



CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
BRITISH COLUMBIA DIVISION

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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



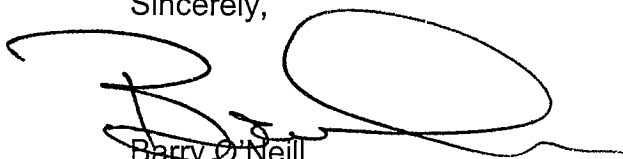
As you know, I phoned your office on a number of occasions seeking clarification about the information I had received. Unfortunately, and for whatever reason, you chose not to respond to any of my calls. I went as far as to courier a letter to you to make you aware of the seriousness of this matter (letter 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