

May 8, 2011

Welcome to Convention

A warm welcome to each of the 2,600 Delegates and Guests attending the CLC 26th Constitutional Convention at the Vancouver Convention Centre, May 9 - 13, 2011. Unions do make a difference in people's lives and this Convention is all about finding better ways to get that message out. There is a Union advantage in the wages, benefits, pensions and safer workplaces that we negotiate for our Members. But all Canadians, not just Union Members, benefit from strong Unions. We push for government policies that will assist in creating good, family-supporting jobs. We advocate for improved Employment Insurance, we defend valuable public services such as Medicare, and our campaign to improve the CPP/QPP will benefit all workers when they retire. There are powerful forces that oppose us, and too often they frame the public debate. We have to do a better job of convincing Canadians that ours is a better way. This Convention will focus on how we can work harder and smarter, using every available means of communication to tell our story. It's going to be an exciting week.

Fly Our Flag!

Executive Vice President Barbara Byers told Delegates to the 25th Annual Convention of the Union Trades and Services Department that, "in the United States, any flag raised at the municipal, state and federal level must be made in the US. We need to step up in Canada to ensure our flags are Canadian and Union made."

Delegates unanimously passed resolution acting on Byers' call to action and to begin a lobby campaign demanding all levels of government purchase our flag only if entirely made in Canada by Unionized workers and made from Canadian materials. Additionally, resolutions were passed to continue to develop a Union-made goods and services directory and to promote a local procurement policy at the municipal level. At this Convention every Delegate received a local directory for the Vancouver area. Executive Director Michael MacIsaac emphasized the need to support businesses listed. The Union Label Trades and Services Department of the CLC actively encourages the promotion of Canadian, Union-made goods and services, including musicians and actors.

Sharon Cameron from SEIU West was elected the new President.

Social Media Workshop with Juliette Powell

Delegates can learn more about the world of social media from author and Digital Media Consultant Juliette Powell, on Friday, May 13, 2011, who will give a presentation on the use of new media and social media to organize around ideas, community and social change. New media and social media have played a role in the people's democratic uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa, and in the wide protests against Republican politicians in Wisconsin. It is also playing an increasing role in politics as we just saw in our own Federal Election Campaign. The presentation will cover how best to use the new and social media tools to help with

organizing new Union Members, for conducting issues campaigns, for gaining public support for workers in labour disputes and in counteracting negative images of Unions and workers. A Q&A will follow. Following the presentation, Delegates will see how Unions are using new media and social media to advance their work.

CLC's Andrew Jackson to Receive Sefton Award

The CLC would like to congratulate Andrew Jackson, CLC Chief Economist, for being named as recipient of the Sefton Award, an honour bestowed annually by Woodsworth College and the Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources at the University of Toronto. The award honours individuals who have made a significant contribution to the field of industrial relations and is dedicated to the memory of Larry Sefton. His career in the labour movement began on the picket line in Kirkland Lake during a gold miners' strike during World War II. Mr. Sefton later held office in the United Steelworkers of America, eventually becoming the Director of District 6. Previous winners of the award include former CLC President Bob White, historian Des Morton and Leo Gerard, International President of United Steelworkers. The award will be presented on Thursday, March 24, 2011 prior to the Annual Sefton Memorial Lecture at Kruger Hall Commons, Woodsworth College, University of Toronto, 119 St. George Street. The lecture occurs at approximately 7:00 p.m.

May 9, 2011

CLC Convention Formally Opens in Vancouver

Hassan Yussuff, CLC Secretary-Treasurer, opened the 26th Constitutional Convention this morning. He asked representatives from the Musqueam Nation to bring greetings and to welcome Delegates to Coast Salish Territory. Elder Rose Point reminded those present to “pass our knowledge to future generations with open minds and open hearts.” She told Delegates, that “the good you do today, some people may forget, but do good anyway”. Jim Sinclair, President of the BC Federation of Labour, also welcomed Delegates to Vancouver and emphasized labour’s need to hold governments and corporations to account when dealing with workers’ health and safety. He noted two recent deaths of construction workers, including one at the Convention Centre. Mayor Gregor Robertson told the Convention that Vancouver “is one of the most livable cities because of our unionized workforce.” He said local Unions stepped up to the plate during the recent Olympic Games and he thanked the CLC for its contributions to electing a progressive government in his city. Delegates to the Convention viewed a biographical tribute to former CLC President Shirley Carr who died on June 24, 2010.

