



President's Report to the 42nd Annual Convention of the PEI Federation of Labour

Greetings Brothers and Sisters of the Labour Movement:

I would like to welcome you to the PEI Federation of Labour's 42nd Annual Convention.

As always, 2006 has been a very busy year for the Federation and the first thing I would like to do is to thank our office secretary Marjorie Gyurus, CLC rep JC Basque, my fellow Executive Council Members and all the affiliated members who have worked so hard on behalf of the Federation over the past year.

Affiliation

To start my 2006 report, it is my great pleasure to welcome our newest affiliates who joined the federation since our last convention CUPE Local 1770 (PEI Schools and School Boards Clerical), PSAC LOCAL 90140 (Commissionaires), and CUPE Local 1051 (West Prince Health).

Unfortunately, I must also report that IUOE Local 942 disaffiliated in January of this year in a dispute over the Federation's support of a Public Ambulance system. The members of IUOE local 942 and their representatives on our executive have always been an active and valuable asset to the Federation and it is my greatest hope that we can at some point in the near future reconcile our differences and welcome them back into the Federation.

Political Action Federal

2006 was a very busy year on the political front for the federation.

On the Federal level, the federation met with Island MP's Wayne Easter and Shawn Murphy twice, and Lawrence MacAulay once to solicit their support for this year's CLC campaign protecting our public healthcare system, creating a national Pharmacare program, saving the childcare deals signed with the provinces, and Anti-Scab legislation. I was especially happy to see that all three were part of the 167 MP's who voted in favour of Anti-Scab Legislation on October 25th to get the Legislation successfully past its second reading.

In response to a emergency resolution brought before our 2005 convention by CUPW-Summerside, the Federation sent out a letter to then Federal Minister in charge of Canada Post, John McCallum regarding the sorting plant closure in Quebec City.

Also, the Federation's Women's committee distributed and got signatures on approximately 300 postcards as part of the CLC's "Women are (still) waiting" postcard campaign in the days leading up to March 8th which were then sent to Prime Minister Harper.

Political Action Provincial

On the Provincial level, the Federation was as always very active this year.

In November, the Federation was an active part of the Yes Coalition in the campaign to reform the Island's Electoral system and make it more representative for all Islanders. While the results of the plebiscite were disappointing, there is work continuing to better educate the public on proportional representation and bring the issue back before the public.

In February, the Federation continued its practice of presenting our annual brief to the Provincial Cabinet and the Opposition. This year's 21 page brief was presented to Cabinet and the Opposition on February 21 and included issues such as

- finally proclaiming First Collective Agreement and Pension Legislation
- increasing the maximum fine in the Occupational Health and Safety Act,
- improving Provincial Pay Equity Legislation,
- instituting Provincial Fair Wages for the Construction Sector,
- instituting the National Building Code island wide,
- improving the Employment Standards Act,
- fighting to maintain the Provincial-Federal Child Care agreement,
- ensuring adequate levels of funding for the delivery of workplace education,
- returning funding to the education programs of the PEI Human Rights Commission
- and making minimum wage a living wage among others.

In addition to our brief the Federation also sent in 2 submissions to the Provincial Government.

In December, the Federation presented a submission on increasing the maximum fine in PEI's Occupational Health and Safety Act at a special meeting of the Occupational Health and Safety Council.

And in March, the federation presented a 23 page submission to the Employment Standards Review Committee. In the submission, the Federation

- expressed the importance of having employment standards to set a socially acceptable minimum floor of labour rights and standards for workers,
- rejected the view of many employers and policy-makers that the promotion and enforcement of basic standards is dated and somehow out of tune with the needs of the new economy,
- recommended many improvements to the Act to bring PEI in line with the rest of Canada,
- and asked Government to get away from the current system of complaint enforcement and move to a more proactive system of enforcement and education.

The Federation also met with the Minister Responsible for Labour Elmer MacFadyen in May to discuss issues of concern.

In July, as part of the PEI health Coalition, we met with Premier Binns to discuss the National Pharmaceutical Program, Wait Time Solutions in the Public System, and other issues concerning our public healthcare system.

The Federation also sent letters to the Minister responsible for Labour

- to get information on the regarding review of the Employment Standards Act,
- to express our concern about the lack of a real Labour representative on the review committee,
- and in response to an emergency resolution brought before convention by IUOE Local 942, to express our concern on the government's apparent attempt to remove all experienced Labour Representatives from the Labour Relations Board and replace them with inexperienced representatives.

Political Action Municipal

Besides the work the Federation did in lobbying the Charlottetown City Council to allow us to finally install the Day of Mourning Monument, the Federation Executive Council decided at our annual planning meeting to get involved in the CLC campaign on Municipal politics. For this campaign, we decided to target the municipal election in Charlottetown.

In June, the Federation in association with other groups held a Forum on the issues that are of importance to the residents of Charlottetown. The Forum attracted 36 participants from labour and various community groups. From the issues discussed at this Forum the Municipal Campaign Committee created and distributed 5000 pamphlets to unions, community groups, and the general public on issues that residents should consider and ask their candidates about before the November 6th election.

