



PEI Federation of Labour Newsletter May 2005 Issue

Current News

- ❑ The PEI Federation of Labour would like to inform to whomever it may concern that our mailing address is changing from P.O. Box 21094, Charlottetown, PEI, C1A 9H6 to **22 Enman Crescent, Charlottetown, PEI, C1E 1E6**

- ❑ On Friday, May 13, the federal government announced Friday herring seiners would not be allowed to fish in waters shallower than 25 fathoms giving Island fishermen what they have been asking for with respect to herring seiners in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The dispute over this has led to protests in Souris which led to violence in 2003, with more peaceful protests in 2004.

- ❑ On Thursday, May 12, the Newfoundland provincial government announced that under new rules, insurance companies in Newfoundland will no longer be allowed to base auto insurance premiums on a driver's age, gender or marital status. The reforms could save some young drivers in the province up to 46 per cent a year on their insurance costs. Also insurers will have to justify any future increases in premiums to the provincial Public Utilities Board, ensuring that the costs are not offloaded onto other drivers.

- ❑ On Friday, May 6, the Federal Court of Appeal found in favour of the Public Service Alliance of Canada and called the decision made by an appeals officer in the Labour Program of HRSDC that law enforcement duties performed by federal park wardens were not dangerous patently unreasonable and ordered federal health and safety officials to re-examine the issue. The Public Service Alliance of Canada has waged a five-year campaign asking Parks Canada to allow wardens to carry guns due to the inherent dangers associated with the law enforcement duties they are asked to perform.

- ❑ On Friday, May 6, a new study by Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc states that the share of Canadian jobs paying low wages has not shrunk since 1981, leaving 1.7 million full-time workers in Canada earning less than \$10 an hour. The study entitled *Does a Rising Tide Lift All Boats? Low Paid Workers in Canada* shows that although teenagers are very disproportionately low-paid -- the rate of low pay is actually high among all age groups. The study traced the problem to the competitive pressures of globalization, which he says has prompted employers to scramble to cut costs by doing

such things as hiring temporary help and outsourcing jobs, the decline in unionization in the private sector and an erosion in social support systems.

- ❑ On Friday, May 6, 2005, it was announced that the unemployment rate on PEI for April was 10.4% same as March . You currently need 525 hours to qualify for EI on PEI.
- ❑ On Thursday, May 5, Labour Minister Joe Fontana announced that the Liberal government intends "to move quickly" to set up a federal fund that would pay up to \$3,000 per worker in back wages should their company go bankrupt. Under current bankruptcy law, workers' claims rank behind those of secured creditors, a group that typically includes banks, mortgage lenders and tax collectors. He said workers would get the money in about six weeks. The government would then claim the money in the bankruptcy, perhaps recovering part of its outlay. Over the last 7 months representatives of the PEI Federation of Labour have met with 3 out of the 4 Island MP's to discuss this issue as part of the CLC nationwide campaign on EI, Child-care, and retirement security.
- ❑ On Wednesday May 4, the fed received an e-mail letting us know that Michel Boudreau (CUPE) is the new President of the New Brunswick Federation of Labour. They also passed an amendment to allow a full-time President which comes into effect at the first of September.
- ❑ Recently the two Cavendish Farms Plants on PEI received Platinum Awards for Food Safety from Silliker Inc. for 2004 which is presented annually to the 10 food processing plants in North America that receive the highest scores in Good Manufacturing Practices/ Food Safety audits.
- ❑ A recent global study by the International Labour Organization Entitled A Global Alliance Against Forced Labour says that big corporations are making \$32 billion a year from sweatshops. Companies like Nike and Wal-Mart often pay workers less than \$1,000 a year while making an average of \$13,000 in profits from each of them, the ILO estimates. The report estimates that at least 12.3 million people are exploited around the world through forced labour with Asia being the biggest offender by far with some 9.5 million forced labourers at work in all economic areas. The report also examines the strong pressures to deregulate labour markets as part of the overall drive to reduce labour costs.
- ❑ Recently the Fed has received a letter from CEP President Brian Payne informing us of the situation occurring with 12 of their members in Belledune, N.B. who have been on strike against Canadian Gypsum for more than a year to achieve a first contract. The company stopped production at the Belledune plant April 15, 2005 rather than sign a contract. What makes it worse is that the plant was set up as the result of a community

