

Dispatches

NOVEMBER 2010



“My union helped me get my job back.”

Read Delphine Alexson's story on page 3

Oral Healthcare
in the Southwest

The Truth About
Public Healthcare

NEW LOOK & FORMAT!

Shining a light on the hidden heroes of health care

As you can see, we have changed just about everything about **Dispatches**. These changes to the appearances and the content did not happen by accident. The content of *Dispatches* has been substantially abbreviated and hopefully will be made more relevant to our members.

Some information that had been part of *Dispatches* in the past has been moved to our website as it is updated and corrected on a regular basis and is easy for members to access. The website has also been revamped with a new look and new links. Check it out.

It is our hope that, with these changes, our internal communication with members will be more informative and helpful. The feedback that we have received, and which we hope to continue to receive, has been of great assistance to all of your representatives on the Bargaining Committee and Executive Council. Thank you.

Lastly, you may have noticed that there are certain advertisements running on television at this time. If you wish to check these out, they will be on our website which may be accessed at www.hsa-sk.com or www.hiddenheroes.ca.

We aim to shine some light on all of you who are working so hard to improve the health of the residents of Saskatchewan.

Thank you,
Cathy Dickson
President-Elect



Social worker fights to get her job back

The Story of Delphine Alexson



Delphine Alexson was working as a community-based social worker in Regina when a series of serious illnesses and other problems struck her family. Both parents, some young relatives and her spouse turned to Delphine for support during long and difficult periods, sometimes involving extensive medical treatment regimes and in some cases, end of life care.

Delphine provided a place to stay, transportation and she accompanied family members to appointments and consultations. Her BSW training was of considerable help to family members. Because this assistance was time consuming, Delphine was, on a few occasions, forced to miss brief portions of her scheduled hours of work. Some of these absences were arranged beforehand with the employer, some were not; and it was the latter group that came to be a problem.

Ultimately, the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region fired Delphine

Alexson. This was done abruptly and without any apparent regard for the circumstances she found herself in during the preceding months. The termination also lacked elements of progressive discipline which Human Resource practitioners normally employ.

Ms. Alexson refused to accept the loss of her job. She asked HSAS to file an unjust dismissal grievance, which went before senior RQHR managers and was denied. The matter was then referred to the arbitration process for resolution. Meanwhile, Delphine obtained alternate employment in order to pay her bills and she helped the union prepare arguments and assemble facts for the arbitration hearing.

Regina lawyer Bob Pelton was selected as chair of the three person arbitration panel. Retired CUPE union rep Andrew Huculak was asked to be the HSAS nominee on the panel. It took months to schedule the

arbitration dates when all parties would be available. The hearing itself was adjourned twice because of competing demands on the participants' time.

At the hearing, Delphine answered all of the lawyers' questions with ease and handled herself very well over many hours of testimony.

Finally, the arbitration award was handed down and Delphine Alexson was given a clear cut win in the 51 page decision. She was reinstated to her employment with the health region with her wage rate maintained and with back pay and full seniority for the period of the unjust dismissal. In labour relations terms, she was "made whole" by the favourable award.

Delphine Alexson is a fine example of a union member willing to stand up for her rights.

Oral Healthcare in the Southwest

by Ralph Aman



One of the most diverse job classifications in HSAS is that of Health Educator. Recently, I had a chance to talk with Loretta Singh who is the Dental Health Promotion Educator in Cypress Health Region. She is not an easy person to track down as she is often out of the office visiting the many communities, schools and even Hutterite colonies in the region.

Loretta filled me in on some amazing information about oral health and the work she does. She noted that since most dental care is not covered through Medicare and that many people do not have access to private insurance, oral health often suffers.

Poor oral health can result in pain, infection, absence from school or work, poor nutrition, an inability to speak or eat properly, low self esteem and even contribute to premature death. Loretta cites that poor oral health is known to contribute to low birth weight babies, heart disease, stroke and can further complicate the management of blood glucose levels for diabetics.

Tooth decay is said to be five times more common than asthma.

Fortunately, tooth decay is almost 100% preventable and the prevention is substantially less expensive than treating tooth decay. Loretta works extensively with children and advised that over half of the children she sees have some evidence of either prior or current tooth decay. More than a third of these children have no access to dental insurance and many only have limited coverage. Some of the oral health programs that Loretta delivers include: fluoride rinse, fluoride varnish, tooth brushing and oral health skill development.

