

WorkSafeBC Regulation Review Public Hearing

May 26, 2008

Location: Richmond

Time: 3:25 - 3:35 pm

My Name is Walter Gerlach; I am a Business Representative with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. I have come here today to speak on behalf of our over 8,000 working men and woman in the province of British Columbia.

We are not in favor of the proposed changes to part 5 of The Occupational Health And Safety regulation. We feel the changes fall short of the requirements to protect the working men and woman of our province.

We work as Heavy Duty Mechanics, Welders, Millwrights, Automotive Mechanics, Autobody Technicians and Painters, Aviation Mechanics and Painters, and in Chroming and Anodizing. All of these workplaces expose the worker to high levels of Chemical Toxins that are known to be Cancer causing and to also cause reproductive side effects.

The rapid advancements in technology in the Automotive and Aviation industries have exposed these workers to increasingly specialized Chemicals. A proven system must be in place to ensure these new products are researched to establish their known risks. ACGIH themselves have admitted that they do not have the resources to establish current listings of all new and altered chemicals found in the workplace today.

Every worker should have the right to protect themselves against sterility, testicular cancers, and abnormalities to their unborn child or risk damage to their nervous system. The premise has always been we look to go home just as we came to work. The reliance on the ACGIH list is placing our workers at great risk. Lists provided by ACGIH are out of date and very limited. Workers have a right to know the hazards around them.

A tripartite consultation meeting was held with labour and employer representatives, the stakeholders agreed that the ACGIH List was not acceptable and that the more current WHMIS system needed to be used. The WHMIS list provides a greater number of toxins and sensitizers, it is frequently updated and it is recommended throughout North America, and is the preferred system in the State of California and in Europe.

Furthermore WHMIS is a familiar and established system in our workplaces today, in which workers are presently trained to access information, so to add accurate WHMIS Threshold Limit Values would be a natural progression

The Machinists Union proposes that the Compensation Board changes its proposed amendments to concur with those of the pre-consultation tripartite agreement that had Employer and Labour representatives recommending that the chemical classification under WHMIS be adopted. Workers have a right to a safe workplace. Thank You.