



May 2 is Election Day – Check out our election coverage

pages 4 and 5

CUPE National's quarterly publication

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Spring 2011

Counterpoint

Day of Mourning particularly significant in 2011

By WES PAYNE

Since CUPE's national health and safety committee recommended its creation 27 years ago, the April 28 Day of Mourning has become an internationally celebrated event.

Sadly, despite increasing awareness of the importance of workplace safety, 2010 saw more workplace deaths for CUPE members than any year since 1998.

CUPE national health and safety committee co-chair Rex Hillier says he's disturbed by the high number of workplace deaths this year.

"The fact that this many workers lost their lives at work – that they went to work one day and never came home – needs to be heard by our members and by employers, who can and should make our workplaces safer and healthier," said Hillier.

"The death of seven of our members this past year really underscores the importance of the date."

Ceremonies honouring workers who died will be held in cities and regions across the country. cupe.ca/health-and-safety

Federal election message from Paul Moist and Claude Généreux:

It's time to vote for change

After five years of Stephen Harper's Conservative government, it is clear Harper has no real commitment to improving the lives of all Canadians. The Conservatives have put the interest of banks, the finance industry, oil companies and the rest of their Bay Street backers ahead of Canadian workers.

Now is the time to say enough. This federal election is our chance to choose real leadership, with a real vision for a better Canada. We need a federal government that will stand up for Canadian workers.

All Canadians deserve a government that will protect and strengthen our public health care system, will help everyone save for retirement, and will stop irresponsible corporate tax cuts. Jack Layton's NDP is the only party with the proven record in providing Canada with this kind of leadership.

Over the coming weeks, CUPE will be tracking the party platforms on these and other important issues, so our



members can see where the parties stand, and which one Canada can trust to lead. We will be sharing this important information with members coast-to-coast-to-coast. Watch for our

election updates on cupe.ca/election2011 and get involved.

This is your election. Let's make sure our voices are heard in the campaign and on Election Day.

CUPE / Canadian Union of Public Employees

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STEWARD PROFILE –

Lisa McPherson, CUPE 556

By JANET SZLISKE

Lisa McPherson is a finance clerk with the City of Courtenay, in British Columbia. She became a CUPE 556 steward in August 2009 because her employer was doing things they couldn't do. Lisa got involved because she realized if she wanted something to change, she had to help make that change from the inside.

McPherson believes the most important thing about being a steward is to help co-workers. When workers feel vulnerable, stewards are there for them.

Recently a member was having a rough time at work due to work overload and stress. Normal employer practice was to take things to the highest level of arbitration before dealing with anything. Lisa stepped in and through several conversations, came up with an action plan that worked for everyone involved.

The quick resolve was a huge workplace victory.

McPherson explains, "The employer was not treating this member well and she needed somebody to say, 'Hey, you can't do that to her.'"

She enjoys making connections with members at different locations that she would otherwise not be in contact with.

"I get to help them, says Lisa. "And normally I would not run across them in my day-



Lisa McPherson, CUPE 556 steward.

to-day job."

Being a steward is an ongoing process. "The longer I am a steward, the more I see," says Lisa. She says that she learns something new every day.

Lisa loves being a steward and being involved in her union. Although there was a learning

curve, it was well worth it.

She encourages everyone to take the basic training so they learn what a steward can do. Lisa has a good-natured warning as well: "Be prepared, you'll be roped into a whole bunch of other union duties." She was recently elected as her local's vice-president.

Saskatchewan school workers enjoy "woohoo" moment

By BETH SMILLIE

CUPE's education workers' steering committee got a lot more than they expected when they met with Saskatchewan's education minister in early March.

Committee members hoped to be able to present their brief to the minister, explaining the need for one collective agreement for all education workers in the province.

But shortly after they began their presentation, minister Donna Harpauer interrupted to tell them: "I have no problem with this."

She said she agreed with provincial bargaining for school workers when she was an MLA on the opposition benches and she still agrees with it now that she is the minister of education.

It was a "woohoo" moment for CUPE's 6,400 school support workers, who have been pressing their case for provincial bargaining rights since 1996. CUPE currently has 26 different collective agreements in the school sector in Saskatchewan.

