

W1031

WCB Presentation: Public Hearings of March 27, 2003

Today, I sat through these hearings and it appears to me that, once again, the government of B.C. and the WCB of B.C. have dodged another bullet. The true issues of systemic misdirection within these forums are rarely addressed, and I'm reminded of comments once made by Kevin Krueger (a Liberal MP from Kamloops, speaking to the Minister of Labour), who said that "if we use the same equation we always end up with the same answer".

I have observed and seen many different parts of this system. This system at its inception was a very good starting point. It was developed to assist all workers and employers. Over the years the misconception of abuse has led to the current state of affairs where neither side of this confrontation will take the first step to meaningful change. In order for significant change, only a shift in consciousness on both sides of this struggle will bring real results.

I have made many presentations, for various organizations, at meetings like this, suggesting to the governments of B.C. and Canada, the types of changes that were needed to resolve some of the current difficulties, and offering solutions. I was involved, years back, as a speaker in the Royal Commission that looked into the WCB of B.C. The many recommendations and solutions offered by injured workers during that process fell on deaf ears. The end result of the Commission was a report that we labeled "the employers' protection fund". Of the many recommendations in this report, that numbered 113 pages, most were dissented by Jerry Stoney, who represented injured workers at the Royal Commission hearings. Nonetheless, many of these recommendations have now been adopted by the government and implemented in the new WCB Act and Labour Code of B.C. Both then, and now, the issues that needed to be addressed, have not been. For example, the issue of unqualified personnel, both developing policy and deciding medical and/or scientific issues—as we have seen here today—remains unchallenged.

In fact, the real cause of the current difficulties in the system are not the costs associated with the rehabilitation of an injured worker, or excessive regulations, but are shown by WCB's own stats, to be an ill-conceived management structure. At the end of the day, decision-makers (who are, incidentally, not here) have little investment in the rightful prerogatives of the WCB, but are merely concerned with economics and political protectionism. Even though the government has enacted many new changes, the real cause of excessive costs will remain.

The original idea of the WCB Act was to make a stand against questionable business practices. This original concept is a good one, and does not need to be changed. Where change is needed is not in the restructuring of the WCB Act, but in its implementation. The government has slowly eliminated all opposition to any and all changes that fly in the face of fluctuating government policy. Once again, the government has facilitated the WCB in justifying its own existence. And once again, the true issues have not been addressed. The specific interests of many groups that make up the work force are not the fundamental issues needing to be addressed; these issues are merely symptomatic of an ineffectual system. This confrontational system never worked and never will.

All of us were responsible for getting us to this point. We are all responsible to help each other to reach our common goals. Remember, what we fail to do for others, we fail to do to ourselves. Governments come and go, but injuries, like mine, can be forever.