONG THE VARIOUS ROLES and responsibilities of stewards, there is the responsibility to make sure that any of our members receiving a Notice of Organizational Change or a Notice of Layoff are treated fairly and in full compliance with the terms of the Collective Agreement.

Since Article 12 covers the rights of our members and the obligations of the University regarding layoff provisions as well as job posting provisions, Grievance co-chairs are frequently called upon to counsel members on the job application process. With the exception of the redeployment provisions found in Article 12:08(b), most of the information provided to members facing imminent job loss is equally applicable to all of our members seeking new opportunities within the University.

For those members who have received a Notice of Layoff there are two extremely important provisions in the Collective Agreement that will help them to successfully find new positions within the bargaining unit. The first is that they enter the redeployment pool 12 weeks before the date that they are laid off. This allows them to seek new jobs with the advantages of redeployment pool status while still receiving full salary and benefits. After their layoff date passes, while no longer receiving a salary, they can continue in the redeployment pool for a total of up to 24 months from the date that they received their layoff notice depending on seniority. For example, a member with 9 years of seniority who receives a Notice of Layoff has 12 weeks to look for another position from within the redeployment pool while still working and receiving full salary and benefits. Near the end of the 12 week period the member can choose to remain in the pool for about 15 more months (18 months from the date of notice, less the 12 weeks spent in the pool while at work) while also getting EI benefits or even working somewhere else besides the University. After the initial 12 weeks of "testing the water" in the redeployment pool the member might decide to sever her relationship with the University and accept the enhanced severance package (18 weeks pay for the 9 year employee), or she might decide that she is likely to find a job from within the pool and to remain in it until she finds one. For members with 10 or more years of seniority, the same rights apply except they can remain in the redeployment pool for up to 24 months instead of up to 18 months.

The second important job-finding advantage for people in the redeployment pool is that the University's usual right to hire the "most" qualified



candidate no longer applies. People in the redeployment pool must be hired for any position that they apply for that is at the same pay level or lower and for which they are qualified to perform, with up to one month of on the job training and/or experience. Pool candidates are also entitled to have their application considered before those of either internal or external candidates. Since the University does not tell the Local when members of the redeployment pool apply for jobs, it is very important that anyone, who is in the pool and feels that they are not being fairly considered, contacts a Union representative to let us know. We can and we do intervene with Human Resources when redeployment pool candidates are cheated out of positions to which they are entitled.

But, knowing your rights is only half the battle. Equally important is to know how to effectively exercise them. Part of exercising the right to have the applications of redeployment pool candidates considered first, and the rights of all internal candidates to be considered before the applications of external candidates is to present the University with a compelling application. The most common reason that the University gives us for not hiring or interviewing is that "applicant was not qualified". Frequently we find that our member may actually have been qualified, but that important qualifications that they felt should have been "obvious" were left off the application. The university then points to these omissions as "proof" that our member was not qualified.

Another factor to keep in mind is that while the University must consider internal applicants before posting externally, internal applicants must apply before the deadline listed on the posting for USW internal candidates. The University is not required to consider any application from a USW member submitted after that date.

It is vitally important that when applying for a position within the University, members carefully review the qualifications requested in the posting and list every single one that they have, nearly "word-for-word" on their applications. All internal applicants also have the right to receive a copy of the full job description of any job they apply for. Also important to remember is that you can have valid qualifications from hobbies, volunteer work or work experience acquired outside of the university. So if a position requires "some experience in maintaining a website" and the jobs held at the University did not involve web experience - but the member maintains a personal site or the website of their family, or volunteer organization - that member should include the relevant experience. One should never put anything in a job application that is untrue - but one must also never forget that a job application is an opportunity to present the best possible version of the skills and abilities held. The application process is designed to allow people to present themselves as the best possible candidate for the positions that they apply for. In order for the University to see an applicant as the most qualified the applicant must include as many of the listed requested qualifications as possible.