For more information go to: www.saskedworkers.cupe.ca.

Porter Ottawa staff on board with CUPE

By JAMES CHAI

CUPE welcomes Porter Airlines Ottawa staff, as the 50-member ground crew becomes the first Porter airline employee group to join a union. The Porter Ottawa staff voted to join CUPE to improve their working and earning conditions.

CUPE represents over 10,000 airline members at Air Canada, Air Transat, Cathay Pacific, Calm Air, CanJet, First Air, Canadian North and now Porter Airlines.

NURSING WEEK:

A commitment to quality care

BY PIERRE DUCASSE

Nurses everywhere in Canada will be celebrating National Nursing Week from May 9 to 15. CUPE proudly represents tens of thousands of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) across the country – known as Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs) in Ontario.

One of the most important issues nurses are facing is being able to use all the skills they were trained to do. LPNs/RPNs are on the front lines delivering high quality care to patients and residents in hospitals, residential long-term care facilities and home and community care settings. Our members want to serve the public and do the job



Licensed practical nurses, members of the Hospital Employees Union in British Columbia.

they are prepared and trained to do. Existing challenges in the workplace unfortunately hinder or limit opportunities for LPNs/RPNs to practice nursing to their

fullest ability.

CUPE salutes the valuable work our members do in providing quality health care.

cupe.ca/health-care

Workers unite from Cairo to Wisconsin

BY PAUL MOIST

Coming into 2011, we could see the attacks on unions on the horizon. But, it's been truly inspiring to see the response from workers all over the world.

In Egypt, workers embraced the calls for freedom and broke away from decades of government control.

Since 1957, all of Egypt's unions have been state controlled, under the government-run Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF).

That changed at a meeting in Tahrir Square, right in the midst of protests against the Mubarak regime. Four of the country's largest unions formed the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU).

At that meeting they staked out their first goal: a minimum wage increase.

The current minimum wage is 35 Egyptian pounds per month, about \$5.75 Canadian. Most troubling, it hasn't increased since 1984. You would be hard pressed to find a better example of what can happen in the absence of strong, independent unions.

While the events of the past few months have been exciting to watch, it's clear our Egyptian sisters and brothers still have a considerable fight in front of them.

Halfway across the world, and a little closer to home for us, more workers took to the streets of Madison, Wisconsin.

Under the guise of tackling a state budget deficit, Wisconsin's Republican Governor Scott Walker is trying to quash public sector collective bargaining rights.

Governor Walker terribly misjudged the resolve of workers, and Wisconsinites' support for them.

Starting with students walking out of class in support of their teachers, thousands have rallied at the state capital building and across the state.

Walker has waned slightly, offering to keep wages negotiable. He is steadfast however, that health care benefits and pensions are off the table.

So the protests continue.

For us in Canada, we offer our sisters and brothers in Egypt, Wisconsin, and in all other corners of the world



National President Paul Moist in Wisconsin.

our support and solidarity.

From them, we can learn some valuable lessons.

From Egypt, we are reminded of our own struggles to build CUPE into a strong, independent voice for workers, and the important role we play in securing good, livable wages. Not just for CUPE members, but for all Canadians.

From Wisconsin, we are reminded we cannot be complacent and take our rights for granted. While some try to cast public sector pensions as excessive, we know that couldn't be further from the truth. We must be vigilant against smears, and continue to work to protect and improve our pension security.

Most of all we see the fight to protect workers' rights crosses all borders, bridges, cultures and religions. From Cairo to Madison, from Halifax to Vancouver, we share the same struggles, and we share the same victories.

cupe.ca/Paul-Moist

Canadian cities save money by keeping waste collection in-house

BY HEATHER FRASER

Cities all across Canada are grappling with how to deliver quality services while keeping costs down and the issue of waste collection is at the centre of that question. Some cities, like Toronto, are using budget restraint as an excuse to try to privatize services. Others are contracting-in those services to save money.

So which approach is the most cost effective and provides the best service?