Unions and the Social Contract

Delegates to the CLC Convention in Vancouver were treated to a lively debate moderated by CBC TV’s Wendy Mesley. Four panelists analyzed the decline of the social contract in Canada’s economy in the years since World War II. They talked about the birth of neo-liberalism and the attack on Unions and working people. Panelists posed lively challenges to the Delegates about what to do about all of this. On numerous occasions, panelists emphasized that the relevance of the Union movement is increasing. They said that on issues such as treatment of temporary, foreign workers or the erosion of full employment policies, it is Unions who insist that wealth be redistributed more fairly. Many Delegates posed questions. One asked about the role that women played in the post war economy. Panelists said it was women, at that time, who kept middle income families from collapsing by going into the workforce in increasing numbers. It was agreed that racialized women have been the most marginalized group in intervening years. But one positive outcome of inequality has been the achievements won in pay and employment equity.

CLC Delegates Distribute Child Care Petition

Delegates to the CLC Convention in Vancouver are circulating a petition to the House of Commons calling upon the federal government to legislate the right to universal access to Child Care and to provide adequate funding for provinces and territories to create the system. The petition is available for downloading and printing here and should be sent to the appropriate Parliamentary critics when the House of Commons reconvenes.

PETITION TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS:

WHEREAS Child Care is often not accessible or affordable for Canadian families and is often of

uncertain quality for young children;

WHEREAS Child Care creates jobs, makes Canada more competitive, helps achieve women's equality and builds local economies and is a recognized human right;

WE, the undersigned, citizens (or residents) of Canada, call upon the House of Commons to legislate the right to universal access to Child Care, and provide multi-year funding to provincial and territorial governments to build a national system of affordable, high quality, public and not-for-profit early childhood education and care accessible to all children. The federal government must establish funding criteria and reporting mechanisms that ensure accountability for how the provinces and territories use federal funding to ensure quality, accessibility, universality and accountability, and that acknowledge Quebec's right to develop social programs with adequate compensation from the federal government.

Download and print the petition at:

http://www.canadianlabour.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/childcarepetition-2011-05-09-en_1_0.pdf

May 10, 2011

United Way Announces Buy Canadian Policy

The President of the United Way of Canada told a cheering crowd of Delegates to the CLC Convention that, starting June 1, 2011, all products purchased for sale, as part of United Way Fundraising, will be Canadian-made, Union-made and green. The change in Policy coincides with a new, activist approach to fighting poverty – an approach Al Hatton challenged national Unions and Union locals to support and join. Speaking as part of a series that focuses on how Unions make a difference, Hatton praised the continued generosity of Union Members, noting that even in the face of an economic downturn, the support never wavered.

Good Jobs For All

The economic system is not performing for working people in Canada. That message was loud and clear as the Economic and Social Policy Committee introduced their report to the CLC Convention. The report shows that the economy has failed to deliver good jobs, better standards of living, decent workplaces, and equal, inclusive societies. The session passed resolutions that set out key building blocks of a new economic model, one which puts forward labour's vision for a much more democratic economy and a fairer society. Foreign ownership was raised as a vital issue with respect to protecting the interests of Canadian workers and their communities. There was a call for a stringent review of foreign takeovers, including those in the broadcasting industry. One delegate said that if broadcasting was controlled by huge US corporations, the Canadian version of a popular television show would be called CSI – Moose Jaw. The issue of migrant workers drew passionate debate. Delegates heard that the plight of some temporary foreign workers resembles modern day slavery. The afternoon's debate also dealt with issues such as green jobs and a national energy strategy.

Women's Forum: A Balancing Act

CLC Vice Presidents Barb Byers and Marie Clarke Walker welcomed more than 200 CLC Delegates to a Women's Forum at the Convention in Vancouver. The two officers recounted examples of how women have mobilized since the last Convention. They have developed tools to challenge women's inequality, used social media to publicize women's issues, lobbied successfully to keep the gun registry and worked to make childcare a key issue the recent federal election. "Women's working lives are a balancing act", said Byers. "Sometimes women get to choose what they balance, and other times not." Clarke Walker expressed a hope that the women's energy and creativity will continue, and predicted that there will be plenty of fights ahead with the Harper government. The forum featured cultural events that depicted women's struggles and celebrated their militancy. Through song, dance and much laughter, the audience participated in performances by the Kayleyla Ladies Drum Group, comedian and ACTRA Member Taborah (Tabby) Johnson, Kathara Canada, and The Kitchen Party Improv troupe.

"Not a Single Financial Executive Has Gone to Jail, and That's Wrong"

With those words, Ken Georgetti welcomed Academy Award winning director Charles Ferguson to the stage at the CLC Convention. Those same words were used by Ferguson himself the night he accepted the Best Documentary Oscar for his film Inside Job, a hard-hitting expose of the financial and regulatory negligence that resulted in the biggest economic collapse in 80 years. Ferguson warned Delegates that without change the American people should expect another, equally devastating financial collapse within 15 years. “The sheer concentration of wealth and political power among a very few people, and the ongoing social and educational distress among so many does not bode well for America,” he warned. “The more people who get left behind, the more America, as a country, falls behind the rest of the world”, he said, and he added that Canadians need to be worried about such events as well. A special screening of Inside Job, sponsored by the Labour College of Canada, took place later Monday evening, and Ferguson was on hand to meet and greet CLC Delegates.

