



CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
BRITISH COLUMBIA DIVISION

510 - 4940 Canada Way, Burnaby, British Columbia V5G 4T3
www.cupe.bc.ca
Tel: 604-291-9119 Fax: 604-291-9043

Memo

Date: August 10, 2009
To: CUPE BC Locals
From: Mark Hancock, Secretary-Treasurer
RE: BC Nurses Union Suspension from BC Federation of Labour
and Labour Councils in BC

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

On July 30th, 2009 the Canadian Labour Congress found the BC Nurses Union to be raiding under the Canadian Labour Congress Constitution and imposed sanctions on the union. Subsequently on August 4, 2009 the Officers of the BC Federation of Labour met and passed a resolution to comply with the CLC decision to suspend the BC Nurses Union from activities of the BC Federation of Labour. These actions came after a complaint from both the Hospital Employees Union and the BC Government and Service Employees Union to the CLC in February of this year. The BCNU has also been directed from the Canadian Federation of Nurses to cease the actions that are found to be raiding under the CLC constitution.

The CLC raiding charges and subsequent sanctions have been as a result of the BC Nurses Union establishing an associate membership program which invites all LPNs and other healthcare employees to join. The BCNU website outlining the associate membership program also states that associate membership may be a first step to full membership in the BC Nurses Union. On May 13, 2009 after the website was established, Debra McPherson, President of the BC Nurses Union, circulated a letter inviting Licensed Practical Nurses, members of the Hospital Employees Union, to become "associate members" of the BCNU. As an affiliate of the Canadian Labour Congress, the BCNU must not "try to organize or represent employees who have an established bargaining relationship with another affiliate....".

For more information on the background to this dispute a website (www.respectsolidarity.ca) has been established by the Hospital Employees' Union, BC Government and Service Employees' Union, United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 1518, CUPE British Columbia and the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 882.

The BCNU campaign continues despite the sanctions and communications from a number of labour leaders and organizations. We are therefore asking you to talk to your friends and colleagues who are BCNU members about this important issue. Encourage them to speak to their stewards and leadership to stop their campaign to move members of other unions into the BCNU. We all value nurses, both as health care providers and members of our labour movement in BC and across Canada. This is a critical time for health care on BC. It is time for all unions to share their commitment to public health care and improving the working conditions of members, not to spend resources and time fighting each other.

In solidarity,

Mark



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June 4, 2009

Debra McPherson
British Columbia Nurses' Union
4060 Regent Street
Burnaby BC V5C 6P5

Dear Ms. McPherson:

I am writing to have my name struck from your mailing list. Although I have, in the past, enjoyed reading about the hard-working and caring nurses of British Columbia, I am appalled by some of the recent actions of the British Columbia Nurses' Union leadership.

I am proud to come from a family of women who chose as their career the most honourable occupation, nursing. All nine of my mother's sisters spent their lives caring for others and continued to nurse until their retirement. My mother, after years of practicing her profession, moved on to train new registered nurses. Later on, she was one of the pioneers in establishing the Licensed Practical Nursing program in British Columbia. It has become very clear to many of us in the labour movement that your leadership has chosen to ignore the long and strong collective collaboration between health care providers in British Columbia.

My, how things have changed. I once sat with you as an Officer of the BC Federation of Labour when there were similar charges against another union just a few years ago. Your absolute distaste for the situation showed on many occasions when you got up and demanded strong and swift action from the BC Federation of Labour as well as the Canadian Labour Congress. In my view, it is wrong for any organization to get up on their soap box and shout about the importance of staying strong in our solidarity with each other and then, a short time thereafter, fall in breach of that very same principle.

I have always taken the view that, as tough as it may be sometimes, talking to the leaders of other organizations is the way we should all conduct ourselves when rumours or allegations arise. At minimum, we need to show respect to other affiliates and their leaders. As you well know, I did just that when I was made aware that the BCNU had made proposals to the government in their most recent round of negotiations that would negatively impact the 4,000 members of CUPE Local 873, the Ambulance Paramedics of British Columbia.

