

## INJURED WORKERS POVERTY REPORT SKIT

*Written by Kate Lushington - based on historical writings from Sir William Meredith's final report, Paul Weiler's Reshaping Workers' Compensation in Ontario, Bill Wrye's speech December 1985 (see Hansard) and an analysis by John McKinnon of Injured Workers Consultants.*

*Presented June 1, 2009 at Queen's Park in Toronto during the Injured Workers Day rally, with Kate Lushington as Fairy Godparent, John McKinnon as Sir William Meredith, Karl Krevar as Bill Wrye, Orlando Buonastella as the Happy Capitalist and Marion Endicott as the "Plant" and Voice Over.*

*Presented June 11, 2009 at RAACWI Forum at the Textile Museum with the same cast except for Fergal O'Hagan as Bill Wrye*

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*– The poverty report is announced – in the audience a “plant” offers a comment:*

PLANT: (*improv comments ending with:*) This report just goes to show that today's politicians are forgetting our history.

*ENTER Fairy Godparent of History in a flurry, wheeling Sir William Meredith in wheelchair. Meredith is mopping his brow with a big red handkerchief. Lady Justice steps forward in chains.*

FAIRY: Oh, oh, oh, I hope we're not too late. What a rush. I am the Fairy Godparent of History. And here is my old friend Justice Sir William Meredith, you know, the man who set up the Compensation System way back in 1915? He's heard about this injured worker poverty report, and he's been rolling in his grave. Haven't you Sir William? (*She shouts*) 1915! Remember? In exchange for compensation, injured workers gave up their right to sue! The Historic Compromise. REMEMBER?

MEREDITH: Yes, that's right, “full justice, not half measures” - but what happened? What's all this about p-p-p-po-po-pov

FAIRY: POVERTY!

MEREDITH: That's right, I can hear you. I'm not deaf. This is not what I intended, not at all.

*(music – 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox theme)*

“I believe the true aim of a Compensation Law is to provide for the injured workman and his dependents, and to prevent their becoming a charge upon their relatives and friends, or upon the community at large.”

*(music out)*

I made that quite clear in my rep-p-p-po-po

FAIRY: REPORT! YOUR FINAL REPORT!

MEREDITH: That's right. *(music resumes)* “A just compensation law ought to provide that the compensation should continue to be paid as long as the disability lasts.”*(music out)*

What is going on? How did this happen? Lady Justice in chains?

*(music Madonna, Like A Virgin)*

FAIRY: Oh oh. They're playing Madonna - it must be the 1980's. And look who's here! Another ghost from the past – it's the Honourable Bill Wrye, Minister of Labour for the Liberal Party, in 1985. That's the year *Like a Virgin* was top of the charts. Listen, he's promising cost of living adjustments to keep up with inflation. That should keep injured workers out of poverty.

ENTER *Bill Wrye, waving to the crowd. (Music out.)*

BILL WRYE: The pain, the loss, the disruption and the disorientation caused to the worker and his or her family by a disabling injury is suffering enough.

FAIRY: *(revving up the crowd)* Suffering enough!

BILL WRYE: We should never add to this suffering the indignity of having to come cap in hand to the steps of the Legislature angrily demanding merely the protection of compensation benefits from the annual rate of inflation. From this day forward, injured workers will never again be in that humiliating position. *(he raises his arms for applause)*

FAIRY: Great words, Minister (*she grabs his hand and shakes it*) but sadly, it didn't happen (*boots Minister off stage*). Injured workers are now paying 2009 prices, with a benefit cheque dated 1990!

(*music: Macarena, Los Dos Rios*)

ENTER *a Happy Capitalist in Hawaiian shirt, on holiday from premium rates, dancing.*

FAIRY: Look who's here! It must be an employer, partying hearty on injured workers money...

HAP.CAP: Excuse me! I am a hardworking businessman, struggling to control my compensation costs. I have been reading a very good book down by the pool. It's called "Reshaping Workers Compensation in Ontario," by Paul Weiler...he says:

V.O (*live voice offstage - unseen*): Once we award an injured worker a certain share of the real economic pie, our refusal to keep the amount of his pension in line with inflation must mean that someone else in the economy will receive an increase

HAP CAP: Someone else? Who could that be? Let me see...

V.O.: In effect, someone will reap a windfall profit from inflation at the expense of the disabled worker...

HAP CAP: A windfall profit! I like that!

V.O. And, the immediate beneficiary of such *inaction* would be....  
Business!

HAP CAP: Business! That's me! (*music out*)

FAIRY: The 1990's! Cost of Living adjustments – eliminated.

HAP CAP: Windfall for me!

FAIRY: Benefit levels – reduced.

HAP CAP: But it's a recession, everybody's hurting. We all have to tighten our belts. Especially now – it's 2009, we're in a financial crisis! A disaster! An economic Tsunami!

FAIRY: Wait a minute - Injured workers are still paying for that last recession. Not the employers: Employer premiums – reduced by 25%.

HAP CAP: Windfall for me!

FAIRY: Rebates under Experience Rating – over 2 billion dollars– taken from the accident fund for injured workers. (*bring in large moneybags*)

HAP CAP: Windfall for me!

FAIRY: You are getting 2009 dollars – but you're paying 1980's premiums. Not only that, you get the exact same protection from lawsuits. You are protected in good times and bad.

HAP CAP: I'm on a premium holiday! Arrividerci Roma! I'm off to the pool. Anyone care for a mojito? (*exits dancing*)

FAIRY: And injured workers are living in poverty. Is this justice?

ALL: NO! (*Meredith – who has been sleeping up till now – wakes up suddenly, and rises from his wheelchair*)

MEREDITH: Full justice, no half measures. (*injured workers come up to unchain Lady Justice*)

ALL: Full justice, no half measures, full justice, no half measures. No more cap in hand! Justice for Injured Workers!

- The End -

RALLY CHANT: Whadda we say to employers? Time to pay.  
Whadda we say to employers? No more holiday!

