



NSFL CONVENTION NEWS

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Monday's convention opened with a report from Federation President Rick Clarke, who talked about some of the challenges we are facing today. He said the provincial government is sitting on much needed occupational health and safety regulations while workplace accidents are on the rise. He said though we had made some inroads on minimum wage — labour's input at the table had brought a 10 percent increase in a 12-month period — the government was still dragging its feet when it came to labour legislation. He said labour has to be even more diligent in the fight against private health care. He warned that if we don't collectively

take a stand we will wind up with American-style health care — like the 48 million Americans who have no health insurance whatsoever.

Clarke told delegates that cuts to employment insurance have taken 400 million a year from unemployed Nova Scotians, and that women and youth have a particularly hard time qualifying for benefits.

He said employment equity is sliding backwards, the working poor are on the rise and that even though labour is at the table more than it is on the street with a minority government it is time for us to take a stand.

He left delegates with the following food for thought:

Retirees Unite

Rene Quigley, speaking on behalf of the newly founded Nova Scotia Federation of Union Retirees, told delegates that many retired workers who had been under a collective agreement all their lives now found themselves being hit hard. He said union retirees have the commitment, the time and the experience to build a strong organization that can stand up for seniors. He asked delegates to give generously to help the organization grow.

“First we do what we can, next we take on the difficult, and soon we will be doing the impossible.”

Resolutions

As the Resolutions Committees delivered the long-anticipated resolutions, delegates lined up at the microphones for healthy debate on the issues. With many workers seeking a greater role in the management of their pension plans, delegates were quick to approve a resolution to create a Federation of Labour committee to look at pensions and joint trusteeship.

Convention gave enthusiastic support to a full-scale campaign on labour issues that will involve canvassing face to face at workplaces as well as a media campaign. Delegates were urged to return to their unions and ask for the monies to support this major

continued on back page...

Building on our STRENGTHS — MOVING forward

continued from page 1

undertaking. President Rick Clarke added that affiliates needed to do more than just provide funds, they had to do the work of strengthening the labour movement as well.

On other internal business, delegates agreed to a review of the standing committees of the Federation, and to renew support for Labour Councils, which are waning in many areas of the province. A resolution calling on the Federation executive to make every effort to attend regular Labour Council meetings was passed with full support.

Convention resolved to join in the struggle of CAW fishery workers at Clearwater's North Sydney processing plant. Laid-off plant worker Jackie Evans told delegates how our provincial government has turned a blind eye while Clearwater sends fish caught off Nova Scotia to Newfoundland. Forty workers have been laid off, and it is feared the plant will close.

"This is the first time the government is allowing an entire resource — the whole

thing — to go to another province for processing," she said. Delegates instructed the Federation to demand that the Department of Fisheries not issue quotas to companies that process the product offshore.

Delegates expressed outrage at a provincial government decision to take the child tax benefit away from families on social assistance. The Federation vowed to lobby appropriate government bodies for an end to this unconscionable practice.



Delegates agreed to not only support the CLC's Make Poverty History campaign but to demand that all political parties in the province work for an increase in the minimum wage and take real action on homelessness.

Delegates condemned the Tory government for its failure to adopt a regulation on violence in the workplace that was developed over ten years ago. They asked

the Federation to coordinate a campaign to finally put this regulation in place.

Many delegates went to the microphones with stories of violence in their places of work, stating that any kind of harassment, whether it is verbal, authoritative abuse or a physical attack, is violence that workers need protection from.

Delegates pledged to support federal correctional services workers in their fight to have danger pay reinstated for 2,000 workers who put their lives in jeopardy every day while working in the public service.

Several delegates praised the work of the Nova Scotia branch of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA-NS), which produces a number of important research documents each year — documents like the Child Poverty Report and the Alternative Provincial Budget. Delegates vowed to help this progressive think tank to thrive by providing annual, sustaining contributions, rather than cap-in-

hand donations.

Delegates wrapped up the day by giving full support to resolutions condemning private, for profit health care clinics and calling for government measures to minimize the impact of rising gas and heating costs.

Labour issues on the table

CLC President Ken

Georgetti addressed delegates in the afternoon with a rousing call for political action.

"The days are long gone when it was enough to be active during an election," he said. "If the labour movement is going to have credibility in political arena, we have to be active 365 days a year."

He said it was important to make our voices heard "when and where the decisions are being made that affect us."

"We have the collective power to achieve our goals at the bargaining table, and the power as well to influence the political process in much the same way."