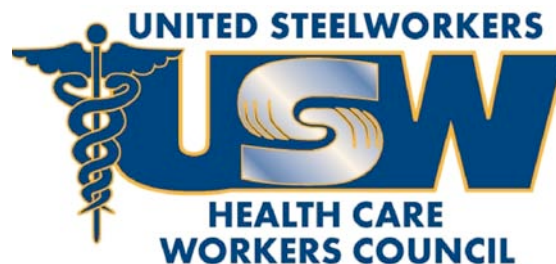


UNITED STEELWORKERS DISTRICT 3

Working for Health Care Workers

BULLETIN

FEBRUARY 2010



Compass lock out continues at several BC hospital sites



USW International President Leo Gerard (front, 2nd from rt.) joins a group of locked out union members picketing against Compass Fraser Health at the Surrey Memorial Hospital. Left of photo is District 3 Director Stephen Hunt. Right of photo is Napoleon Gomez, president of the Mexican Mlneworkers Union. USW Photo by Jim Kilty.

Compass Fraser Health, which has contracts to provide cafeteria and coffee shop services at several Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley hospitals, locked out over 90 United Steelworkers Local 2009 members over the issue of equal wages and benefits back on October 15.

Locked out sites include the Surrey Memorial Hospital, Burnaby General Hospital, Peace Arch Hospital in White Rock, Queen's Park Health Centre in New Westminister, Royal Columbian

Hospital in New Westminister, Langley Memorial Hospital, Eagle Ridge Hospital in Coquitlam, the Ridge Meadows Hospital in Maple Ridge, Chilliwack Hospital and Mission Hospital.

It all began after the USW conducted a series of rotating strikes and consumer boycott actions aimed at disrupting the regular delivery of services.

"Our members have done a good job of sending Compass a message that it must negotiate

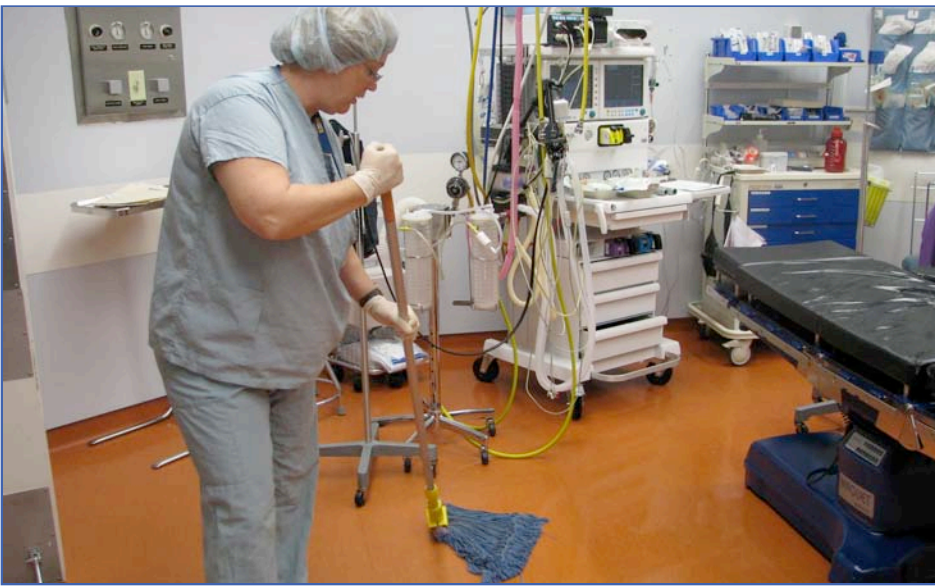
a fair deal with our membership," says USW District 3 Staff Rep Brian Harder.

"Compass is telling workers it pays \$11.21 an hour to not expect equal pay and benefits as to what it pays other employees in other BC hospitals," he says.

In November USW International President Leo Gerard dropped by to boost the spirits of workers. He praised the workers for their resolve to win their fight for a fair and equitable agreement, reminding them that they are members of a large international union that has fought many past battles for economic and social justice.

District 3 Director Stephen Hunt urged picketers to stick together for "one day longer" than the employer is able to maintain the lockout, to remember these times on the picket lines and the many friendships and bonds of solidarity that are formed.

Hunt said that Compass is not locking the workers out for the benefit of patients in the hospitals or their customers. Compass simply does not want workers to have an increased share of its revenues.



Work loads increasing with BC government health cutbacks

Health Care workers employed by private contractors such as Sodexo, Compass and Aramark, are seeing their hours cut, jobs eliminated and an increase in work loads. The Liberal government's direct cuts to health care authorities like Fraser Health and Coastal Health are seeing a deterioration of service levels in housekeeping and food preparation.

"Our members take a lot of pride in doing a good job by not cutting corners. But they are often forced to make hard choices," says USW Local 2009 business agent Don White.

"Some are working extra time for free just to get the job done. We advise them not to work unless they get paid properly," he adds.

Alberta NDP reports on changes needed to care

The Alberta NDP, the province's Official Opposition, is currently touring 7 Alberta communities to report back on the results of a consultation tour it conducted in the fall of last year.

That initial tour, led by leader Brian Mason and MLA Rachel Notley, asked people in Medicine Hat, Ft. McMurray, Grande Prairie, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Edmonton and Calgary what kind of improvements they need to provincial health care system.

"Albertans want quality health care when they need it that they won't be forced to pay out-of-pocket for," says Mason.

Notley says that the move to merge regional health care authorities into a single board in 2008 has given Albertans a sense that there is no one left in communities who is taking responsibility for the deteriorating system, especially health care for seniors and the mentally ill.



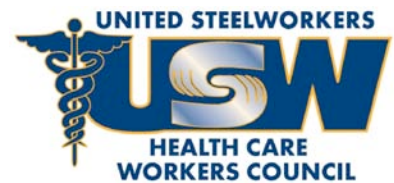
Local activist starts health care publication



USW Local 1-207 member Lydia Wozniuk, who works at the Masterpiece River Ridge retirement and care facility in Medicine Hat, has created a comprehensive health care newsletter that is circulated throughout Alberta, where the USW has over 800 members in private health care.

"The publication links members throughout the province and encourages them to take steps to assist our union's campaign for improved working conditions and residents' care," says local business agent Ray White.

Lydia enjoys the task of putting it together, works different shifts and often "burns the midnight oil" at home to do the job. E-mail ngarcia@usw.ca for digital copies.



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