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Barry O'Neill, President
Mark Hancock, Secretary-Treasurer

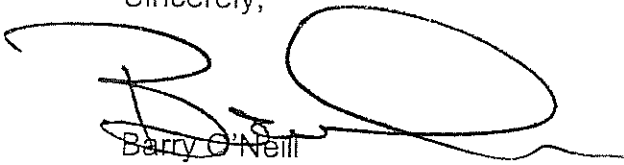
As you know, I phoned your office on a number of occasions seeking clarification about the information I had received. Unfortunately, and for whatever reason, you chose not to respond to any of my calls. I went as far as to courier a letter to you to make you aware of the seriousness of this matter (letter attached) and, once again, looking for clarification. It was only after receiving that couriered letter that you had the courtesy to call. I stated during that call that I wanted you to clarify this matter so as not to misinterpret the situation. I stated as well that I would not react with any such allegations until I got confirmation from you, as the president of the BCNU, on the matter.

You told me then that you did not know if such a proposal had been made, which surprised me. However, I gave you the benefit of the doubt and you stated categorically that you would find out and get back to me immediately. That was over two months ago and, as of this writing, I have yet to receive the same courtesy that was extended to you. I well understand the schedules we all have as leaders of our organizations, but the lack of respect you have shown to myself, but more importantly, CUPE members in British Columbia, is like nothing I have experienced in my 30 years as a trade union activist.

Your lack of respect for the rest of us in the labour movement seems to be part of the new direction taken by your leadership. The BCNU's recent targeting of the Hospital Employees' Union's LPN members is a case in point.

I close by saying that your actions in no way diminish my respect for registered nurses in British Columbia. Their commitment to professional care and to British Columbians, and their willingness to work together with other health care providers regardless of their union affiliation, is a standard that in my view goes unmatched anywhere in North America. As for your actions, as I stated in my registered letter, the Canadian Union of Public Employees will not stand by idly and allow the BCNU leadership to destroy the solidarity that has been built by those who came before you and I. Working women and men expect and deserve better.

Sincerely,



Barry O'Neill
CUPE BC Division

BON/LW
COPE-15

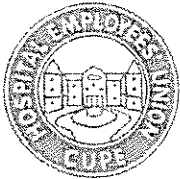
cc. Ken Georgetti
Paul Moist
Claude Genereux
Mark Hancock
BC Fed Officers
BC Nurses Union Executive Board
CUPE BC Executive Board

AN OPEN LETTER TO BCNU MEMBERS

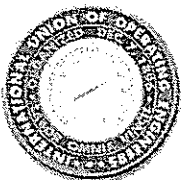
June 2009

Dear BCNU member:

Re: BCNU's plans to sign up members
of other health care unions



bcgeu



For decades, members of BCNU and other health care unions have worked side-by-side with a shared commitment to team work.

Whether it's on the nursing unit, in the community, in joint health and safety and violence prevention committees, or by standing together in our commitment to achieve fair wages and working conditions, we have stood in solidarity with each other and in our commitment to patients.

We can also take a lot of pride in our combined efforts to mobilize community action through our work in the BC Health Coalition, and campaigns to stop the cutbacks and privatization in health care.

Although we have had our differences at times, we have never lost sight of our collective goals. Our mutual dedication to provide the best care possible under challenging conditions and defend public medicare for the benefit of all has always taken priority.

Despite a long history of working together as sister unions, the BCNU leadership has launched a full-scale campaign to move members of our unions, starting with those in the Facilities and Community Health subsectors, into the BCNU.

The BCNU leadership is targeting LPNs right now, but they have also been clear that they've got a wide range of unionized health care workers in their sights, including care aides, unit clerks, ambulance paramedics and even doctors.

As you know, we work in a high pressure environment where health care workers must rely on each other to deliver quality care as a cohesive nursing unit.

These latest actions by BCNU directly undermine collaborative nursing practice, professionalism and team work. They create unnecessary disruption, divisiveness and uncertainty among colleagues.

We would urge you not to participate in this campaign to sign up members of other unions as BCNU associate members.

... more

In terms of the broader labour movement, there are significant consequences to BCNU's attempts to raid other unions' members.

Raiding - which occurs when one union tries to take members away from another union - undermines solidarity, weakens the labour movement and drains resources.