Journalist Challenges Labour to Stand Up to the Conservative Agenda

Hundreds of Delegates and labour activists came together for an evening of solidarity, spectacular entertainment and challenging words on Sunday at the Human Rights Forum. Following greetings from CLC Secretary-Treasurer Hassan Yussuff, Delegates were treated to a mesmerizing, high-energy performance of traditional aboriginal hoop dancing by three-time World Champion Alex Wells. Keynote speaker Haroon Siddiqui later challenged the audience to recognize that while the Conservative Party has earned the right to govern by virtue of its own winning “divide and conquer” strategy, it is the labour movement’s responsibility to hold the government accountable. “While Canadians have conferred a majority mandate on Mr. Harper, they have not crowned him King of Canada; he said himself on election night that he intends to be Prime Minister for all Canadians. Your job is to make sure that he is”, said Siddiqui. The award-winning journalist challenged activists in the room to match Conservative strategies with new strategies of their own, including modern tactics that engage people where they live and work. The CLC’s Yussuff acknowledged the hard work and dedication of several Trade Union activists who are retiring from their roles as Equity Vice Presidents: Sonia Reynolds (SEIU) and Philip Paul (CAW) from Workers of Colour; Darren Patrick (COPE) from Aboriginal Workers; Victor Elkins (CUPE) from Solidarity & Pride; and, Lynn Taylor (CUPE/HEU) from Workers with Disabilities.

Labour Councils Affirm that Municipalities Matter

CLC President Ken Georgetti congratulated the Labour Councils for their role in electing more than 1,250 mayors, councillors and school trustees in the six years since the Municipalities Matters campaign began. “Great things happen for Union Members and their communities when they elect people who represent workers’ values and interests,” Georgetti told a Labour Council Forum on Sunday, May 8th. Delegates to the forum were also encouraged by the positive experience of Glen Taylor, the three-term mayor of Hinton, Alberta, and several other speakers who shared their stories of how electing labour-friendly candidates really does make a difference. Labour councils can work to ensure that communities elect people who make municipalities matter for working people. The results can be seen in living wage policies and campaigns to keep water public, to the power of building through coalitions.

Unions Stand Up for Working Canadians: Georgetti Says Use New Media to Get the Message Out

The president of the Canadian Labour Congress says that Unions have had many successes in standing up for working people, and he is calling on the labour movement to use every form of media available to tell that story. “We have to make the winning argument that a strong labour movement who’s Members have good wages and benefits lifts everyone up, including non-Union workers and all businesses. Because without Unions, the standard of living will drop for everyone”, Georgetti said. He was speaking to 2,600 Delegates and visitors at the CLC’s 26th Constitutional Convention occurring in Vancouver. Georgetti said that there are powerful forces that oppose the Union agenda of good jobs for all and more equality in society. “Too often Unions are portrayed negatively, inaccurately and unfairly. Put simply, we’ve been framed. Framed by our opponents, by big business, in the media they own and by right-wing governments.” Georgetti added, “We must examine our public image as Unions and be willing to reconsider our strategies to address it. This Convention is where we also start a new mission to work harder and work smarter than ever at presenting a realistic image of our labour movement to the public through the media. And through an improved public image and the use of accessible social media like Twitter, Facebook, texting and the Internet, we are going to step completely out of their distorted frame, starting at this Convention.” Georgetti said, however, that the improved use of media by Unions has already begun. He pointed to labour’s advocacy to win improvements to the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans. “We have shown with our CPP/QPP campaign that when we go on the offensive with labour’s issues, it is our opponents who are forced to react and who cannot control the debate.”

May 11, 2011

Trumka Says, “We are one!”

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka brought a message of solidarity to CLC Delegates meeting in Vancouver – a message of renewed, global effort to organize and re-organize working people the world over. But first of all, he took time to thank Canada’s Unions for their solidarity. “You were at our side in Wisconsin, in Indiana and Ohio when we called. You kept your promise of solidarity. For that, your Brothers and Sisters to the south say thank you and we will stand beside you whenever you call, for as long as you need us.” Trumka described the growing gap between the super rich and a quickly eroding middle class across America, where the top 10% of income earners took 100% of the wage gains over the past decade, leaving millions of working families struggling to make ends meet. Trumka also brought news of successful new organizing efforts in New York to bring the city’s taxi drivers back into the labour movement. He also spoke of the success of Domestic Workers United, which recently secured passage of a Domestic Workers’ Bill of Rights in the New York legislature. Echoing the words of many speakers to the Convention, Trumka concluded by calling on Union activists to reinvent the movement with new strategies and modern tactics in order to take on today’s global corporations and win prosperity for working people everywhere.