■ **Allan Revich, Grievance Co-Chair**

do's & don'ts

- do** include every single requested qualification you have
- do** use the same words used in the posting to describe your qualifications
- do** remember to include qualifications obtained outside the University
- do** include skills obtained through staff development and continuing education courses
- do** increase your "hireability" by broadening your skills and education (take staff development courses, build a website, create a database of contacts or collectables)
- do** take advantage of your rights under the Collective Agreement

- don't** omit a requested qualification because it seems "obvious"
- don't** include a qualification that you cannot confirm in an interview
- don't** include a qualification that you cannot demonstrate if hired
- don't** fabricate qualifications, experience or education
- don't** accept inappropriate rejections - contact your Union representative

news news

Young women earn higher education, but not higher wages

S TATISTICS CANADA data revealed that in 2001, 31.3% of young women had earned a university degree, almost double the number in 1981 when only 16.2% of women graduated from university.



In comparison, degree rates for men increased to 21.6 in 2001 from 15.5 in 1981.

While women have improved their qualifications, *StatsCan* noted that they have yet not managed to reduce the wage gap. In fact, the wage gap has actually widened at the university level. *StatsCan* cited public spending cuts as most damaging as they were “felt by health and education graduates (female-dominated fields) and the high tech boom helped engineering and other technology graduates (male-dominated fields)”, effectively undermining what gains

women had made through pay equity.

This shows why we must be persistent if we are to achieve pay equity and it is why Local 1998 is engaged in a major effort to improve pay equity at the University of Toronto. It isn't enough for us to simply rely on the one time pay equity adjustment that took effect in 1990.

In August, U of T staff began to complete their job evaluation questionnaires, ensuring that we have the most up to date and complete information available about their work.



CAS workload crisis puts children at risk

A “WORKLOAD CRISIS” is putting children at risk, says Erin Kinsley, vice-president of Local 304 of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU).

“Workers are not given sufficient time to complete...(documents) to close a file,” continued Kinsley. Local 304 represents Children's Aid Society (CAS) staff in the York Region.

The agency executive director, Martin McNamara, said files are considered closed when a worker finishes providing services, even if final documentation is incomplete.

York Region Children's Aid Society (CAS) workers set up picket lines at four offices Monday August 27 after an 89 per cent vote to reject the agency's latest contract offer. The union is seeking improvements in wages and realistic workloads that will allow them to maintain quality in service. Both sides have said the issue of workload is at the forefront of the dispute.

Recent trends amongst CAS workers in York Region illustrate the impact of worker dis-satisfaction. In the past two years alone, 50 workers have left for jobs with better workloads and more money, Kinsley said in a recent article in the *Toronto Star*.

The recent *UofT Staff Environment Survey* revealed workload is a concern for staff.

Climate labour assembly a ‘beacon of light’

In May I attended the *North American Labor Assembly on Climate Crisis in New York City* (NYC) as a Steelworkers delegate.

I went to the conference not as an expert in environmental issues or climate change, but as a union activist concerned about global warming, hoping to find some solutions, and a little worried that I would be spending two days hearing about our impending doom. I did not expect that, with over 200 delegates from more than 20 countries, the conference would be a beacon of hope not only for stopping climate change, but also for the manufacturing crisis.

The theme of the Assembly was that global warming will only be solved by labour, government and industry working together to create well paying manufacturing jobs in the field of renewable energy sources. It will not be accomplished by small changes, but by a large scale reorganization of the energy industry. It will require extensive retraining programs and government of energy and industrial emissions.

These changes are possible and already taking place in Europe. Renewable energy industries (and other industries) must be local, because one of the greatest sources of carbon emissions and pollution is the shipping industry. Labour must take the lead or be left behind.

The conference started on a high note with a Robert Socolow of Princeton University's “wedge

theory”. He proposed we spend the next 50 years freezing levels of carbon emissions and spend the next 50 years lowering them. To maintain current carbon emissions, he said, would involve cutting them by 7 billion tons per year. If each billion of these tons were seen as a single wedge, then we could look at reducing the emissions in seven manageable chunks. One wedge could be as simple as driving cars that give twice the gas mileage. Another would be to stop all deforestation immediately. A third would be cut electricity use by 25%. Four more similar projects and the mission would be accomplished.

