

## Quality Home Building for Vancouver Island

It's been a couple of decades in decline since Union Construction companies were building residential projects on Vancouver Island. That is beginning to change. At the start of 2004 I recognized that our Industrial work had all but disappeared and was not coming back in any big way soon, but, with a residential building boom all over our Island, we were provided the opportunity to do things a little different to maintain work for our membership. After crunching costs and exploring if this "opportunity" had any merit, I set out to meet with several of our signatory contractors to discuss the possibilities in this recently untested sector. Fueled by new emerging home technologies in Voice, Data and Video, Home Offices, Home Theatres and Home Security, using structured wiring throughout a new home increases the value (and the hours worked), many of our contractors see the same opportunity, resulting in many new projects in the Condo and High-rise markets all over the Island from Victoria to Courtenay going Union.



Dennis Nanos site Foreman for Houle on the Astoria project.



Apprentice, Brian Phillips working on the Bear Mountain Condo Project.

But, this is only the first step, getting the work, and getting the work done constitutes two separate sets of challenges. Many of those projects are underway and we have to prove ourselves in this sector, because the next place I would like to take us is the large subdivisions currently contemplated by our communities today. Much of this Industry is wired by unqualified trunk slammers, forcing us to compete with workers that are paid much less. We are going to have to go into each job with a professional will to win back this market, or we can sit at home wait for a pulp mill to call and let the trunk slammers eat our lunch. Residential construction work accounts for approximately 50% of all construction in Canada, and with expectations of our Island's population to double over the next decade; this is a market we can no longer afford to ignore. I am positive we are up to the challenge and with your hard work; I look forward to re-establishing ourselves as the preferred choice in this busy residential sector.

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### News/Notes:

- Office's will be closed Dec. 27 thru to Jan. 3, 2005
- Please come out to the December Unit Meetings to accept your Long Service Pins as attached

### Important:

- **Union dues change January 1, 2005. Please read the financial overview for details.**

# Business Managers Report



**Philip M. Venoit**  
Business Manager/Financial Secretary

In late August, President Hill called a meeting of all Inside and Outside Construction Local Union Business Managers. This meeting was a “wake up call” for the leaders of our Organization. Although we are making gains in some areas of both Canada and the United States, we need to be more consistent with those gains. These gains can be directly translated to market share in each sector of the construction business; Industrial, Commercial, Residential, Highways, Voice Data Video and Outside construction work. We all recognize that only bringing in new members is not the answer; that we must also bring in new contractors and do what we can to increase the amount of work our existing contractors are doing. This is the only way we can increase the value we set upon ourselves, by controlling the majority of the market. As usual, we had several speakers all of whom provided a piece of the aggregate but summed up in one sentence; “the only unions who will survive going into the next century are those with qualified workers who are professional in their day-to-day on the job conduct.”

Meanwhile at home in construction negotiations, both the Building Trades Council and the CLRA have applied to the BC Labour Relations Board for “bargaining in bad faith” as was reported in the last newsletter. The decision made by the Board in late October, was that both parties had been acting in bad faith and we were ordered back to the table with the offer to have someone from the Board to oversee those negotiations. No dates have been set as yet.

The Public Service Alliance strike action although far reaching on the National scene, had minimal impact on the Island saving our private marine section from losing cruise ship work and future scheduled work. All it would take is the hint of job action in the private marine shipbuilding industry and the owners of these

vessels would be taking their ships elsewhere this Winter & Spring. We worked closely with their strike coordination committee and I am happy to see their negotiations concluded with a collective agreement.

In continuation from the last newsletter, we are seeing a whole new BC Ferries that have truly changed their corporate structure. They may still prove to be a Crown Corporation (pending the BCMWU Supreme Court case) but they have moved to the “low bid” mentality, indifferent to social interests; a paramount shift from their 40 year history in marine shipbuilding and transportation. Although we know this to be shortsighted, we must also at this time shift with it. All this and more, they made crystal clear at their Annual General Meeting and we will likely see more bids to contract out several of the coastal routes to other private operators.

The Ministry of Highways has contracted out their maintenance work on the Vancouver Island Highways to Raylec Power a Local 230 contractor. Those workers have been offered a job by Raylec however, the decision of who will represent those workers will be made by the BCLRB in the near future.

Tradewinds Electric, a mid-island employer the IBEW had some past history with, have recently changed their name to Tyee Electric and I have declared them “HOT” as reported in the last newsletter story, “Organizing is our only way ahead.” Working for an employer whose position is adverse to the IBEW is a chargeable

offence which is explained in our Constitution. This contractor has picked up a good portion of work recently and to feed them qualified workers to complete their jobs will only help them to grow. If any member(s) are currently working for Tyee, I would strongly urge them to contact the Business Office ASAP prior to us taking the next step.

In 1992, twenty-six miners were killed at the Westray mine in Nova Scotia after the mine’s owners and managers repeatedly ignored safety warnings. Bill C-45 was introduced following a parliamentary report on this fatal tragedy which included several provisions furthering the liability of employers who put their workforce knowingly into high risk situations. If you feel at risk of injury with the work task that is being asked of you, please bring this up with your foreman or supervisor. In the Industrial Sector, Norske Skog Canada is responding with a fairly intensive safety program. All workers operating a forklift or JLG are required to have certification today. If you would like to take a course for either of these two pieces of operating equipment, please call the Victoria Office and Len will facilitate putting on the required courses.