Instead of wasting money and time fighting each other, we could be using our resources in working together to protect public health care and improve seniors' care.

On February 17, HEU and BCGEU filed raiding charges under Article 4, Section 5 of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) constitution against BCNU through their national unions (CUPE and NUPGE).

On May 14, CLC president Ken Georgetti wrote Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions president Linda Silas stating:

"It became clear with the publication of advertisements in British Columbian newspapers on May 13, 2009, and from statements at the meeting by the BCNU representative [held May 13], that the BCNU was preparing to undertake actions that would be in violation of Article 4, Section 5 of the CLC Constitution."

"I am, therefore, directing that the CFNU/BCNU cease all actions in which it is interfering in and seeking to disrupt the established bargaining relationships of other affiliates."

Despite this direction from the CLC president, BCNU has continued and, in fact, escalated its actions. If the BCNU continues to fail to comply with the CLC's directive to cease these actions, BCNU representatives may be barred from participating in CLC, B.C. Federation of Labour and local labour council activities. The BCNU could eventually face expulsion from these labour bodies.

That's a price that the leadership of BCNU appears to be willing to pay in order to pursue their plans to boost BCNU's non-RN membership.

But in our view, such an outcome would be a loss for both the labour movement and for committed union activists in the BCNU.

If you believe we should be working in the spirit of unity, we encourage you to contact your leadership to voice your concerns.

In Solidarity,

HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION
BC GOVERNMENT AND SERVICE EMPLOYEES' UNION
UNITED FOOD AND COMMERCIAL WORKERS UNION LOCAL 1518
CUPE BRITISH COLUMBIA
INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS LOCAL 882

P.S. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Please pass it on to other BCNU members who may be interested.



CFNU Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions

FCSII Fédération canadienne des syndicats d'infirmières - infirmiers

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August 5, 2009

Debra McPherson
President
British Columbia Nurses' Union
4060 Regent Street
Burnaby, BC V5C 6P5

Dear Debra,

Re: CLC Article 4 Ruling, July 30th, 2009

First, on behalf of your colleagues at the CFNU table, I wish to tell you how we value your hard work and leadership on behalf of nurses in British Columbia and across Canada. The activities led by BCNU and now found to be raiding under the Canadian Labour Congress Constitution have placed your colleagues in a difficult situation.

We still hope it can be resolved with the collaboration of all parties in British Columbia. Meanwhile, we must respect the responsibilities assigned to us within the CFNU constitution.

On behalf of the National Executive Board of CFNU, I direct BCNU to uphold both the CLC and CFNU constitutions by ceasing immediately your actions that are found to be raiding under the CLC constitution as per the ruling of CLC president Ken Georgetti, July 30th, 2009.

All members of the NEB remain confident that we can find a positive solution with BCNU. I remain available to meet with yourself or BCNU executive council at anytime.

In solidarity always,

Linda Silas
President

cc: Ken Georgetti, President CLC
Hassan Yussuff, Secretary-Treasurer CLC
Barbara Byers, Executive Vice-President CLC
Marie Clarke Walker, Executive Vice-President CLC
Michel Arsenault, FTQ
Robert Bouvier, Teamsters Canada
Dermot Cain, IUOE

James Clancy, NUPGE
Dave Coles, CEP
Anouk Collet, UFCW
Phil Flemming, IBEW
John Gordon, PSAC
Wayne Hanley, UFCW
Joan Jessome, NUPGE/NSGEU
Ken Lewenza, CAW-Canada
Paul Moist, CUPE
Kenneth G. Neumann, USW
Phillip Paul, CAW-Canada
Sharleen Stewart, SEIU
Pauline Worsfold, Secretary-Treasurer CFNU
Debbie Forward, NLNU
Janet Hazelton, NSNU
Marilyn Quinn, NBNU
Barbara Brookins, PEINU
Linda Haslam-Stroud, ONA
Vicki McKenna, ONA
Sandi Mowat, MNU
Rosalee Longmoore, SUN
Heather Smith, UNA
Bev Dick, UNA
Melanie Leckovic, BCNU
Tyler Kuhk, CNSA