A quick look at what's happening in our cities provides the answer:

In Vancouver: Mayor Gregor Robertson spent two days collecting and sorting garbage in Vancouver when he appeared on a recent episode of the CBC series *Make the Politician Work*. Talking about his experience, Robertson said, "What really struck me was how much people care about their work. That's great value for us at the City and it's great value for taxpayers too."

In Sherbrooke: The City has decided to bring garbage collection services in-house saving \$750,000 annually. After comparing the costs, the City came to a simple conclusion: municipal employees can provide the service more cheaply than private companies.

In Ottawa: The City and CUPE 503 announced that by keeping the service in-house rather than using a private company, the City saved nearly five million dollars over four years.

Meanwhile in Toronto: CUPE 416 is campaigning to keep waste and recycling services public. Newly-elected Mayor Rob Ford has announced he intends to contract out waste collection services despite a recent report which shows that the cost to collect garbage in the City of Toronto is in fact 30 per cent below the provincial average.

If Ford did his research, he'd find that public services are more efficient, more committed to service and environmental sustainability, and more accountable to the public.

To keep up to date on these issues visit cupe.ca/sanitation.

E L E C T I O N

CUPE on the issues:

On Election Day, vote for the leader and party that will stand up for workers

Too many Canadians are struggling caring for aging parents, keeping up with the cost of housing, child care and prescription drugs. Too many are worrying about when they will be able to retire and what they will live on when they do.

We need a government that will put your needs first, not the interests of the banks and big corporations. CUPE will be focusing on some key issues that affect all of us. On Election Day, May 2, think about the issues that matter to you.

Health care: It's time for a clear plan for the future of public health care

Health care is the undisputed top priority for Canadians in this election. Canadians are demanding shorter wait times, an end to hallway medicine with more health care practitioners and support staff, long-term and home care solutions for our seniors, and more affordable prescription drugs.

Privatization does not work. It costs more, drains resources from our public health care system and lowers the quality of care available to all Canadians.

Our next federal government must have a clear plan to protect and strengthen our public health care system for all Canadians.

JACK LAYTON'S NDP IS THE ONLY PARTY WE CAN TRUST TO WORK WITH THE PROVINCES IN ENSURING HEALTH CARE TRANSFERS ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF ALL CANADIANS AND PUT IN PLACE A REAL PLAN FOR THE HEALTH CARE WE COUNT ON.

Pensions: It's time to fix Canada's pension crisis

Only one in four Canadians is confident they will be able to save enough to live comfortably



NDP Leader Jack Layton and CUPE National President Paul Moist.

in retirement. Eleven million Canadians have no workplace pensions, and few say they can afford to contribute to private retirement savings plans. Our next federal government must have a plan to address the retirement income needs of all Canadians.

We can start to fix the crisis through a balanced approach that combines strong workplace pensions with public pension plans that cover all working people. Gradual increases to Canada Pension Plan (CPP) contributions in order to increase benefits is the best, most cost effective way to improve the retirement income security of all Canadians.

The Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) must be increased and expanded to ensure Canada's most vulnerable seniors are not condemned to poverty.

If we ignore retirement income insecurity, more and more of Canada's aging population will be forced to work longer,

and face a retirement living in poverty.

JACK LAYTON'S NDP IS THE ONLY PARTY CANADA CAN TRUST TO WORK WITH THE PROVINCES TO REFORM THE CPP, AND ENSURE ALL CANADIANS CAN RETIRE COMFORTABLY.

Corporate tax cuts: It's time to stop lining the pockets of the banks and big corporations

Canadian workers and communities are still struggling to recover from the global recession. Our next federal government must have an economic plan that puts the needs of Canadian workers ahead of corporate interests.

More than a third of the benefits from Stephen Harper's annual \$6 billion corporate tax cut will go to highly profitable banks, oil and gas companies

and other finance and resource sector firms. When faced with record deficits, it is irresponsible to go ahead with corporate tax cuts for these companies, while neglecting crumbling infrastructure and proven job creation initiatives.

The jobs and investments the Harper Conservatives and past Liberal governments promised corporate tax cuts would create have not materialized. Corporate tax cuts are not helping Canadians recover from the global recession.

