

NEWS LETTER

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As we enter the New Year we feel we should recapitulate and review to some degree our activities for the year 1951; in other words, take an inventory of our organization.

As stated in previous Bulletins, 1951 was the year in which we had to set the pace in bargaining for hospital employees. We feel that the results prove that we have succeeded in this, in spite of the fact we were confronted with obstacles which no other Trade Union organization in the Province has had to face. Our main hurdle was the deadline of November 30th set for our bargaining under the Hospital Act. Add to this the fact that as a Trade Union we had to work under the I.C.A. Act which allows certain periods of time for the various stages of conciliation. Naturally, employers were ready to take advantage of this situation by procrastinating at the bargaining table and using Mr. Detwiller as an excuse for their evasion. This did not happen in all instances. Our bargaining at the Vancouver General Hospital, though lengthy, was clear-cut, and their Negotiating Committee had some authority to do business with our representatives. The same can be said of our negotiations at the Royal Columbian Hospital in New Westminster, at the West Coast Hospital in Port Alberni, and the General Hospital in Nanaimo.

Our aim has been to establish a standardized rate of wages and salaries and working conditions throughout the Province. In this too, we have made great progress, particularly as far as the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island are concerned. In our first effort in the Okanagan and the Kootenays we did not establish Coast rates, but did obtain substantial increases and improved working conditions. These Districts were away behind the rates at the Coast and it was difficult to overcome in one effort what had been transpiring for a number of years. It must also be remembered that there are other Hospitals in these regions, not affiliated to our organization, who settled for extremely low wage increases for the year 1952. This was dangerous to the cause of the organized hospital worker and created a major obstacle which had to be overcome. Naturally the employer was very quick to quote these Agreements. Unfortunately, those Unions have made no overall effort to fight the B.C.H.I.S., nor did they appreciate the fact that in establishing poor contracts they were hurting us; but they in turn would be quick enough to use the precedents which we created.

And just what are the tangible results of the time and effort put forth in bargaining this year? We obtained varying awards ranging from twelve and one-half percent (12½%) to twenty percent (20%), or an average increase across the board for our membership of seventeen percent (17%). Just what does this mean in dollars and cents? In the case of the Vancouver General Hospital it means an additional Five Hundred Thousand Dollars per year in take-home pay; for the Royal Columbian Hospital, an extra Sixty Thousand Dollars per year. For the Province as a whole, we estimate the increase in take-home pay will run over Two Million Dollars. But this was not our only gain. Improved vacations with pay, increased Statutory Holidays, extra pay for shift work and additional sick leave benefits were also obtained. The Union Shop principle was established in some cases, and in other contracts already containing that clause, the waiting period was considerably reduced. It is also interesting to note that the five day work week was won for the clerical staff at the Vancouver General Hospital.

and the Conciliation Board strongly recommended that Union and Management devise ways and means of instituting a forty hour week for all employees in that Institution. This gives us a strong lever for future negotiations.

Though the Registered Nurses' Association bargains for most of the Nurse groups in the Province, we do hold the Certification for the nurses at the Vancouver General Hospital and the Ladysmith General Hospital. The nursing staff at the Vancouver General is now receiving the highest rates in the Province, or in fact, in the Dominion of Canada. The maximum salary of a General Duty Nurse is Two hundred and fifty-eight dollars (\$258.00) per month; Assistant Head Nurse and Admitting Nurse, Two hundred and sixty-four dollars (\$264.00) per month; Head Nurse, Two hundred and seventy-six dollars (\$276.00) per month. While the nursing profession may frown at the Trade Unionist, we feel that they should be thankful there is an organization of Lay Employees to do their fighting for them. We are well aware of the fact that the unorganized nurses are only too pleased to use any precedents set by Local 180.

Since April, 1951, until arriving back home from Nelson on Christmas Eve, after completing our last contract, your Business Manager put in fifteen thousand (15,000) miles in organizing and servicing new Units, and in negotiating the various contracts. At the same time, we were confronted with the routine work of running a Trade Union centre - research work conducted, contracts prepared, grievances handled and mail and questions answered. Not quite so routine was the preparation and presentation of a brief to the Hospital Inquiry Board. However, we feel this was a worthwhile accomplishment and are quite certain our arguments had some influence on the members of the Board. It must also be remembered that the settling of our contracts was not merely a matter of holding meetings with the various Boards. We were continually pressing the Board of Labour Relations for the appointment of Conciliators and Chairmen of Boards in order to try to meet the deadline set for our bargaining and at the same time we were constantly in touch with the Hospital Insurance Commission for an extension of our time. The fact that we have successfully wound up all our negotiations proves that our efforts were not in vain. I sincerely trust that we shall never experience such a heartbreaking situation again.