economic development agreement with the NB government and it sources material for its product from NB Power. To show support for these workers, the CEP is asking that you use gypsum products from other companies if at all possible until the strike is over and let Canadian Gypsum know about your decision by going to their website at www.cgcinc.com and emailing them. CGC produces Durock, Sheetrock, Fiberock and CGC branded powders and adhesives.

Update on UFCW's Walmart Unionization Drive

❑ On Saturday, May 15, it was announced that the Quebec Labour Relations Commission has turned down a request by UFCW Canada to order Wal-Mart to reopen a store at Jonquiere, Quebec, that the retail giant closed after employees voted to unionize. In rejecting the union motion, the commission referred to a Supreme Court of Canada decision recognizing that "an employer maintains the right to close down its business, whatever the reasons."

❑ On Saturday April 30, Wal-Mart Canada shut a recently unionized store in Jonquière, Québec, a week earlier than previously announced. The decision to close early comes days after the Québec Labour Commission ruled it would consider an application by UFCW Canada to force Wal-Mart to keep the store open until a series of unfair labour practice charges filed against Wal-Mart were ruled on by the commission.

Report From The Recent Greet Walmart Customers Event

❑ On May 7, 2005, the Canadian Labour Congress held a national "Greet Walmart Customers Event" at 43 Walmart stores across the country. Nationally over 12,000 union members and activists handed out over 150,000 leaflets to Customers entering the targeted Walmart stores to let them know about Walmart's lack of respect for worker's rights.

❑ On PEI, the event was held at the Charlottetown Walmart and attracted 52 people. The event organized as a friendly demonstration of support for the employees of Walmart went very smoothly with alot of pamphlets getting handed out to customers entering the store and no major incidents.

❑ The main objectives of the event were:

-To create a Canadian trade union response to Wal-Mart about the Freedom of Association and the Right to Bargain Collectively,

- To build visibility and education about Worker's Right's
 - To expose how Wal-Mart operates, and to provide insights on Wal-Mart's anti-worker, anti-Canadian values and attitudes,
 - To tackle the myth that unionization will have an impact on Wal-Mart's prices.
- ☐To see pictures from the Charlottetown event go to <http://www.peifl.ca/pages/walmart/Walmart.html>

Report from the Fourth Annual Provincial Day of Mourning Ceremony

- ☐On April 28, the PEI Federation of Labour and its affiliates in conjunction with the Workers Compensation Board and the provincial government held our Fourth Annual Provincial Day of Mourning for Workers Killed and Injured on the Job Ceremony at Province House in Charlottetown. Approximately 60 - 70 people attended this year's event.
- The solemn event started inside with O Canada sung by Gaye Hood followed next by the Invocation read by Reverend Joy Noble, then by a speech on the theme for this year's ceremony "**Save Lives – Enforce Health & Safety Legislation**" from Carl Pursey (President of the PEIFL), and finally a speech from the Provincial Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs Elmer MacFadyen.
 - Bagpiper Wayne MacKinnon then led everyone outside for the wreath and rose laying ceremonies. There were 20 wreathes laid this year including the ones laid by the loved ones of Russell Lockhart and Darryl Clow who died at work this year and one laid by employees of Atlantis Bioactive in honour of Wayne Murnaghan who also died on the job this year. Roses were laid by the loved ones in honour of 9 other workers who died on the job in previous years.
 - Next Martin Kenney led the crowd in singing Peter Emberley. After the closing remarks made by Charlene MacInnis (Injured Workers Group), there was a very nice reception at Province House supplied by the Provincial Government.
 - The fed would like to thank everyone who helped make the event the success it was, especially Executive Council member Leo Cheverie, Treasurer Chris Vessey, and Office Secretary Marjorie Gyrus who put a lot of effort into organizing the event. Also Executive Council member Vimy Gregory who handled announcing duties during the wreath and rose laying ceremonies along with Executive Council Member Claudette Anderson who also handled signing in those in attendance.