Instead of corporate tax cuts we need to invest in child care, infrastructure, and strengthen the public health care system and other public services important to all Canadians.

JACK LAYTON'S NDP IS THE ONLY PARTY CANADIAN WORKERS CAN TRUST TO PUT THEIR NEEDS AHEAD OF CORPORATE INTERESTS.

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What can you do? Get involved.

THERE ARE FOUR SIMPLE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO INFLUENCE THIS ELECTION AND MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD:

Get informed, vote, volunteer and donate.

Get informed.

Think about what matters to you and then find out where the parties stand. Vote on Election Day. And mark your X for the party and leader who will stand up for Canadian workers.

Volunteer in an NDP campaign. The NDP is our party, and our voice in the Parliament. Help elect a New Democrat in your community by volunteering in a campaign. Volunteer for a candidate that will stand up for working people.

Donate to your NDP candidate – it’s easy. Just go to ndp.ca to find out more. Donate to a candidate you support and who will be your voice in Parliament.

VOTE

Most importantly, vote. Your vote is your voice. Don’t be silent. Voters decide who forms the next government. That’s the beauty of democracy. Your vote and your involvement do make a difference and can change the face of the next government.

Visit cupe.ca/election2011 for up-to-date information about the campaign.

CUPE candidates in the fray, and on their way to the House of Commons

CUPE members know what’s at stake in this election. As prominent leaders in their workplaces and communities, more than 20 CUPE members and staff are running as candidates for the NDP in

this election. We salute you and thank you for putting the issues facing working people and their families front and centre in this election.

Here’s a look at whose running:

Former CUPE Atlantic Regional Director Robert Chisholm is running to be the next NDP MP for Dartmouth-Cole Harbour in Nova Scotia. Robert Chisholm is probably best known for leading the Nova Scotia NDP from four to 19 seats in the 1998 provincial election. He also served for 12 years as an MLA, speaking up for Nova Scotia families.

Says Chisholm:
“For me, public service is a passion and a personal responsibility. I feel obliged to speak up on behalf of others – whose voices might otherwise be lost – so that fairness, respect and cooperation can be woven into the fabric of our society.”



Region	Federal Riding	Name	Staff/Member
Atlantic	Sydney-Victoria	Kathy MacLeod	Staff
	Dartmouth-Cole Harbour	Robert Chisholm	Retired Staff
Maritimes	Miramichi	Patrick Colford	Member – CUPE 1252
	Tobique-Mactaquac	Pierre Cyr	Member – CUPE 3013
Quebec	Rosemont-La Petite-Patrie	Alexandre Boulerice	Staff
Ontario	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	Lyn Edwards	Member – CUPE 855
	Scarborough Rouge River	Rathika Sitsabaiesan	Member – CUPE 1281
	Burlington	David Laird	Member – CUPE 2316
	Guelph	Bobbi Stewart	Member – CUPE 4393
	Nepean Carleton	Ric Dagenais	Staff
	Ancaster Dundas	Nancy McBain	Member – CUPE 1281
	Flamborough Westdale	Jim Glaven	Member – CUPE 2544
Manitoba	Winnipeg South	Dave Gaudreau	Member – CUPE 500
	Winnipeg South Centre	Dennis Lewycky	Former Staff
Alberta	Fort McMurray Athabasca	Berend Wilting	Member – CUPE 474
	Calgary Southeast	Kirk Oates	Staff
	Edmonton Sherwood Park	Mike Scott	Member – CUPE 30
	Calgary Northeast	Collette Singh	Member – CUPE 8
	Calgary Centre	Gary Lehmann	Member – CUPE 4731
B.C.	Abbotsford	David Murray	Member – CUPE 498
	Vancouver-Quadra	Victor Elkins	Member – CUPE 6010
	Okanagan Shuswap	Nikki Inouye	Member – CUPE 7003

Former Atlantic Regional Director, Robert Chisholm is the NDP candidate for Dartmouth-Cole Harbour.

Union presence in Haiti – both useful and appreciated

Four CUPE representatives and one from the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) were in Haiti in March to launch the construction of a new office for a sister union federation in that country.

