



CONVENTION

45th convention of the nova scotia federation of labour

NEWS

Tuesday, October 27, 2009

Kyle Buott, President of the Halifax-Dartmouth and District Labour Council, welcomed delegates and urged them to help build a culture of solidarity across the province by going out and supporting their labour councils. "Workers are losing sick leave benefits, we are seeing two-tier wages in our workplaces, attacks on pensions, job layoffs and plant closures," he said. "Capitalism is not working for workers."

President's Report

Brother Clarke gave an overview of the work of the Federation over the past two years. The literacy project that was cut two years ago received new funding this year and the office moved from Lunenburg to Halifax. Linda Wentzel continues her excellent work as the Workplace Education Co-ordinator, with several new and exciting projects on her plate.

A pilot project funded by the WCB to provide a worker counsellor is in the second year of its mandate and just received funding for a third year. Jessie Parkinson heads

up the Office of the Worker Counsellor and shares office space with Sister Wentzel. The two have collaborated on workshops which Brother Clarke urged members to take advantage of.

President Clarke talked about the need to establish a formal relationship with the new NDP government. He reminded delegates that we'd spent much of the past two years fighting cuts brought about by the Tory government. He said he was optimistic about working with the new premier, adding that labour representatives have already met with Darrell Dexter to talk about issues and set up a multi-sectoral structure for moving forward.

"We know there are going to be differences but we will always represent workers no matter who is in government. We know what side we are on."

Brother Clarke urged delegates to keep fighting for improved occupational health and safety regulations and better labour laws.

"This year is the 25th anniversary of the Day of Mourning. Last year over 1000 Canadians died from work-

NOTICEBOARD

GET COOKIN'

The Women's Committee has cookbooks for sale! At \$10 a pop, *Cooking for Equality* makes a great X-mas present. Funds go to help transition houses and the WIL Fund (Women in the Legislature). And for a mere \$20 more you can buy a *Rosie the Riveter* canvas bag to put it in!

By-election Blitz!

Join the HDDLC on Nov. 1st for a door-to-door canvassing blitz in support of Cumberland-Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley NDP candidate Mark Austin. If you can't be there but would like to make a contribution, you can send a cheque, payable to Mark Austin NDP Campaign, to: 550 Prince Street, Truro, NS B2N 1G1 or to help out call 902-893-2526 or go to www.markaustin.ndp.ca.

related injuries," he said. "And in Nova Scotia, 29 workers died from work-related injuries, the highest since Westray."

He reminded delegates that our labour laws and standards lag behind the rest of the country and that we should expect the same rights as workers in other jurisdictions.

He appealed to members to support labour councils and the youth committee that has been four years in the making. "Please help get this committee up and running—youth are our future and we need their voices to be heard."

He said labour needs to keep pushing for things like poverty reduction and improvements to minimum wage, and for EI and pension reform.

He urged delegates to debate the issues as we head towards a federal election and to consider who we need to elect in order to make our priorities the priorities of government.

LEXICON

LICO: Low Income Cut-Off (the accepted measure for establishing the poverty line)

our province - our future - working together to make it better

RESOLUTIONS

Delegates passed many important resolutions throughout the day, buoyed by the possibility of achieving gains for workers previously unattainable under Tory and Liberal governments.

People spoke passionately about the need to hold employers accountable for workplace fatalities and serious injuries. The Federation was directed to pressure the government to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate such incidents.

Delegates expressed frustration with lengthy Labour Board hearings and costs that cripple our ability to unionize workplaces, and vowed to lobby the NDP government to eliminate these barriers to organizing.

Delegates directed the Federation to lobby the

government on several issues, including indoor air quality regulations (which have been on the books for 12 years), workers' compensation for university employees and increases to social assistance.

They endorsed the creation of an education program designed to stop bullying in the workplace, and pledged to fight for immigration status for temporary migrant and guest workers who are paid less and have fewer rights than other Canadian workers.

Delegates heard how Canada Post is moving to cut back services and jobs, especially in rural areas, and passed an emergency resolution calling for universal postal services and opposing the privatization or deregulation of Canada Post.

They endorsed the recom-

mendations of the Minimum Wage Review Committee to bring the minimum wage to \$9.65 per hour and index it to inflation beginning October 2010.

Delegates vowed to lobby for socially responsible pension plans and to hold fund directors accountable for their performance. They called for legislation to protect whistleblowers and renewed their commitments to protecting collective bargaining rights and the right to strike for health care workers. They registered strong opposition to any move by the government to suspend collective bargaining or freeze or reduce wages. And they vowed to lobby for changes to the Trade Union Act and Labour Standards to facilitate the organizing of non-unionized workplaces.

Internal resolutions to create spots on the Executive for a Union Retiree and a Young Worker representative received speedy passage, as did a call to create an ad hoc International Solidarity Committee.

The Federation was encouraged to reduce its carbon footprint by holding meetings in venues that have environmentally-friendly practices, and a resolution calling for gender-neutral washroom facilities where possible was also passed.

The importance of supporting local food producers and retailers was strongly endorsed, with delegates urging the Federation to develop a buy local campaign, and to lobby government to market and promote local food in our schools, hospitals and institutions.

NDP Leader Jack Layton speaks to crisis in pensions

Federal NDP Leader Jack Layton took time out of his busy schedule to address convention Monday morning.

"The nation's eyes are on Nova Scotia right now, that's for sure," he said. "People are excited all across the country—what is this interesting thing that's happening down in Nova Scotia? I congratulate you and thank you for making history."

"I was looking out at the sunrise this morning and by golly it was orange!"

~ Jack Layton on landing in Nova Scotia

Layton praised the labour movement for defining important issues during the provincial election, and urged delegates to send a strong message to Stephen Harper by helping to elect NDP candidate Mark Austin in the by-election in Cumberland-

Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

He explained the federal party's pension campaign which is aimed at eliminating seniors' poverty by expanding CPP and putting \$700m into the Guaranteed Income Supplement. The campaign also has a plan to protect workers from unfunded and underfunded pension plans and from company bankruptcies.

Finally, he explained why his

party supported the Harper government rather than force a fall election:

"Almost half a million people lost their jobs in this country in last 12 months," he told delegates. "The EI system doesn't work for a lot of these people... so when the Harper government put a billion dollars forward to fix EI, our caucus made a decision: instead of an election, let's help the people who sent us here."

SAVE RURAL POSTAL SERVICES! Go to www.southshorenova.ca, click on the rural delivery link, and sign the petition!