I am proud to say it is shaping up to be busy over the next two (2) years in all of our sectors and I remain committed to winning back the residential sector we’ve let slip from our grasp over the past couple of decades. I wish all of you a very safe and happy Christmas Season and a prosperous New Year.



Members Paul Byrne and Rick Nohr join the protest outside BC Ferries Offices.

# Financial Overview

One accomplishment I am very proud of and which has been a difficult item to grapple with over the past two years has been getting our finances in order. When I took Office, we were faced with a real and significant increasing debt that had been around from past administrations. Not only have we managed to pay down over 2/3's of that debt but at the same time increased our net worth by over 1/4 million dollars. But, believe me, this has not been an easy task. Many sacrifices have been made to get us where we are today and the job is not over yet. What is even more surprising is in that 2 years we haven't had a large job to turn to and say we were able to increase our revenues (dues) because that Dam, Co-Gen, or Polar 8 for example. Although I am patiently

waiting for that day to come, I am not necessarily counting on it to pay our bills.

Article 25, Section 1 (j) of our Constitution states; "Making known the business of a Local Union, directly or indirectly, to any employer, employer-supported organization, or their representatives", is a chargeable offence. Therefore I cannot go into any more detail than I already have in this update. For the first time ever, the Business Manager of this Local Union went to all 6 unit meetings with our Financial Statement on prepared overhead transparencies and in paper form to illustrate to the membership what financial responsibilities we are exacting on your behalf in our job as Financial Secretary of your Local Union. If you were unable to attend

those meetings, any member who wishes to see our Financial Statements over the past couple of years please do not hesitate to contact me in our Victoria Office to arrange a time for me to go over them with you.

On another topic, our dues motion has come back from the International Office. We will thus be instituting the \$1.00 increase to the non-working portion effective January 1, 2005 in lieu of the full working dues following the month after you were laid-off. This is yet another one of the items I said I would accomplish prior to becoming your Business Manager. For clarity the out-of-work portion for "A" members is \$32.30 and working dues will be calculated at two times (2x) your hourly rate plus \$32.30.

## Sector Report

**Appliance Repair** – After wrapping up Negotiations with this employer we discovered our members had not been paid the right wage rates stemming from the last Agreement, however we were able to rectify the oversight prior to becoming a problem.

**Cablevision** – The "job share" agreement has been resolved, some new temporary staff from the local high school are being employed in programming, and we believe more work is coming in strung fibre.

**Construction – Industrial** – This sector is still slow, but our understanding is Norske Skog will be spending some money in their mills next year, the LNG plant slated for Nanaimo is getting past their project hurdles with environmental assessments, and BC Hydro has disclosed their intention on building a new cogeneration plant in Nanaimo, and has awarded the project to Duke Point Power Ltd., so next year we should see some work in this very quiet sector.

**Commercial** – Canem Systems has picked up the Capital Regional District Headquarters, Raylec has picked up a project on the Pat Bay Highway, Fraser City Installations has picked up the runway lighting at Victoria Airport, and Emery has picked up the Premier Facility.

**Residential** – The Belvedere is the latest condo to be announced to be built in Victoria by Concert

Properties and again will be built 100% Union, Canem Systems has picked up the Aberdeen Seniors Centre, Houle Nanaimo picked up The Fountains and Arrowsmith Seniors Intermediate Care. Raylec has picked up Trumpeters Landing in Courtenay.

**Federal Government Dockyard** – The Submarine HMCS Victoria is about to undergo her mid-life refit with over 85,000 man hours and growing fast due to limited amount of space.

**Motor Winders** – Continue to be fairly busy with work coming from the Pulp and Paper Mills.

**Municipal Government** – The main focus at this time in the City of Victoria, as well as most of the rest of the Islands cities and towns,

is preparing for the Christmas Season with the usual extensive decorations which light up our streets at this time.

**Private Marine** – The announcement of 6 new 100'YAG's to be built by Victoria Shipyard to start in the spring with an option to build 2 more is good news for our Marine section. Holland American Cruise Line was happy with our members work on the Ryndam and will be back in the spring with the Statendam. There is also many other Federal projects coming out to tender in the near future and we are keeping our eye on all of them.

**Provincial Health Care** – I was invited to the HEU Convention and attended an evening dinner while I was in Vancouver on other business, Carol James leader of the BC NDP was one of the evenings speakers, who said privatization threatens to divide BC into "health-care haves and have-nots" and vowed to end the practice, anyway you slice our Health Care system is still in a bloody mess.

**Railway** – The E&N Railway is still awaiting a final outcome of the proposed transfer of the title to a municipal society made up of Coastal Communities.

**Wholesale** – Thanks to Westburne Electric Supply (BC) and Houle Electric for providing the material and expertise in wiring a Habitat for Humanity home in Nanaimo.