The former headquarters of the Confederation of Private and Public Sector Workers (CTSP), a federation of 12 public and private sector unions in Haiti, was destroyed in the Jan. 12, 2010 earthquake that shook the country. The CTSP has had to operate out of a tent since then.

"We are here to launch the construction of a new

union building," affirmed Claude Généreux, CUPE national secretary-treasurer. "We were able to witness the first steps needed to clear the plot of land on which the new offices will be built." The estimated cost of the construction project is approximately \$100,000.

"Our delegation went further, and offered financial and bookkeeping training to 15 local union leaders. While international aid does not always have the desired impact, our inter-union collaboration represents our concrete contribution towards the reconstruction of union infrastructure and the



CUPE National Secretary-Treasurer Claude Généreux breaking ground in Haiti.

longer-term capacity-building of unions and civil society in Haiti," said Généreux.

Dukens Raphaël, president of the CTSP, is thankful for the contributions of CUPE, PSAC and other Canadian unions.

"It's with great satisfaction and solidarity that we accept this contribution. We are extremely pleased to move forward to the concrete phase of this project," states Raphaël.

cupe.ca/global-justice

Food for thought – local is better for environment and economy

By **STELLA YEADON**

"Broad-based community coalitions and actions are the best way to defend public services and support local economies and jobs," said CUPE National President Paul Moist to more than 150 people who gathered at a community lunch in

Kingston recently.

Moist was the keynote speaker at the event which also included speakers from the National Farmers' Union, CUPE 1974 and other community groups who make up *People Who Care About Kingston* – a community coalition opposing the outsourcing of hospital

patient food to a factory operation near Toronto.

"Get as much food from local farms as possible. Bring the cooks back. Make patient food in the Kingston General Hospital kitchen. Provide good quality food to convalescing patients. Support the local economy and promote

environmental sustainability," urged Moist. "It is the responsibility of both the provincial government and the local MPP to promote local solutions." More information about the Kingston General Hospital food campaign can be found at: www.kingstonfoodfight.ca.

Updating the anti-scab law

By **SÉBASTIEN GOULET**

In February, CUPE and the Quebec Federation of Labrador (QFL) called on the National Assembly Committee on Labour and the Economy to update Quebec's anti-scab law in order to reflect the reality of new technologies that have surfaced since the law was first adopted back in 1977.

The joint brief by CUPE and the QFL makes three recommendations: to clarify the notion of establishment; to accelerate the Labour Relations Board's decision making process; and to grant investigators more power.

Island P3s

By **DANIELLE SAVOIE**

CUPE Prince Edward Island kicked off a campaign against the government's recent move towards public-private partnerships (P3s) to build affordable

housing for seniors and persons with disabilities.

In P.E.I., this type of subsidized housing has historically been built, owned and operated by the province's housing authority. Under the P3 proposal, the subsidized housing would only last a maximum of 10 years. After that period of time, the privateer has the right to charge whatever seems appropriate. As well, they could pay the government their forgivable loan back before 10 years and get out of the agreement. CUPE PEI has formed a coalition with other unions and community groups to fight the government's plan.

New video celebrates CUPE-Métis relationship

CUPE and Wolf Sun Productions have teamed up to create *River of Unity*, a short film documenting

the relationship of CUPE, the Métis Nation & Saskatchewan to the annual Back to Batoche canoe trip.

The full-length film and a shorter preview version are available on YouTube. Check out cupe.ca/video for links!

Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska: end to lockout

By **DANIELLE SAVOIE**

After a ten-month lockout, the Union representing the municipal employees of Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska and the Municipal Council have ratified a new collective agreement.

The Municipal Council has accepted the agreement reached with CUPE 4576. The two village employees will be returning to work Monday.

"These negotiations have been extremely difficult for the two members of Local 4576 and

the whole community», said Gérald LeBlanc, CUPE union representative.

"The new five-year collective agreement includes salary increases of 6 per cent and the two permanent positions have been changed to seasonal employment."

Calling all CUPE communicators

National Convention is a great opportunity to acknowledge some of the fantastic communications work our locals, councils and divisions have been doing.