I asked Loretta about the challenges she faces in her work. She described her work as a “stand alone” program where she is the only Dental Health Promotion Educator in Cypress Health Region and has a large geographic area to work in. She was grateful for the other Dental Health Promotion Educators in the province and how they try to support each other despite all having very busy schedules.

Loretta also spoke about the challenges of obtaining continuing education and being able to stay current with evolving research and best practices related to oral health.

I also asked Loretta about her thoughts regarding SAHO’s unwillingness to provide a meaningful contract to HSAS professionals. Loretta expressed disappointment and wondered if SAHO really understands the value of the professional services she and others provide to promote good oral health.

Throughout my discussion with Loretta, I could not help but notice the commitment and dedication she has for the work she does. Loretta knows the value of good oral health that is attained with the work of Dental Health Promotion Educators. Let’s hope that SAHO recognizes the work of Dental Health Promotion Educators throughout the province with a contract that treats all health care professionals alike.

The truth about public health care

by Natalie Mehra and Mike McBane



The outgoing president of the Canadian Medical Association, Anne Doig, recently went on record advocating for private health insurance and user fees for patients.

Adopting this approach means dismantling more than 60 years of progress towards creating a comprehensive health care system.

Medicare is Canada's largest social program. It was set up to remove the financial barrier for access to care.

Despite frequent propaganda to the contrary, Medicare is neither in crisis nor unsustainable. According to eminent health economist Robert Evans, since 1975 public health care has remained relatively stable at between four and five per cent of the GDP. Medicare spending comprises the same proportion of provincial revenues as it did 20 years ago.

While public resources for Medicare have remained consistent, tax cuts have been eating away public budgets.

It makes sense to pay for health care through a progressive tax system. It allows us to levy bulk buying power to contain costs, something that patients cannot do when they are left to their own devices in a private health care market. It means that as a society, we can redistribute income to provide care when we are most in need, when we are aging or sick or when we have the least ability to pay.

The only way we can safeguard equitable and effective care for Canadians is through a robust, democratic and responsive public health system.

The public system has expanded in recent decades to provide millions of Canadians with access to new technologies for cancer treatment, diagnostics, and dramatic increases in surgeries. But it has also contracted. Cuts to chronic care and to rural and community health services have contributed to Canadian's concerns about the future of the health system.

Instead of exploiting these fears and seeking inequitable methods of obtaining more money, the CMA should join with the thousands of patients, health professionals and care workers who are advocating for a fair tax system in which money goes to improving care. Rather than taking away from the public system, we should be protecting and increasing the scope of care for seniors and those with long-term illnesses.

The experience of privatization in Canada and around the world is that only the healthy and wealthy can afford adequate coverage. Private insurance is neither available nor affordable for those with pre-existing medical conditions.

Recent research has uncovered outrageous charges for private care: \$1,200 per eye for cataract surgery; \$500–\$800 for a physician consult; \$800–\$2000 for MRIs; \$15,000–\$20,000 or more for knee surgery. In the present public system, these procedures cost a fraction of these charges.

The truth about public health care (continued)

Promoting private health insurance and user fees means inequity and higher costs that will worsen the standard of living and reduce access for the vast majority of Canadians. It is irresponsible to use the aging baby boomers as a tool to create fear. Our society is more than capable of taking care of our aging parents who have contributed all their lives to the public health system.

There is a clear path to restore confidence and ensure the sustainability of public health care. But it does not involve pretending that privatization is anything more than enabling private companies to

make profit from people when they are ill and infirm.

The CMA should be insisting our governments uphold the principles of equity and fairness embodied in the Canada Health Act and renew the federal funding accord. They should work to ensure that chronic and rehabilitative care are properly covered. And they should push for the political leadership to expand Medicare to cover drugs in a comprehensive public program that can provide more care for less money.

The only way we can safeguard equitable and effective care for

Canadians is through a robust, democratic and responsive public health system.

Justice Emmett Hall, whose report set the foundation for public health care in Canada said, “We, as a society, are aware that the trauma of illness, the pain of surgery, the slow decline to death, are burdens enough for the human being to bear without the added burden of medical or hospital bills penalizing the patient at the moment of vulnerability.”

Natalie Mehra is director of the Ontario Health Coalition.

Mike McBane is national coordinator of the Canadian Health Coalition.

Fewer than half unemployed receive benefits

Fewer than one in two unemployed workers in Canada receives Employment Insurance. Statistics Canada reports that only 45 per cent of unemployed Canadians were receiving EI benefits in July – down from 50 per cent a year earlier.