Now that we leave 1951 behind us and proceed into 1952, our work must still carry on. The B.C.H.I.S. Inquiry Board is bringing down a report which will be placed before the Legislature at this coming session of the House. This report, in a large degree, will affect our bargaining for 1953. We feel that in the future Master Contracts will be the order of the day. This will simplify our bargaining. Nevertheless, this entire report will have to be watched very closely and we shall be in Victoria when the Legislature is in session to watch this all-important matter.

During 1952 we hope to visit our various Units as frequently as possible to assist them in the internal operation of our organization. Due to the job of work that has been accomplished in the last few years, Hospital employees can no longer be considered depressed, downtrodden employees. They can hold up their heads with some degree of pride. Our salaries will stand comparison with any wage increases obtained by any of the other Federal, National, or International organizations. We, ourselves, have failed in not getting our story across to our membership. With the turnover of staff in Hospitals, new employees do not appreciate the bitter struggle which has taken place in establishing our present salary schedules and working conditions. We take our Trade Unionism too lightly. We must develop a sense of loyalty and every effort must be put forth to increase the strength of our organization - to add more Units - to develop an efficient organization - always bearing in mind that we are just as strong as our weakest link. We have set the pace for all hospitals in Canada - the pattern is now established. Negotiations, in a not too distant future, will take place in Victoria. As has been suggested, Master Contracts are quite possible; therefore, it is vital that we have one strong united organization of hospital workers in this Province.

We have received communications from time to time asking for financial assistance or contributions towards a party or benefit, or sending flowers to sick members. On the present basis of our dues structure, these requests are impossible. Our costs, like all other costs, have risen. Our Union dues are the cheapest of any Trade Union in the Province. The Trades and Labor Congress

has increased our Per Capita Tax from ten cents (10¢) to fifteen cents (15¢) per member; our initiation fee from fifty cents (50¢) to one dollar (\$1.00) per member; the Union pins cost fifty cents (50¢) per pin for new members. Since our own initiation fee is only one dollar (\$1.00), it now costs Local 180 fifty cents (50¢) for each new member brought into the organization. The Conciliation and Arbitration Boards which confronted us this year were most expensive. The Union appointee had to be paid, travelling expenses for the appointee and representatives taken care of, and cases prepared. When you review the length of time at the bargaining table - eighty days for the Vancouver General alone, and then the Arbitration Boards at Nanaimo, Port Alberni, Duncan, Hollywood Sanitarium, Melrose Park Private Hospital, Chilliwack, Kamloops and Nelson; when you consider that seven hundred dollars (\$700.00) was spent in winning the cases of Kamloops and Nelson alone, then we know you must agree that a lot of Union dues will be needed to repay this outlay. Our expenditures in the last four months far exceeded our income. If it had not been for the savings we had made during the years, mainly contributed by the Vancouver General, we would have been out of luck. However, our Provincial Executive is meeting quite frequently and is reviewing our entire structure.

According to our Constitution, Local Unit elections are held in February. This is the time of year when you select those who are going to guide the Local Units for the year 1952. The reason we mention this is that we have had some difficulty with Local Executives - Secretaries resigning, Chairmen leaving. In one Unit alone, they had four Secretaries in one year. This disrupts continuity and does not expedite our business. Local Unit Executives are important - they are important to this office. They handle grievances, they run the Local business, they are the watchdogs of our contracts. The selection of Local Executive Officers should be made carefully, selecting the type of member who is prepared to take an interest in the organization, to further its cause, and particularly those who are desirous of making a career out of hospital work and are going to remain, as far as possible, with the job. Minutes should be directed to this office as rapidly as possible, communications answered promptly. Might I suggest while selecting officers, you also elect the delegate or delegates, in accordance with the Constitution, for the forthcoming Provincial Conference.

A further word on the Provincial Conference. It is our intention to hold it as rapidly as possible after the Local Executive elections are completed, in the City of Vancouver, when all our problems, financial and otherwise, will be thoroughly reviewed and plans laid for the conduct of our organization during the forthcoming year.

Now with the heat of battle over, we hope to get out this News Letter monthly, in fact, we may gravitate to a better type of publication in order to keep our membership fully informed of our many activities. News items and notes of interest would be appreciated. Contracts will be mimeographed as rapidly as possible and sent to our various Units for their guidance.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all members and Local Executives for their assistance during all our strenuous bargaining, and I trust that our entire membership will have a most successful 1952.

W.M. Black
W.M BLACK
BUSINESS MANAGER