CLC Officers Re-elected

The CLC’s four Executive Officers have been re-elected for a three year term by Delegates to the organization’s Convention in Vancouver. CLC President Ken Georgetti, Executive Vice-Presidents Barbara Byers and Marie Clark Walker, and Secretary-Treasurer Hassan Yussuff were all acclaimed in their positions. Each thanked Convention Delegates for the vote of confidence.

Layton Wows CLC Convention

Jack Layton, leader of the NDP and of the Official Opposition, thrilled CLC Delegates with a rousing speech that called for a united front to strengthen retirement security for Canadians. “Working together we can put pressure on the Harper Government to finally improve the Canada Pension Plan,” said Layton, “and the NDP won’t stop until it’s done.” Delegates cheered Layton wildly when he said that Canada now has the largest united opposition in thirty-one years. In addition to fighting for improved pensions, he said the caucus will concentrate its effort on improving public health care and put forward practical solutions so working families can make ends meet. Layton thanked the CLC and the labour movement for their efforts in the election. “We would not have pulled it off without your help. Thank you for everything you have done.” He said that progressives need to build the largest movement for change that Canada has ever seen. “We can build the Canada we want, where no one is left behind.” He asked Delegates to roll-up their sleeves and build this country. Layton was accompanied by recently re-elected MPs Libby Davies, Don Davies, Peter Julian, Fin Donnelly and brand new MPs Jasbir Sandhu, Jinny Sims, and Kennedy Stewart.

Recapturing Our Space

Delegates to the CLC Convention debated a discussion paper called “Recapturing Our Space.” The paper says that labour has always done its best when its arguments speak to the interests of all workers. “Our public image and visibility must penetrate everything we do. We must drive and repeat our conviction and support for a positive image of ourselves and for our campaigns.” Delegates agreed that labour needs to find new ways of getting its message out. Speakers referred to the influence of the internet. They said there are more ways than ever to get across unfiltered and positive messages. This can be done by using blogs, Twitter, Facebook, issue-based websites, email and texting. The discussion paper promised the CLC will produce a guide to developing a quick-response, grassroots communications program that will provide tools and techniques for individual Members to use in responding to negative portrayals of Unions and workers. The CLC will also create a working group of communicators from the labour movement and from outside to share what works and does not when using social and more traditional media.

Progressives as Pragmatists and Dreamers

Delegates to the CLC Convention in Vancouver were treated to a thought provoking panel discussion that focused on labour’s ability to tell its story internally and to the public. The moderator was CBC journalist Ian Hanomansing. He guided panelists, including pollster Allan Gregg, the CCPA’s Trish Hennessy and Alex Himelfarb, a former senior federal civil servant, through a series of issues and perceptions that confront labour. The panel began with a question about the mood of Canadians. Hennessy rejected the notion that Canadians are angry. She suggested that there is a “slow simmering worry” which breeds fear. Himelfarb said that there are three things wrong with the progressive movement. It has become complacent, relies on nostalgia and has lost confidence in the future. He also said that Canada cannot have “Swedish style services with American style taxes”. Gregg told the Convention that the labour movement must first be relevant with its Membership and then mobilize beyond the shop floor. He advised Delegates to embrace social media as a way to connect. The panelists agreed that labour needs to be better at telling its story. Hennessy said that labour people can be pragmatic and be dreamers too.

Dix for Premier!

Adrian Dix, leader of the BC NDP, spoke to Delegates at the CLC Convention in Vancouver, promising an agenda of good Union jobs when he becomes the province’s next Premier. Delegates were on their feet when Dix promised to restore card-check certification to British Columbia and asked Unions to support the NDP to ensure they win the next provincial election.

Panel on Politics, Using Our Voice

A panel discussion at the CLC Convention dealt with labour’s involvement in politics. Former BC NDP Premier Mike Harcourt, Vision Vancouver city councillor Andrea Reimer, and lobbyist Robin Sears answered Delegates’ questions on how labour should best approach politics. “The day

corporations advocate for the NDP, you can stop being involved in party politics,” Sears said when asked about whether Unions should back a political party. Reimer added, “We should be proud to make a point and take a side.” On the issue of whether labour should be in the halls of Parliament, all panelists agreed that directly lobbying politicians is important. But that is only the first step. The panel emphasized the need to mobilize voters to agree with labour’s issues. Harcourt said, “The labour movement is most effective when you reach out beyond just talking to yourselves.” Social media was talked about, as it has often during this Convention. The panel agreed that social media is an essential component of political action but is best used as a door opener to encourage a wider discussion on issues. When asked what motivates politicians, Harcourt concluded, “one word...its called vote.”