“This tells us that long term unemployment is a big problem,” says Ken Georgetti, president of the Canadian Labour Congress.

“A lot of people can’t find work and in the meantime they are running out of benefits.”

The government is ending programs that offered extended EI benefits to long-term unemployed workers.

“These workers paid EI premiums believing that the program would be there for a rainy day but the government is taking away their umbrella,” Georgetti says. “Parliament is sitting again and MPs simply must focus on providing support for the unemployed.”



Copyright ruling affects education sector



Bulletin/CAUT/CALM

In July, the Federal Court of Appeal released its decision on the tariff Access Copyright can levy against K–12 schools to reproduce educational material.

Canada’s K–12 sector, represented by provincial ministries of education and school boards, earlier this year challenged a ruling of Canada’s Copyright Board to allow Access Copyright to significantly increase the fee that primary and secondary schools pay for paper copies of copyrighted material and requested a judicial review by the appeal court.

Canadian Association of University Teachers intervened in the appeal court to promote a deeper understanding of “fair dealing” (the right to copy material without permission or payment in certain circumstances), and, failing that, to ensure that any negative fallout of the decision would be confined to the issue’s particular factual circumstances.

“The court’s decision can be seen as largely limited to the reproduction of curriculum-specific textbooks in the K–12 setting, and to this extent we are pleased that CAUT’s input was reflected in the ruling,” said Sam Trosow, a law professor at the University of Western Ontario and chair of CAUT’s advisory committee on copyright. “But other aspects of the decision are more worrisome.” In particular, CAUT questions the lack of adequate analysis of the relationship between fair dealing and educational instruction.

“Our hope is that the school boards will seek review of this decision to the Supreme Court,” Trosow said. “While limited to the facts on the record in this case, the ruling fails to provide the clarity and precision that the educational community was seeking.”

The decision also underlines the urgent need for educational

institutions to implement written policies that clarify and positively promote fair dealing along the lines endorsed by the Supreme Court of Canada in the CCH v. Law Society case. The absence of such codification is a vulnerability to advancing the rights of the users of copyright material.

“The decision is a disappointment for the educational community,” Trosow said. “But we have to put it in its overall context—the rights of students and teachers to access and use works have been steadily advancing over the last decade.”

He said Canadian court decisions have been overwhelmingly in favour of user rights and that the proposed copyright legislation before Parliament expands fair dealing. Even in the U.S. the copyright office has just affirmed new exceptions to digital locks provisions that recognize fair-use rights, Trosow said.



HSAS Scholarships and Funds

Winners of the Education Fund and Silver Anniversary Scholarship will be posted on our website, www.hsa-sk.com.

Public sector wages trail private sector

Private sector workers have pulled ahead of public sector wage settlements as governments across Canada increase their focus on budget deficits.

Data from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada shows overall gains are the smallest in a decade and that Canadian households have less disposable income available than previously after inflation is taken into account.

Gains in the public sector in June averaged just two per cent (annualized) for 41,890 employees covered in 10 agreements surveyed. In the private sector, 9,389 workers in seven private sector settlements monitored by the department received average (annualized) increases of 2.2 per cent.

Average wage settlements across both the public and private

sectors were 2.2 per cent on an annual basis in June, a fraction above the trend of 2.1 per cent across the first half of 2010.

For the first six months of the year, private sector gains averaged 2.2 compared with 2.0 per cent for the public sector.

The 2.1 per cent overall wage increase for both sectors in 2010 is well below the 2.4 per cent that workers in both sectors averaged last year and just ahead of the decade low of 1.8 per cent recorded in 2004. Pay raises averaged three per cent in the years preceding the financial crisis of 2008.

The Health Sciences provincial bargaining team is determined to buck this recent trend and conclude a contract with SAHO containing a substantial increase in wages.

Health care professionals fairly mobile

From 2001 to 2006, Canada's health care providers were less likely to move from one province or territory to another, with migration rates decreasing to their lowest levels in two decades, a study from the Canadian Institute for Health Information has found.

Despite these findings, the study, *Internal Migration of Canada's Health Care Workforce: Summary Report Update to 2006*, states the health care workforce was still more mobile than the general population.

Alberta continues to be the prime destination for health care workers who moved between provinces, followed by British Columbia.

Canada's shortage of nurses, doctors and other health care professionals tops the list of key health challenges for the country, a survey conducted for Health Canada shows.

The annual survey found one in five Canadians identified the shortage of health care professionals as a top priority, followed by long wait times for medical care, the H1N1 pandemic, cancer research and preventive health care.