USW International President, Leo Gerard gave one of the most inspiring talks. He told us that Steel has a history of commitment to environmental issues and urged us not to believe employers who tell us we can't have good, well-paying jobs and a healthy environment -- they're the same bosses who told us we couldn't have well-paying jobs and good pensions, or well-paying jobs and a safe work environment. Leo described a partnership where Steelworkers converted former steel plants into factories producing windmills to generate wind power, creating 1000 Steelworkers jobs along the way.

I left NYC convinced that something can be done about global warming, that it can be done by working people, and that as Steelworkers we are already moving down that path.

■ **Alex Thomson, Victoria University**

A rose by any other name

...continued from page 4

this often results in poorer quality, loss of control and accountability, and greater risks to workers in terms of health and safety. Other terms for this form of privatization are outsourcing or sub-contracting.

Competitive bidding

Governments invite private companies to bid on the delivery of public services that have traditionally been provided by the public sector or non-profit service providers. Very often, the lowest bids are selected, again with disastrous consequences in terms of poorer quality, loss of control and accountability. Another term used for competitive bidding is alternative service delivery.

Restructuring

Governments and public services often use restructuring to hive off certain aspects to be run by a private company. Under the guise of local control, proposals for regionalization, amalgamation or integrated service delivery create quasi-public sector bodies to oversee requests for bids, replace elected boards with appointed ones and introduce contracting-out and competitive bidding.

The immortal bard once wrote “a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” I say that privatization by any other name still stinks.

■ **P. C. Choo, Admissions & Awards**
With notes from CUPE/CALM



The problem of uncertainty:

SICK BUILDING SYNDROME emerged in the 1980s as an array of ill effects without specific cause, affecting primarily women working in late twentieth century offices.



sick building syndrome

Sick Building Syndrome & the Problem of Uncertainty:
by Michelle Murphy, Duke University Press, 2006
ISBN-10: 0-8223-36716-5

An "occurrence of an excessive number of complaints by the occupants of a building," Sick Building Syndrome was defined by its very lack of causal explanation; its effects were varied and nebulous, utterly unlike those of known workplace poisons such as asbestos.

University of Toronto professor Michelle Murphy takes on the Gordian knot that is Sick Building Syndrome in her study of the struggles of lay people and experts to prove or disprove the existence of an environmental health problem. Her "history of a contested reality" documents that gender and environmental politics, science and the aggregate experiences of workers constructed a reality that then determined practice. The story is couched in an extensive account of the history of office work and the evolution of the industrial architecture that houses it.

The office at the rise of the twentieth century wore a proud cloak of middle class respectability. An exemplar of cleanliness and safety, it appeared as remote from the dangers of the mine or mill as it was from the body odour of manual labourers. For women, it promised "genteel" employment. Indeed, early campaigns to encourage women to develop the skills required in the office compared typewriting to playing the parlour piano.

This rosy picture was challenged when consciousness raising groups of the 1970s proposed that the same workplace is recklessly exploitive of women's labour. The accusation of gender oppression both triggered and buttressed the efforts of workers who had started to collect and document the perceived negative influence of the building upon the body that was manifested in a myriad of disparate physical complaints. They argued that the modern building where temperature, humidity and airflow were tightly controlled, which was dressed with mass produced synthetic materials in its furniture and carpeting and which contained technology including

computers, typewriters, cameras, telecommunications equipment and copiers that emitted radiation and/or fumes was, in itself, a hostile environment. Moreover, they alleged that science, industry and government had failed to study and understand this environment and had neither the means nor the intention to protect workers from its effects.

That the workplace was an overwhelmingly female one muddled the issue, and, at least initially, elicited a "diagnosis" of mass psychological illness and the corollary accusation that middle class, white women are both unreliable reporters of illness and prone to hysteria. Workers countered with their own appropriation of science and statistics; proponents of Sick Building Syndrome mapped a collection of diverse health effects that they understood to be the corollaries of the complex of fumes, bacteria and "pre-breathed" air. The ensuing awareness of clusters of illness and community exposures to chemicals were the result of lay people documenting their experiences. Similar instances of "popular epidemiology" mobilized the residents of New York's Love Canal and Massachusetts' Woburn.