Pensions Expert Bernard Dussault Honoured by CLC

Bernard Dussault, former Chief Actuary of the Canada Pension Plan, was honoured by the Canadian Labour Congress Convention in Vancouver for making a difference in people’s lives. CLC President Ken Georgetti thanked Dussault for his expertise and the time that he has devoted to supporting the CLC’s campaign on retirement security. Dussault told the Convention that he is outraged that a pension plan proposed by the federal government will allow banks and financial institutions to skim off 50% of the investment earnings that low income people save for their retirement. He pledged to continue his work with the labour movement until the campaign for an improved CPP/QPP is a reality.

Richard L. Trumka, President, AFL-CIO Speaks to the CLC Convention in Vancouver

“Thank you, Ken (Georgetti) for that truly generous introduction. You’re the best kind of Union man, a true friend and a fighter, with a deep personal commitment to fairness and justice for working people across Canada across this continent and around the world. Last week Canada’s federal election results gave us a pretty clear indication of where things are heading over the months and years ahead. Canada’s choice has become razor sharp between shared prosperity and rising inequality and the job ahead is clear. We have to reshape our economies so every last one of our Brothers and Sisters can work safely and with dignity, so every worker can bring home a fair share of the wealth we create, so anyone who works hard for a lifetime whether in a grocery store, a factory, or on a farm, can live with the protections of a Union contract and aspire to a secure retirement and a better life for our children and grandchildren. And I promise you this, as you rise to the opportunity before you, your Sisters and Brothers to the south will be proud to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with you, and with every single working man and woman in Canada. Earlier this year when Wisconsin Governor. Scott Walker turned budget hysteria into a weapon against Wisconsin teachers, nurses, and first responders, you were at our side, you said, ‘What can we do?’ You said, ‘We’re there for you, Brother.’ You said, ‘We’re with you, Sister, whatever you need.’ And then as the days turned to weeks and the weeks into more than a month, the Canadian labor movement answered every promise with action.

Your word is your seal. On behalf of the 12 million working men and women of the AFL-CIO, on behalf of our Union leaders at the national state, and local level, and on behalf of the hard-working organizers and researchers and other professionals of the labor movement in the United

States, and on behalf of those teachers and nurses and firefighters in Wisconsin and elsewhere, I thank you and thank you again. In our solidarity is our strength. And here's our word: We will be there for you whenever you call every single time you need us, that's a promise. The challenges we face today here and around the world are tough. All workers, especially young people, look at each other around the world and see even in the shadow of repression and global capital, the same goals, the same hopes, the same digital culture, the same tactics of nonviolent protest. These global cries must be answered with good jobs and a voice at work and in politics. These cries call for us to re-found our global economic and political order on a more democratic, transparent and equitable basis. We need to chart a road to develop a global strategy to coordinate and unite working people with every bit as much agility and reach as the multinational corporations we deal with. And our bar for measuring progress will not be the profits of multinational corporations but the number and quality of jobs, good jobs around the world.

Let me ask you something: How many of you got a 23 percent raise last year? Go ahead and raise your hands if your local Union took in 81 percent more money last year. How many of you earned 343 times more than your co-workers? Last year, the average pay of a corporate CEO in the U.S. went up 23 percent. Those CEOs make 343 times more than the median workers earn. Profits at S&P 500 companies rose 81 percent last year. It's the same story here in Canada where the richest one percent of Canadians takes a larger piece of the economic pie than at any time in the past 100 years. But for working families, it's a different story. We feel the pinch. We sense the looming poverty. Every day we hear things like, 'We used to be middle class, but not anymore.' Working families, our communities, are struggling. We're angry, of course, we're angry! We're working harder for less. The rules have been changed on us and our identities as middle class societies have been threatened. And too often the justifiable anger of working people makes it possible for us to be lured away from the promise of robust growth toward the fake virtue of austerity which after all is just an excuse to drain more from working families and pour more cash into corporate coffers. Austerity is the greatest trap facing governments worldwide from Europe to Asia and America. Instead of austerity our urgent need is to create jobs. But our leaders haven't focused on jobs. Instead, we've seen our politics corrupted by billionaires who have used fear and economic insecurity in a bid to dismantle our social safety nets and divide working people. Meanwhile, Union Membership in the private sector in the United States has dropped below 8 percent—as low as during the Great Depression 80 years ago. These Union Membership numbers aren't a popularity poll and they're not an indication of a declining need for Unions. They're just a sad reflection of how difficult it is for workers to form Unions in our modern corporate environment in the United States.