Also as part of the campaign, members of the committee developed a questionnaire and based on those questions interviewed many of the candidates in the Charlottetown election with a view to see who will best represent their constituents. On Monday, November 6th there will be municipal elections across the Island, I would urge all of you to get out and vote so that we can elect progressive voices in our communities.

Educationals

In March and October of this year, we held two very successful educationals that attracted a total of 55 union members and we will hold two others for next year. The courses offered this year were Shop Steward Level 2 and 3 and Mobilizing the Membership. Global Solidarity was also offered but unfortunately had to be cancelled due to lack of registrants.

The Federation feels that educated workers can only reinforce our movement, allow them to better defend their brothers and sisters in the workplaces and contribute more to their own locals. We also feel that the diversity of the members and their experiences that attend our courses adds immensely to the educational value of these educationals. We hope to see many of the delegates here tonight at future educationals.

Events

This year, the federation held

- an event to commemorate International Women's Day,
- a Celebrate May Day Brunch,
- our Annual Spring Luncheon for Labour Reps and Media
- our Day of Mourning Ceremony, .
- and we were also once again involved through our VP(women) in the Charlottetown ceremony to commemorate the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

These events went very well and for the most part were well attended.

This year's Day of Mourning Ceremony was made especially special by the unveiling of the Day of Mourning Monument. On behalf of the Federation I would like to thank all the unions that not only donated money to the Monument but also gave us the support we needed to make this important monument a reality. This monument is meant not only as a respectful memorial to all workers who have lost their lives on Island worksites but also as a stark reminder to all Island workers and employers of how important workplace safety is. The role that the labour movement played in this important project is something that we can all be proud of.

Unfortunately this year, after 6 years of continuous growth and success the Federation's Labour Day Barbecue and Corn boil had to be cancelled due to rain.

On behalf of the Federation, I would like to thank all the Executive Council and Affiliated members who worked so hard to make the events the success they were and I hope we continue to get the support and effort we received this year so that next year's events can be just as if not more successful.

Press Releases

The Federation also worked hard over the last year to get its message to the public. This year, we issued 9 press releases on topics such as:

- The Labour Relations Board Decision Against Polar Foods,
- The Federation's Reaction to City Council's Approval of the Day of Mourning Monument,
- The Federation's Support for a Public Ambulance System
- The Federation's Disappointment in Premier Binns' Support of Prime Minister Harper's So-Called Child-care plan,
- Resisting Atlantica,
- The Provincial Government Decision To Not Offer Tax Credits To People Buying Into Labour-sponsored Investment Funds,
- The Federation's 2nd Annual Book Donation to the UPEI and Provincial Libraries,
- The Federation's Reaction to the Federal Government's Recent Cuts
- and our Labour Day Message for 2006.

The Federation was also a participant in 4 separate press conferences on:

- Our support of the Yes on MMP Campaign.
- The release of the Canadian Health Coalition's policy paper on a National Pharmacare program
- Resisting Alantica
- and our Municipal Campaign Launch

Also in an attempt to get our message out to the public, in early September, the Federation made its 2nd Annual donation of books on labour and social issues to the Provincial and UPEI libraries. This year's donation contained a total of approximately 40 books and cds and was valued at approximately \$1,000.00.

And in recognition of May 1st International Worker's Day, the Federation distributed over 10,000 placemats to various restaurants across PEI. The theme for this year's placemat was "Protecting Health Care for Our Families". There will be another placemat

produced next year.

Other Activities

Since convention last year, the Federation also attended the Resisting Atlantica event in Saint John. Business seems to be pushing this concept very hard and the PEI Federation of Labour will continue to play a role along with the other Atlantic Federations of Labour in fighting this business driven proposal.

The Federation also played a large role in the now defunct Canadian Labour and Business Centre's Workplace Partners Atlantic Task Force which was among the many victims of the Harper Government's recent cuts.

The Federation also offered strike support this year to the members of the UPEI Faculty Association and I gave a speech in support at their rally at the Confederation Center in Charlottetown.

The Federation's Vice President and I have also been very busy attending affiliate events. Since last year at least one of us have attended UPSE's and CUPE's annual conventions, PSAC Local 90154's and CUPE Local 3324's Annual Meetings, and CUPE Local 2523's 25th anniversary,

I have also been representing the federation as vice-chair of the Sector Council Association and as a director with Growth Works.

Conclusion

My third year as President has been the busiest yet and with the upcoming review of the WCB Act, the ongoing battle against Atlantica, possible Provincial and Federal elections and the many other issues that will crop up, 2007 probably won't be any slower.

The amount of time and energy the Federation asks of myself and my fellow officers is very demanding but with the continued support and help that we have been shown by the rest of the Executive Council and our affiliated unions over the past year, I know that the federation will continue to grow and remain a strong voice for labour on the Island in the upcoming year and beyond.

Once again I would like to thank all those who worked so hard on behalf of the fed this year and I hope that all the delegates in attendance at this year's convention will find this year's convention educational and enjoyable.

In Solidarity
Carl Pursey, President