Scheduled overtime is not voluntary

In a landmark decision, handed down March 5th, 2010, Saskatoon lawyer Bill Wardell, acting as a single arbitrator, may well have changed the law regarding union contracts in Saskatchewan.

This decision arose out of a case where an employer scheduled hours of work for an employee based upon an agreement made between the union and the employer. In looking at whether or not Section 12 of the Labour Standards Act (which states that “... **no employer shall without the consent of the employee**

require an employee to work or be at his disposal for more than 44 hours per week”) deals with the situation, Mr. Wardell reviewed the case law and concluded that only an **employee** can consent to a waiver of Section 12.1.

Therefore, any agreements negotiated by a union and an employer **cannot** have the effect of requiring an employee to work more than 44 hours per week.

In simple language, every employee, whether subject to a collective bargaining agreement or

not, can refuse to work more than 44 hours per week (except in cases of emergencies).

This decision is under appeal but for the time being, all employers in the province are put on notice that former past practices regarding forcing employees to work over the 44 hours per week may be **contrary to the law**.

See International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Asbestos Workers, Local 119 and Fuller Asutin Insulation Inc.

6 out of 10 live payday to payday

Six in ten Canadians are surviving from paycheque to paycheque, and younger workers are feeling the pressure most of all, says a new national poll of 2,766 citizens by the Canadian Payroll Association.

Among those surveyed, 59 per cent said they would be in financial trouble if their paycheque were delayed by just one week. This is the same level as a year earlier.

Younger workers are having the greatest trouble meeting their expenses. Two thirds of those aged 18–34 say they would have great difficulty coping if they missed even a single pay day.

The situation is most precarious for single parents, 75 per cent saying they would have some trouble making ends meet.

Top economic concerns among Canadian workers are rising interest rates, not being able to save enough to retire, inflation and falling back into recession.

The poll also found that:

- 62 per cent expect a salary increase this year but 83 per cent expect their cost of living to rise as well
- 47 per cent save five per cent or less of their net pay while 40 per cent are no longer even trying to save

- 60 per cent feel the economy will improve in the next year, a decline from 67 per cent in 2009.

The survey was taken between late June and mid-July, 2010.



JOE HILL

The man who never died

On November 19th, 1915 an unemployed immigrant labourer was shot to death by firing squad in the Utah State Penitentiary at Salt Lake City.

The execution threw the North American and international labour movements into an uproar. The executed prisoner was Joe Hill, a champion of itinerant workers and a hero to militant trade unionists around the world.

Despite his renown not much is known about Joe Hill's early life.

He was born either Joseph Hillstrum or Joel Haaglund in Jevla, Sweden in 1882. He learned English while working on small cargo ships sailing between Stockholm and Hull in Britain.

While still in his teens Hill emigrated to the United States in 1901. Like thousands of other immigrants he Anglicized his name and became a migrant worker, drifting around to wherever the jobs were.

Hill was tall and lean, with a shock of blond hair and deep blue

eyes. From all accounts he was considered handsome, intelligent and popular with working class people and the ladies.

Joe Hill was a very good amateur musician, a songwriter and poet. He played the concertina and had a great knack for setting ironic or poignant words to well-known tunes of the day.

Hill's songs used the plain, blunt language of the working class. His lyrics expressed the anger, despair and aspirations of labour and the unemployed.

Casey Jones the Union Scab and *The Preacher and the Slave* were very popular songs written by Hill. The chorus to his *A Little Talk with Golden* became the marching song for the 23,000 picketers during the huge Bread and Roses Strike in the textile mills of Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1912.

The simple yet forceful language in Hill's poems and songs had an immense appeal for workers. They were translated and recited or sung in dozens of countries around the world.



Joe Hill, Labour Hero

Joins Wobblies

Joe Hill joined the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies) in 1910 at San Pedro, California. He took a very active part in the brutal San Diego "free speech fight" which established the IWW's right to use street corner speakers and outdoor meetings as organizing tools.

Hill was also heavily involved in the bitter strike by stevedores at San Pedro, California in 1912.

He soon found himself on the blacklists of many West Coast employers thanks to his red IWW membership card. His difficulty in finding work likely prompted a move to Salt Lake City in 1913.

In Utah Hill remained active in the various Wobbly causes. In fact, he worked as an unpaid organizer for IWW local 69 in Salt Lake.

Then in January, 1914 Joe Hill was shot at and wounded in a quarrel over a married woman.