We're taking your submissions for CUPE's 2011 Communications Awards.

Show us your CUPE **newsletter, website or photographs of members** that you are most proud of.

Awards and prizes to be won!

Find entry forms at CUPE.ca/convention2011.

Historic pay equity settlements in Quebec



From left to right: Michèle Bordeleau, Sylvie Goyer and Claudine Pagé presenting the pay equity program results to the Université de Montréal workers' union (SEUM-CUPE 1244).

By SÉBASTIEN GOULET

CUPE Quebec achieved a major victory on the pay equity front this winter. Nine universities completed the pay equity process, stemming from Quebec's Pay Equity Act. Thousands of employees received salary increases ranging anywhere from a few pennies to \$6 an hour, with an average hourly increase of approximately \$2. These results are the culmination of several years of work to rectify the systemic salary shortfalls affecting predominantly female job categories.

CUPE finalized pay equity programs last fall in the following institutions: the Université du Québec à Montréal, the

Université de Montréal, the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, the Université du Québec à Rimouski, the Institut national de la recherche scientifique, the École de technologie supérieure, as well as the École nationale d'administration publique.

The salary adjustments apply as of November 2001. Employees who have held one of the targeted female-dominated jobs will be granted retroactive payments to this date, whether they are still working, retired, or have since changed jobs. In each case, the payments could potentially add up to several thousands of dollars.

Major monetary adjustments for City of Montreal white-collar workers

The Syndicat des fonctionnaires municipaux de Montréal (CUPE 429) completed its pay equity process in December. Close to 4,500 white-collar workers will see their salary increase with adjustments ranging from 0.53 per cent to 120.03 per cent, in an extremely exceptional case. Close to 60 per cent of all predominantly female job categories

will be affected out of a total of some 400 different jobs.

"We are more than pleased with the outcome, considering this process will put a stop to wage discrimination which affected many women in our ranks," stated Monique Côté, local president and also representative on the joint labour committee.

Canadians oppose Harper on CPP, corporate taxes – poll

By STEPHEN HOWARD

The Harper government is out of step with Canadians' views on two key election issues—the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) reform and corporate taxes—according to national polling commissioned by CUPE.

In a CUPE/Environics pension survey, eight of 10 Canadians believe increasing CPP benefits should be the federal government's first priority for improving retirement security, and 81 per cent say CPP should be an important issue in the next federal election.

In December, Ottawa broke a promise to work with provinces to raise CPP benefits. Instead, the Tories proposed a private pooled pension scheme that will not help working Canadians.

Meanwhile another poll found 65 per cent of Canadians support raising taxes so corporations pay their fair share to lower deficits run up by governments because of the global economic meltdown. The Conservatives are proposing to drastically reduce corporate tax rates.

For more see cupe.ca:

cupe.ca/cpp/harper-government.

Stephen Lewis inspires municipal workers to protect public services



Stephen Lewis, visiting professor at Ryerson University addresses CUPE municipal workers.

By HEATHER FRASER

CUPE municipal workers from across Canada met in Toronto in February to discuss how to deliver quality public services to Canada's communities in the face of underfunding, privatization and trade agreement threats.

In a powerful speech to delegates, Stephen Lewis called on municipal workers across Canada to continue our work to protect vital community services. Lewis is a distinguished visiting professor

at Ryerson University and is the chair of the board of the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

"The public sector is what makes things work," said Lewis. "And when we don't have the public sector alive and robust, as has been shown in country after country, then the human condition declines, it atrophies, it falls apart."

To see video excerpts from his inspirational speech visit cupe.ca/video.

Taxation: Putting an end to anorexia and amnesia

NEB Highlights

Our National Executive Board (NEB) met on March 23-24, 2011 in Ottawa. These are the highlights of their deliberations and decisions.

Board members voted unanimously to adopt the Public Services International (PSI) Charter on Quality Public Services. By adopting the Charter, the NEB commits CUPE to work together with progressive groups and unions worldwide to promote public services, to persuade governments to embrace quality public services as a tool to eradicate poverty, and to take a leadership role to ensure that quality public services are delivered by public sector workers.