-The fed also sent out Proclamations to various towns on PEI asking them to proclaim April 28th as an annual Day of Mourning in recognition of workers killed, injured or disabled on the job. Kensington, Stratford, Summerside, and Montague signed the Proclamation while Charlottetown agreed to fly their flags at half-mast and observe a moment of silence.

☐ To Promote the Day of Mourning the Fed released a press release on Monday, April 25. Here it is:

-On April 28th, 2005 the PEI Federation of Labour will hold its Fourth Annual Provincial Day of Mourning Ceremony for workers who have been killed or injured on the job at Province House at 7:00 with a reception to follow hosted by the Province.

-Once again we invite everyone to join with the federation and the friends and families of Island workers who have died on the job, as we come together to honour their loved ones memory, mourn for their loss, and recommit ourselves to working hard to improve workplace safety across the Island so that these tragedies never occur again.

-Since our last ceremony there were 3 workplace deaths on PEI (not including deaths caused by occupational illness or diseases not yet recognized as having roots in the workplace). The only way to obtain the ultimate goal of having no workplace deaths on PEI is for the provincial government, unions, workers and employers to make a strong never ending commitment to make workplace safety their number one priority.

-And with the theme for this year's ceremony being "Save Lives-Enforce Health and Safety " , The PEI Federation of Labour urges the provincial government to renew its commitment to enforcing Occupational Health and Safety legislation especially at a time when they are using Public Service employees and the services they supply as scapegoats for their mismanagement of Public Funds.

-“Because they like a lot of other governments in Canada seem to have forgotten that the affect OH and S legislation will have on workplace safety is only as good as the commitment they show to its enforcement.” says Carl Pursey President of the PEI Federation of Labour

-“As we said earlier, improving workplace safety is not the sole responsibility of the government but their role is one of the most important. It is their responsibility through the Worker's Compensation Board to make sure that the personnel, the resources, the penalties, and most importantly the political will are there to make sure that employers and workers know that creating an unsafe work environment on PEI will not be tolerated for any reason.” Says Pursey.

CLC And Federation Letter to Premier Binns on Child Care

□ On Thursday, May 12, CLC President, Ken Georgetti and Federation President Carl Pursey sent a letter to the Premier as part of the national CLC campaign to establish a National Child Care System. Thus far, the federal government has signed child care agreements with Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. The PEI government is currently negotiating with the federal government. The stumbling block so far is the level of funding the province will receive. Here is the letter sent:

-Dear Premier Binns:

-On behalf of the Prince Edward Island Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress, we are writing to you to emphasize the importance we place on having all provinces participate in a national child care system.

-As you well know, the labour movement has long-favoured the introduction of a national child care program. We were pleased that the federal government followed up its campaign promises by allocating funds for this initiative in the current Budget.

-We had hoped that there would have been a National Child Care Act that supported the QUAD principles of Quality, Universally inclusive, Accessible and Developmental child care programs, by setting forth standards and accountability. Because this goal was not achieved, the federal government and provincial governments have started to sign bilateral agreements.

-We were very pleased with the Manitoba agreement and its commitment to meet its objectives "by making investments in [its] community-based non-profit early learning and child care centres." With such scarce resources already going to child care, it would be unfortunate to subtract any of these monies to provide an 8% or 12% profit margin from already limited resources available to our youngest and most vulnerable citizens.

-We are writing to urge that the P.E.I. government also take the approach of community-based non-profit delivery in its agreement with the federal government. We were most pleased that, in your meeting with the Federation, your government indicated that while it would grandfather existing for-profit centres, future ones would be non-profit. We believe that this approach is the best one which will enable Prince Edward Island to meet the social needs of its children and their families.