Let me be blunt. Too many business leaders today will do anything in their power anything, legal or illegal, to deny workers the basic human right to bargain collectively. To them we're just another commodity. I'm not a commodity and neither are you. We can't soft-pedal around this. We're in a fight for our lives, our families! Sisters and Brothers, it is time for us to rise together, to build toward the future working people deserve, it's time. And to do it, we need new tools, new organizing models, new solidarity, a new vision. And as we look to our roots for lessons, I am struck that a hallmark of our movement has always been our practicality, the way we fashion answers out of the questions at hand. That has always been the case when we most needed to grow. We generate ideas that at first seem radical but quickly become standard ideas like helping factory workers organize or bargaining for pension ideas that seem so obvious today. These ideas allowed millions of workers to form Unions and lift ourselves and our families into the middle class. Once again today we're breaking new ground by returning to basic principles, creating new models together for a truly comprehensive and global labor movement, one that can

protect workers from Milwaukee to Juarez, from Vancouver to Beijing, from Toronto to Bogota. For example, the entire global labour movement has committed to workers in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas at one multi-national corporation-Deutsche Telekom so its workers can demand in a dozen languages that it honour the same basic rights around the world as it does in Germany. We're working to ensure that deep grassroots organizing led by workers employed in new industries is tied to similar movements of workers employed by the same multinationals everywhere.

We're undertaking a big initiative to redefine our Unions and transform how we work, how we operate internally and how we present ourselves to the public. We're changing the narrative away from our Unions as faceless institutions and toward an understanding of Unions as vital communities of working people. We're strengthening our relationships with our community partners and allies especially in the African American, Asian and Latino communities, but also among young people and in the environmental LGBT and other communities. We must be one, we are one, and that underlies the beauty and the strength of the incredible energy and activism generated in response to this year's attacks on Collective Bargaining rights along your southern border. We have to bore in deep on our changing demographics and shifting workforce. We're reaching out to young workers not only by blogging and using social media like Facebook and Twitter but by encouraging young trade Unionist groups to form in every community and focusing hard on the needs of young workers. New workers are stepping into one of the cruelest economies in generations - the "gig economy" some call it, that's offering young workers not jobs but a succession of short-term, temporary, no-benefit "gigs". That requires a different kind of outreach and organizing. And we're embracing working people who have been excluded from traditional organizing, through worker centers and nontraditional worker organizations. I just came from a congress for "excluded workers." One such group is domestic workers in New York and a dozen other states we're supporting the organizing of domestic workers.

In some ways it seems an impossible task. Each maid, each nanny, each home care provider has a different employer. This is a new model with untested tactics but already it is inspiring and successful. Domestic Workers United is developing neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood contract standards and creating resource centers. And DWU campaigned for and passed a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights in the New York State Legislature. The bill lays out baseline working standards including a reasonable workday and sick leave. And DWU is forming an alliance of domestic workers globally. A similar campaign is under way to help taxi drivers in New York City organize. And the success of our own AFL-CIO community affiliate Working America signals another promising direction. Already more than 3.5 million strong, Working America shows that working people who don't have the benefit of Union contracts are ready to be part of something bigger to fight for good jobs and a just economy and to build support for Union organizing. We're using that foundation as a laboratory to develop additional forms of representation. Another area where we're making change is our work to expand on new models to organize workers' capital and to make sure workers' pension and welfare funds are invested in workers' best long-term interest - we're grateful for Ken's leadership in putting these capital strategies onto the global labor movement's agenda.

I want to be frank about this. Over the decades as our economies have moved away from our Union Members, we in labour did not respond quickly or creatively enough. Sometimes it takes some good, hard knocks just to wake us up. But listen closely, just when people think we've been knocked down, that's when we're at our strongest. Just when people think we're out, that's when we're at our best. It has to do with what's right here in our hearts. Sisters and Brothers

when workers across the continent and around the world stand up and say, ‘Hey, what about my rights? How can I join with my co-workers in a Union?’ - we’d better be ready! And we can only do it together. It’s time for us to build a movement big enough for every worker who needs us. A movement for an economy that creates good jobs, a movement that honours the dignity of all workers and our fundamental freedoms every single day. The freedom to assemble our freedom of speech and our freedom to come together in Unions to bargain for a better life. A movement inspired by the heroism we see every day in working men and women, and sustained by our shared belief in morality and by our shared vision of a better world. A world that offers opportunity to every person who wants a job, a good job, so people can raise a family if they want to, and have a decent life. We have a vision of a day where corporations and the rich pay their fair share of taxes instead of poaching off the middle class and the poor. We’ll work for it. We’ll stand for it. Together. To bring out the best in our countries. To build the future we know we can have, we must have for ourselves, for our children, for our grandchildren. And we will never, ever back down. Thank you, and God bless you, and the work you do.”

