

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unions and secret votes

In her letter of Dec. 23, "Simms missed the boat," Mary Shortall replaces alleged undue employer influence with (alleged) undue union influence.

Shortall accuses columnist Randy Simms of missing the boat because he suggested workers in a given workplace should have a vote to decide if they want a union or not.

She accuses employers of unduly influencing employees when it comes to the vote, so her solution is to remove the vote.

Workers, she says, are better off signing cards at their kitchen tables at the encouragement of union staff and leaders.

Then, she suggests, if there are allegations of unfairness or inappropriate behaviour, the Labour Relations Board (LRB) will investigate. "Trust us" is the motto. If the LRB is good enough to investigate undue union influence, then why was it not sufficient to investigate the undue employer influence

she alleges?

This brings it all back to a secret and confidential vote of employees so they can decide what they want, with no one looking over their shoulders.

The provincial government changed legislation last year such that workers can now have a union certified just by signing cards, with no vote, if a certain threshold of cards are signed. In the previous model, workers could sign cards, but then a ballot was held to ensure that workers could vote in confidence without having undue union influence as they signed their cards.

The letter also misleads the reader to believe somehow the employer conducts and counts the vote.

An independent third party, the LRB, conducts the vote and representatives of the union and the employer are *both* entitled to be present to act as scrutineers during the voting (this is right in LRB policy). The envelopes with names on them are only ones that scru-

tineers cannot agree on as being a part of the bargaining unit — a process in which both parties, union and employer are a part of.

The obvious solution would be ensuring an appropriate and confidential ballot for workers. It is no solution to allege undue employer influence, and then remove a vote and make everything subject to card signing with its potential shortcomings.

If it's democracy we all laud, its most primary means is secret balloting.

Isn't it that simple?

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