Yours sincerely,

Kenneth V. Georgetti President Canadian Labour Congress

Carl Pursey President PEI Federation of Labour

CLC And Federation Letter to Premier Binns on EI Reform

□ On Friday, April 29 , CLC President, Ken Georgetti and Federation President Carl Pursey sent a letter and report to the Premier as part of the national CLC campaign to reform EI legislation. The report and letter outlined the consequences that EI cuts have had on Island workers and the Island's economy. The letter also asked Binns to join a lobby effort to get the federal government to hand over a surplus in the EI fund, and make changes to the system so more people are eligible for benefits.. Treasurer Mitch Murphy tabled the report in Province House as part of the province's fight for more help from the federal government. Here is the letter sent:

□ Dear Premier Binns:

-On behalf of the Prince Edward Island Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress, we are writing to outline the appalling consequence of Employment Insurance cuts on PEI's workers and their families, as well as, the huge impact that these cuts have on your province's economy and budget.

-Unemployed workers in PEI are losing about \$90 million a year in EI benefits; nearly a billion dollars since 1994.

-In 1990, three out of four unemployed workers in Canada received UI. Today only 38% are covered.

-Qualifying requirements and other permanent eligibility rule changes brought in a decade ago hurt women even more than men. In PEI 52% of unemployed women under 35 receive EI compared to 72% of men in that age group. It is much worse for PEI workers under 25. For women in this age bracket coverage has fallen from 72% in 1990 to the current level of 31%.

-The benefit cuts that built the \$47 billion EI surplus and financed yearly premium cuts of a similar magnitude came largely from low income workers. Sixty percent of the workers cut from unemployment insurance benefits had income under \$15,000.

-It is not surprising therefore, that the single biggest cause of the growth in child poverty since 1989 has come from cuts in unemployment insurance.

-There is an urgent need to bring in EI eligibility rules in line with the realities of the way we live, work and learn. A good place to start is to have the federal government implement the EI recommendations of the Commons' Human Resources Committee.

-The Committee recommended a uniform qualifying requirement of 360 hours for all EI benefits, a 60% benefit rate based on the best 12 weeks of a worker's earnings; and increasing the maximum length of the benefit period to 50 weeks. The Committee also recommended that the government repay the \$47 billion surplus.

-Attached is an analysis of the 28 recommendations that the Commons' Human Resources Committee made in their report; *Restoring Financial Governance and Accessibility in the Employment Insurance Program*.

-We are asking you to press the federal government to make immediate reforms to the eligibility rules, so that workers have access to their insurance when they are without a pay cheque because of job loss, training, pregnancy, sickness, parental leave and compassionate care.

-We would be pleased to meet with your government to discuss this request or any related issues that the government would like us to clarify.

Yours sincerely,

Kenneth V. Georgetti President Canadian Labour Congress

Carl Pursey President PEI Federation of Labour

The Fed's Response to the Recent Defeat of Bill C-263 (Anti-scab)

□ On Wednesday May 4, in response to the recent narrow defeat of Bill C-263, an amendment to the Canada Labour Code that would make it illegal for employers to hire replacement workers during strikes or lock-outs in federally regulated workplaces, the fed sent out letters to the 4 Island MP's. To Shawn Murphy, Lawrence MacAulay, and Wayne Easter who supported the Bill, the Fed sent out letters thanking them for their support of the Bill and hoping that they will support a similar bill when it is brought before Parliament in the near future. To Joe McGuire who voted against the Bill, we sent out this letter:

□The PEI Federation of Labour is writing you to express our dismay in your decision to vote against Bill C-263 "An Act to Amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers)" on April 13th.

-The PEI Federation of Labour and indeed the entire Canadian labour movement consider this an issue of the utmost importance for workers across the country and we were very disappointed by the lack of support shown by yourself and your fellow Cabinet Ministers especially when the bill was defeated by such a small margin and you had supported a similar bill in the past.

-The use of replacement workers during a legal strike is an affront to the collective bargaining process in Canada and therefore getting legislation in place to ban this practice is a goal that the Canadian labour movement will not let up on. We hope that after some reconsideration you will change your mind and support a similar bill once it is brought before Parliament in the future.