Mobilizing Young Workers

Well over one hundred Delegates to the CLC Convention in Vancouver attended a Young Workers Forum that heard from presenters about how young workers are mobilizing across North America. Special guest Christine Kistner from Wisconsin said that during the recent controversy their “young workers were at the front of the occupation of the Capitol building in Madison”. She thanked the many youth who helped demonstrate against the state’s Governor Scott Walker and his anti-worker agenda. Panelists at the forum described actions from across Canada. Jennifer Matthews is a key activist who participated in the recent CLC Retirement Security campaign. She is also instrumental in getting Canada to adopt ILO Convention 138, which is attempting to abolish child labour both in Canada and abroad. The panel also included Mathieu Debroux (ITUC), Pablo Godoy (UFCW) and Stephen Von Sychowski (COPE). They talked about the plight of migrant workers, the response to the attack on employment standards, and the creation of an international young workers’ blog. One panelist summed up the discussion by emphasizing the need to “capture the imagination of young workers and make the Union your family”.

“Bringing our structure into the 21st century”

A Delegate to the CLC Convention began his remarks with the above statement, saying that the Report of the Commission on Structural Review was a “historic document”. The Commission struck at the last CLC Convention in 2008 was tasked with a comprehensive review of central labour bodies in Canada. The report’s recommendations dealt with the role, goals and focus of the labour movement, its governance, campaigns and inter-Union relations. The Commission proposed the creation of a Canadian Council which would be more inclusive, with increased representation of affiliated Unions, federations of labour and equity groups. It also proposed that a National Campaign Committee be established to design and develop actions and campaigns for delivery across Canada. On inter-Union relations, a clear consensus was reached to draft a protocol for dealing with raids, an amended Oath of Office and a Pledge of Solidarity. As one delegate said, “raiding serves no purpose”. Many at the microphones talked about how our efforts should be directed at organizing workers and not on raiding other Unions. The debate on the Commission was followed by a series of resolutions to implement its proposals.

May 12, 2011

Coalition For Gun Control Given Award

Wendy Cukier, Co-founder and President of the Coalition for Gun Control, accepted a \$25,000 donation from CLC President Ken Georgetti at the National Convention in Vancouver. Cukier thanked the CLC and many individuals who have given endless hours and steadfast support fighting the Harper government on the gun registry. She congratulated those NDP MP's who were re-elected while supporting gun control and urged everyone to continue to stand up for the registry.

Sharan Burrow on Jobs, Decent Work and Solidarity

A year after being elected General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) – the first woman to lead an international labour organization - Sharan Burrow came to Vancouver with a message of praise and encouragement. “You, your Unions and your Canadian Labour Congress are a bright spot in a world where Unions and workers are under attack,” she told Delegates to the CLC Convention. Burrow told Delegates how the ITUC and its member Unions are organizing working people around the world with a focus on “jobs, decent work and social protection”. She spoke of the role that Unions in Tunisia, Egypt and across the Middle East have played in the overthrow of dictatorships, and the role those same Unions are playing in the new governments that are taking shape. She described for Delegates the ITUC's new focus on global corporations that abuse workers rights. She also served a notice of warning to companies that observe labour rights at home yet exploit people elsewhere in the world. She also talked about the urgent need to focus on green jobs, on the “decision for life” campaign that's touching the lives of 100,000 women in the world's poorest countries, and on the need for labour activists to defeat politicians who won't support labour's values.

Text Mob for Workers' Rights

President Ken Georgetti asked Delegates to turn their cell phones and smart phones on during Wednesday's proceedings as the CLC staged its first “text mob” in support of workers' rights in Mexico and Colombia. Hundreds of text messages saying, “Respect Workers' Rights in Mexico!” and “Stop killing Trade Unionists in Colombia!” were sent to those countries' ambassadors to Canada - overwhelming the telephone systems in their Ottawa offices.

Keeping PM Harper “Posted” on the CPP

Cheryl Stone of the North Okanagan Labour Council drops post cards into a mailbox to Prime Minister Stephen Harper. Hundreds of Delegates to the CLC Convention in Vancouver signed individual cards calling for a gradual doubling of benefits under the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans. Those plans are financed by workers and their employers

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Unions and Social Networking

Delegates to the CLC Convention in Vancouver participated in an informative presentation on social networking by Juliette Powell, author, digital media consultant and co-founder of The Gathering Think Tank. She encouraged Delegates who are not yet using social media to seize the opportunity. “You are not in the Union business, you are in the community-building business,” Powell said. “People live with Facebook and Twitter in the palms of their hands. You have to reach out to them.” She said the fear of change is not a good enough excuse to avoid social networking, which adds value when organizing workers. Statistics show that more than 500 million people use Facebook. The key to success lies in the calls to actions, Powell said, but she cautioned that success must be measured and strategic. “It’s not just a campaign, it’s ongoing dialogue about co-creating our future.” Delegates at the session shared their own stories, and one stressed the importance of using social networking to enhance and not to replace on-the-ground organizing. “The caveat,” concluded Powell, “is that solidarity is there, beyond borders, beyond geography, beyond specific Unions. It’s all about the power of the people.”