Most readers would anticipate that Murphy's study of imperceptible exposures and transient complaints would weigh the interests and methodologies of toxicologists against those of community activists. It does, but her most arresting contribution to what she labels "the tangle" is her revelation of the

influence of nvironmental politics and the role played by the tobacco industry.

Murphy argues that the tobacco industry promoted acceptance of Sick Building Syndrome because it had an interest in asserting that a range of causes of indoor pollution - chemical contaminants, bacteria, humidity and mould attributed to faulty design, construction and maintenance - were all more hazardous than second hand smoke. It's aims were abetted by the Reagan administration which used ceaseless studies of supposedly sick buildings that yielded ambivalent results to neuter the powers of the Environmental Protection Agency. "Imperceptibility" was sought and valued by the state and corporations which used it to justify inaction.

Murphy's study is interesting because it is an exploration of the way diverse and competing players - women workers, toxicologists, environmental activists and scientists and corporations - constructed and created knowledge and determined ensuing practice out of nothing tangible. It encourages us to view similarly large expenditures of human energy and resources through a critical lens, always asking who benefits and who is served by studies that purport to be scientific and objective.

■ book review by *Carolellen Norskey, JEC*

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review

contact info

LOCAL 1998

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

Allison Dubarry, President
416.506.9090 x224
allison.dubarry@usw1998.ca

Robin Breon, Vice President
416.506.9090 x230
rbreon@usw1998.ca

Christine Beckermann, Recording Secretary
416.978.0220
c.beckermann@usw1998.ca

Linda Wilding, Financial Secretary
416.506.9090 x229
linda.wilding@usw1998.ca

Lee Jeffrey, Treasurer
416.978.5340
lee.jeffrey@utoronto.ca

Philip Murton, Guide
416.978.5271
philip.murton@utoronto.ca

Alex Thomson, Guard
416.585.4565 x3212
alex.thomson@utoronto.ca

Art Birkenbergs, Trustee
905.828.5254
abirkenb@utm.utoronto.ca

Lillian Lanca, Trustee
416.506.9090 x228
lanca@usw1998.ca

Melba Remedios, Trustee
melba.remedios@utoronto.ca

David Johnson, Unit Chairperson
University of St. Michael's College
416.926.1300
david.johnson@utoronto.ca

John Ankenman, Unit Chairperson
Victoria University
416.506.9090 x227
john.ankenman@usw1998.ca

David Chew, Unit Chairperson UTS
416.946.7990
dchew@uts.utoronto.ca

Lori Wells, Unit Chairperson, Casuals
416.978.3722 x226
lori.wells@utoronto.ca

STANDING COMMITTEES

Bylaws
David Johnson
(david.johnson@utoronto.ca)

Grievance
Lillian Lanca

(lanca@usw1998.ca)
Allan Revich
(arevich@usw1998.ca)

Health and Safety
Lee Jeffrey
(lee.jeffrey@utoronto.ca)
Sean Kearns
(sean.kearns@utoronto.ca)

Human Rights
Ruby Barker
(ruby.barker@utoronto.ca)
Melba Remedios
(melba.remedios@usw1998.ca)

Job Evaluation
Mary Bird, Robin Breon, P.C. Choo, Valerie Ferrier, Shelley Glazer, Pat Hood, Monique McNaughton, Carolellen Norskey, Melba Remedios, Martha Young
(jec@usw1998.ca)

Newsletter
P.C. Choo
(pcchoo@usw1998.ca)
Lori May
(lmay@oise.utoronto.ca)

Political Action
John Ankenman

(john.ankenman@usw1998.ca)
Christine Beckermann
(c.beckermann@usw1998.ca)

Women of Steel
Colleen Burke
(colleen.burke@utoronto.ca)
Sandra Grant
(s.grant@utoronto.ca)

SteelPride
Martin Aiello
(maiello@uts.utoronto.ca)
Nikki Redman
(nikki.redman@utoronto.ca)

GENERAL INFO

You can find us at:
Steelworkers Local 1998
25 Cecil Street, Third Floor
Toronto, ON M5T 1N1
e info@usw1998.ca
t 416.506.9090
w www.usw1998.ca