Yours Sincerely,
 Carl Pursey, President of the PEI Federation of Labour

Update on the Fed’s Labour Movement Donation Drive to Establish a Day of Mourning Monument

☐ On Saturday, November 6, 2004, at our annual convention the federation kicked off its labour movement donation drive to pay for a Day of Mourning Monument to honour all workers who have been injured or have died on worksites across PEI to be installed around Province House hopefully very shortly. We feel that it is very important for labour to come together and supply this very important monument to workers who paid the ultimate price. The goal for the drive is \$8,000.

- On Monday, January 10, 2005, Charlottetown City Council passed a resolution at their regular monthly Council meeting to provide upkeep and maintenance on the Day of Mourning Monument.

- Thus far, the fed has received donations from:

Union	AMOUNT
Bricklayers Local 1	\$100.00
Canadian Labour Congress	\$500.00
Canadian Union of Public Employees PEI Division	\$500.00
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 501	\$100.00
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 805	\$500.00
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 1145	\$100.00
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 1770	\$200.00
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 1779	\$185.00
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 1870	\$287.00

Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 2523	\$50.00
Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3324	\$50.00
Canadian Union of Postal Workers Charlottetown Local	\$150.00
Canadian Union of Postal Workers Summerside Local	\$100.00
Communications, Energy & Paperworkers Union Local 61	\$10.00
Communications, Energy & Paperworkers Union Local 401	\$100.00
International Association of Machinists Local 1934	\$100.00
IATSE Local 906a	\$40.00
International Union of Operating Engineers Local 942	\$500.00
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1432	\$500.00
PEI Nurse's Union	\$150.00
PEI Teacher's Federation	\$100.00
PEI Union of Public Sector Employees	\$1,500.00
Public Service Alliance of Canada Area Council	\$50.00
Canadian Employment & Immigration - PSAC Local 90153	\$80.00
Canada Employment and Immigration Union PSAC Local 90154	\$50.00
Union of Canadian Transport Employees PSAC Local 60905	\$100.00
Union of Parks Canada PSAC Local 90023	\$80.00
Union of Taxation Employees PSAC Local 90002	\$200.00
Union of Veteran Affairs Employees PSAC Local 90001	\$750.00
United Brotherhood of Carpenters & Joiners of America - Local 1338	\$300.00

United Food and Commercial Workers - Local 864	\$1,000.00
Total	\$8,432.00

- The Federation of Labour would like to thank all of the affiliated, and nonaffiliated locals and the CLC who have donated to the cause so far and we hope that the rest of the Island Labour movement will show their support for this very important cause.

- So far the average contribution has been approximately a dollar per member but any contribution would be greatly appreciated.

- The commitment that has been shown to this important project thus far has been overwhelming with all the pieces coming together very nicely. With the City of Charlottetown's generous offer of upkeep and maintenance on the monument and the Island Labour movement showing tremendous support for our donation drive, the only piece that remains is securing the land for the monument and at our recent brief to cabinet we were assured by the province that the deal for the land should be completed shortly.

- If you wish to receive copies of our brochure or want to arrange for a fed representative to come to your meeting to discuss the monument. Please contact the fed's office. If you wish to keep up on what is happening with our drive please visit

<http://www.peifl.ca/pages/dom2/dom.html>

Important Dates

CLC Day of Action on Wal-Mart	Saturday, May 7, 2005 from 10 am till noon	At the Charlottetown Wal-Mart
Labour College of Canada Graduate Program	May 9 - June 3, 2005	Algonquin College ,Ottawa
25th Annual CUPE Convention	May 19 - 20, 2005	Slemon Park, Summerside
PEI Federation of Labour's Spring Luncheon for Labour Reps and Media.	Wednesday, May 25, 2005	at Noon at the Inn on the Hill (Quality Inns)

24th CLC Constitutional Convention	June 13 - 17, 2005	Credential Deadline May 13, 2005
Labour Day	Monday, September 5, 2005	
CLC Atlantic Region and P.E.I. Federation Educational	October 13 - 14, 2005	