Working People Have the Power

Delegates to the CLC Convention in Vancouver debated a political action Policy Paper aimed at labour’s mobilizing for the future. Delegates repeated the refrain that when working people stick together they have power. Many speakers recalled the success of the CLC’s Retirement Security campaign and how it mobilized Members across Canada. The Policy Paper, “Building on Our Success”, builds on a plan drafted at the 2005 CLC Convention that would build political capacity, visibility and ultimately lead to political power. Delegates at the 2011 Convention describe the election of a Conservative majority government as a major challenge but also see an opportunity with an NDP as official opposition. The policy paper describes a multi-dimensional approach to political activism and an engagement of labour and its social allies. The CLC, the paper says, must build on its success in municipal and school board elections and expand its lobbying efforts at all levels of government. The paper emphasizes the importance of working more closely with young workers and retirees, and a commitment to incorporate social media and new technologies into political work. Finally, the Convention committed to organizing a national political gathering to bring together all components of the CLC to develop political strategies for the next several years.

Tribute to Locked Out Workers

Delegates to the CLC Convention in Vancouver were updated on four specific lockouts that are across the country. CAW Members talked about their lockouts in Winnipeg and Toronto. In Winnipeg, the employer is attacking retirees’ pensions, as well as wages and cost-of-living allowances for members. In Toronto, an employer currently before the labour board for unfair labour practices has locked out employees who are working under deplorable conditions. In Edmonton, sixty-two UFCW Members have been locked out for more than a month while the employer demands a three-year wage freeze. A Delegate from USW 1005 in Hamilton updated

Delegates about a six-month lock out. The employer is attempting to cut indexing for 9,000 Pensioners and to close the Pension Plan to new hires. He commended the CLC for passing a resolution against bargaining for two-tier benefits.

People Power in Africa and the Middle East

An International Solidarity Forum at the CLC Convention in Vancouver drew panelists from the International Labour Organization, the Kenyan Committee of Experts on Constitutional Review, and the Tunisian General Labour Union. CLC President Ken Georgetti opened the forum, welcoming the international guests. He noted that the struggles of workers around the world are connected to the struggles and work of the Canadian labour movement. CLC Executive Vice-President Barb Byers introduced the panelists and other international guests attending the Convention. "Your presence here speaks to the importance of the international solidarity in the labour movement," she said. The guest panelists offered their analysis on what's been happening in their own countries and organizations. They said Unions and workers have been at the forefront of grassroots movements demanding democracy and better lives. Tumultuous change has swept across North Africa and the Middle East and elsewhere, resulting in toppled dictatorships, international intervention and calls for change. Inspired by the successes in Tunisia and Egypt, people power actions have erupted across the region with demonstrations in Algeria, Bahrain, Iran, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Syria and Yemen, and elsewhere. The international trade Union movement is calling on the G20 to respond to the problems of unemployment and inequities that first ignited the protests.

CLC Donates to Refugee Group

The CLC has recognized Sherman Chan, from the Canadian Council of Refugees for his organization's outstanding work on behalf of immigrants and refugees. CLC Secretary-Treasurer Hassan Yussuff also provided the CCR with a cheque for \$10,000 during the CLC's Convention in Vancouver. The CCR's work includes holding governments accountable and fighting for laws and policies which ensure that immigrants, refugees, migrant workers and asylum seekers are not exploited in Canada. Chan accepted the financial donation and acknowledged the importance of the partnership with labour. He also thanked all those who have supported the CCR through advocacy and active participation in campaigns.

Respectfully Submitted by the LL764 Delegates in Attendance:

Sister Janet Andrews

Brother Wes Sim

Brother Glenn Girard

Resolutions Carried:

Available on-line at <http://www.canadianlabour.ca/convention/2011-convention/resolutionscarried>

Committee Reports:

Available on-line at <http://www.canadianlabour.ca/convention/2011-convention/committee-reports>

Agenda:

Available on-line at <http://www.canadianlabour.ca/convention/2011-convention/agenda?date=2011-05-15>

Policy Papers:

Available on-line at <http://www.canadianlabour.ca/convention/2011-convention/policy-papers>

Speakers List:

Available on-line at <http://www.canadianlabour.ca/convention/2011-convention/speakers>

Convention Home Page:

<http://www.canadianlabour.ca/convention/2011-convention/home>