Hill adamantly refused to name his lover so as not to smear her reputation. He maintained that silence even when his own life might have been in less jeopardy by revealing her.

It was Hill's bad luck to have been wounded the same evening that a Salt Lake City grocery store was robbed. The owner of the store and his adult son were shot dead in the ensuing gun battle.

When the authorities learned that a prominent Wobbly had suffered a bullet wound they looked no further for the robbers of grocery store.

Framed for Murder

The police burst into Hill's rooming house and shot him in the arm while he was lying on his bed under sedation.

Joe Hill was charged with the double murder and refused bail.

At his trial Hill's lawyer, who was hired by the IWW, introduced persuasive evidence of Hill's innocence. None of the eye witnesses identified Hill as the killer.

The bullet that hit Joe Hill penetrated right through his chest leaving a tiny exit wound – a good

indication that it had a hardened metal jacket. The storekeeper's gun fired only soft lead slugs, which distort on contact with flesh and either lodge in the body or leave a large exit hole.

But this and other evidence favourable to the accused was largely ignored.

The politics of Utah in 1915 were dominated by elements openly opposed to any type of trade unionism, and viciously hostile to the radicalism and militancy of the IWW.

The governor and much of the state legislature were devoted Mormons. The city of Salt Lake was controlled by the thoroughly corrupt and extremely reactionary American Party that catered to the wishes of the business crowd.

The "Copper Trust" which had fought the Wobblies for years in their mines, lobbied hard for a conviction. The local newspapers were nearly hysterical in their condemnations of Hill.

They were all determined that Joe Hill be found guilty and executed...and they got their way.

Workers Protest

Before the execution could be carried out workers and unions around the world launched a huge campaign for Hill's release.

Thousands of letters, telegrams and petitions poured in to the governor of Utah's office from across North America, Britain, Scandinavia, Australia and dozens of other countries.

Hill wired Haywood to say "Don't waste time mourning. Organize."

The great Wobbly leader Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, to whom Hill dedicated his song *The Rebel Girl*, pleaded for and got a meeting with U.S. president Woodrow Wilson. She convinced Wilson to telegraph the Utah governor asking for the whole case to be reconsidered.

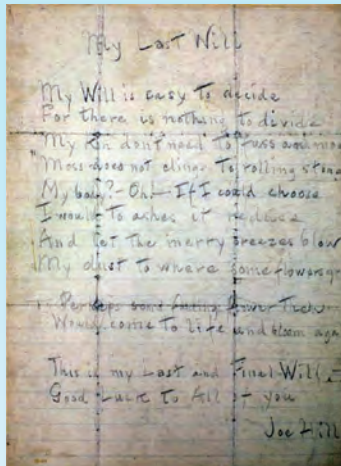


Cover illustration by Arthur Machia for *The Rebel Girl*. Words and music by Joe Hill (Ithaca, NY: Glad Day Press, 1940, c1915)

It was all to no avail. Joe Hill spent his last days writing letters of encouragement and thanks to IWW friends, union organizers and the Wobbly newspaper *Solidarity*. Those who visited Hill in his cell were greatly impressed by his courage and calm.

In Utah in 1915 a condemned man had the choice of being hanged or shot. Hill chose firing squad. He also chose to face his executioners without a blindfold. Legend has it Hill himself yelled out the order to fire.

Joe Hill's last words were wired to Big Bill Haywood, head of the Industrial Workers of the World. The telegram read, "Goodbye, Bill. I die a true blue rebel. Don't waste time in mourning. Organize."



My Last Will

My will is easy to decide
For there is nothing to divide
My kin don't need to fuss and moan
"Moss does not cling to a rolling stone."
My body? - Oh. - If I could choose
I would to ashes it reduce
And let the merry breezes blow
My dust to where some flowers grow
Perhaps some fading flower then
Would come to life and bloom again
This is my Last and final Will
Good Luck to All of you

— *Joe Hill*



Saskatoon Office

#42 - 1736 Quebec Avenue
Saskatoon, SK S7K 1V9
Phone: (306) 955-3399
Toll-Free: 1-888-565-3399
Fax: (306) 955-3396
Email: hsasstoon@sasktel.net

Regina Office

#12 - 395 Park Street
Regina, SK S4N 5B2
Phone: (306) 585-7751
Toll-Free: 1-877-889-4727
Fax: (306) 585-7750
Email: hsasregina@sasktel.net

Visit our newly designed website at:

www.hsa-sk.com