Mike Barker, Foreman and Dave Ryan, Journeyman finish up the new Shoppers Drug Mart in Port Alberni.

# Dispatch and Training

As long as I've been a member of this Local Union, the Dispatch System has always been held in contention from time to time. It has evolved over recent years from the use of a card file to a 365 day bank computer program which accounts for every member's days they've been employed or unemployed and recalculates this on a day by day basis. Remember, you don't lose a day you worked until the same day passes the following year. When you go inactive has no impact on your standing or ability to move up the List as well as when you are traveling for the first six (6) months. The Dispatch Policy has been re-written to conform to this practice over the past few years and with a clearer understanding of its operation. This Policy will be placed on the Local's Website under the "work" tab in the near future so you can familiarize yourself with it. One change to the Dispatch Policy which will come into effect July 1, 2005 is that you will be required to contact the Dispatcher and let either Len or Michelle know if you are interested in traveling outside our geographic jurisdiction. We call everyone on the "Out of Work List" for calls off Vancouver Island and currently have 16 members working in Alberta, but we had to call over 100 members before we found 16 interested in going. This is wasteful in time and money for our staff so simply let us know if you wish to work off the Island and it will be signified by data code "T" beside your name on the "List". We will continue to call everyone for travel calls until July 1, 2005 thus giving all members time to understand and accommodate for this change.

As we come into the Fall and Winter months, we will be putting together as many courses as we can fill. We've included a course list for you to fill out and send back to the Victoria Office so Len can make arrangements for the courses you want. Along with those, we would like to put on some forklift and JLG courses as the Mills require them if you are going to be operating these machines in their mills.

Preceding the first National Training Conference which was cosponsored by the IBEW & Canadian Electrical Contractors Association (CECA), IBEW



New Apprentice Christian Zarry helps sort out Data closet.

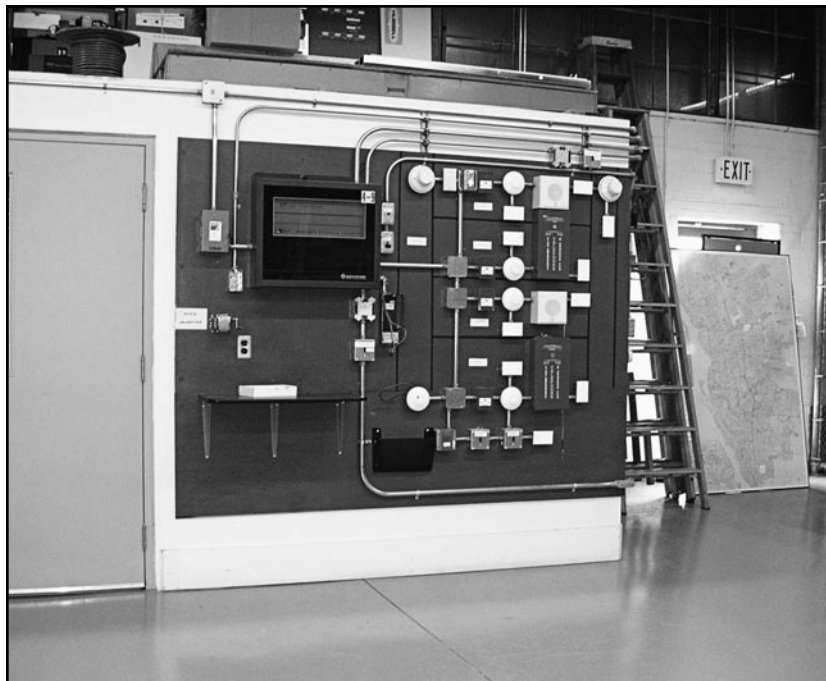
Local 353 Toronto offered a tour of their training centre which is equipped for training in Data, Fire Alarm, Fibre Optic and Conduit bending to name a few. During the Conference, there were presentations on Barriers to Success in Apprenticeship, Essential Skills Assessment, Workplace Mentoring Program, as well as workshops on Best Practices for Joint Apprenticeship Committees, Apprentice screening Protocols and Interview Techniques for selecting Apprentices.

The delegates discussed the idea of a National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee and a National standard for the Electrical Trade which would include:

- 1) Essential Skills Assessment
- 2) Standard Entry Level Certification
- 3) Remedial Training
- 4) Support system for Apprentices
- 5) Interprovincial Licensing
- 6) Compulsory Certification (Provincial)

An Action Plan was also developed by Delegates which included:

- 1) To strike a National Joint Committee
- 2) To create an Annual Conference
- 3) To begin Political Lobbying for funding



Electrical Lab at Local 105 Hamilton, Ont.

Our Apprentices hours have been entered and updated into an electronic format and calculated on a month by month basis. This is leaps and bounds from the paper and pencil format we have used all these years and I'm happy we are finally coming in to the electronic age for tabulating our apprentice hours. Please remember, if you are organizing (working non-union) remember you need to forward all the hours you've worked for non-IBEW contractors so we can adjust your hours for this time worked.

Remember, your \$400 bursary for passing school still requires you to come to four (4) Union meetings per school year.