CUPE's quarterly economic report attacks the myth that public spending is increasing and must be pulled back. In the Economic Climate for Bargaining, CUPE's Economist Toby Sanger points out that the latest figures show total government spending prior to the recession was at its lowest level as a share of the economy in at least 30 years. Find out details by accessing the quarterly Economic Climate for Bargaining at www.cupe.ca.

After serving CUPE members for 10 years as National Secretary-Treasurer, Brother Claude Généreux announced his decision to retire. Brother Moist thanked Claude for his commitment, friendship, and the principled and firm hand he has taken to CUPE finances. The work Claude has done has strengthened CUPE's power for all members at the bargaining table, in the legislatures, and in our outreach across Canada and around the world. There will be many opportunities to thank Claude and pay him tribute in the months to come.



An interview with CUPE National Secretary-Treasurer, Claude Généreux

BY PIERRE DUCASSE

Pierre Ducasse: With the recent economic crisis and the return of deficits, governments are tempted to make cuts to public services and employee benefits. How should we react?

Claude Généreux: It's important to remember that workers didn't cause this crisis. Some attempts have been made to plant amnesia in the public opinion regarding the root of the crisis.

In reality, the return of the deficit stems from the financial crisis in 2008, a crisis created by big business. The very people who caused this crisis, and who raked in profits based on speculation, later pleaded with governments to save them once they were out of luck.

The deficit we face today is not a structural one; but rather one related to the current climate. It's not a result of public spending or public services.

PD: Should we believe that governments "have no more money" and "have no choice" but to make cuts?

CG: No, that's far from the truth. Sure, some countries have more trouble than others. But in Canada, we are in a relatively good position. Deficits will be absorbed quite quickly. In Ontario, for example, the budget will be balanced within seven years. Public spending is clearly not out of control.

In Wisconsin, the public finance crisis and the subsequent attacks on unions were completely fabricated. Wisconsin had absolutely no deficit before the government started giving massive tax breaks to big business.

PD: Should tax fairness be an important issue in the federal election campaign?

CG: Definitely, yes. We have found ourselves in a situation where Harper is lowering corporate taxes while we struggle with a deficit and cuts to public services. The government is suffering from self-inflicted fiscal anorexia.

The ratio of taxes paid by corporations as compared to individuals is half of that of the 1960s.

But alternatives do exist. We could start by re-examining certain tax loopholes without harming the economy whatsoever. The United States has a combined corporate tax rate reaching nearly 40 per cent. In Canada it's closer to 30 per cent—that's a 10 per cent gap. We're already ahead of the game in terms of corporate taxation compared to our closest and biggest competitor. There is room to manoeuvre.

And then, there's the

question of natural resource royalties. In Saskatchewan, for example, royalties on potash are a mere five per cent. It's a reminder of what Duplessis did in the 1960s, when he sold Quebec's North Shore iron for "a penny a ton."

The Harper government argues that tax cuts for businesses will create jobs in the long term. But we believe investing in people and in public services will have a bigger, immediate impact on the economic recovery and for job creation. cupe.ca/podcasts

Water rights expanded in Botswana Bushmen court ruling

An appeals court in Botswana has ruled that the Kalahari Bushmen have the right to access well water in their ancestral lands located in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. The victory came after an eight-year legal battle and is an important step in further establishing access to water as a universal human right protected by law.

The Botswana Court of Appeals granted the Bushmen people access to an existing well and permission to excavate new ones, overturning a previous decision that had denied the Bushmen people access to water and drilling rights on their ancestral land.

CUPE has long argued that access to clean water is a universal human right. The Botswana courts referred to the recent United Nations General Assembly resolution declaring the human right to "safe and clean drinking water and sanitation," in their ruling.

cupe.ca/water

Bottled Water Free Day

On March 10, Canadians celebrated Bottled Water Free Day to raise awareness about the negative impacts of bottled water and defend public water resources and infrastructure. CUPE participated in many of the 120 events at campuses, workplaces and municipal facilities.

Across the country, nearly 100 municipalities, seven school boards, 11 university campuses and countless workplaces have restricted the sale or distribution of bottled water.