

National President's Report

October 2005 – January 2006

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

What an exciting time for CUPE. This may prove to be a longer report than usual, for so much has occurred in the last few months!

I would be unable to begin this report if not to start with some very personal comments regarding our 22nd National Convention held October 3rd to 7th, in the beautiful City of Winnipeg (never mind that it snowed, delegates had no boots, and we needed to improvise for Communities Day – October 5th).

May I begin by thanking you for your confidence in re-electing me as your National President. I am most humbled and respectful of the trust and responsibility you have given me. Thank you. I pledge to work hard for the betterment of CUPE members and all workers.

Particularly, I wish to thank delegates and staff in attendance at national convention for their warm welcome and acceptance of my parents into the CUPE family. It had been and remained one of my most important dreams to be able to thank and recognize my parents for the richness of the childhood and the values they had both given and incited in me. Thank you for greeting them.

This report will attempt to highlight key policy initiatives, as well as touch on national, regional and international issues affecting our Union. As always, I welcome your comments and feedback on this report and any other matter.

1. CUPE 22nd National Convention – October 3-7, 2005

Just over 2,000 delegates, staff and guests assembled in Winnipeg for our 22nd National Convention. All gathered to discuss and deliberate our National Union's direction for the upcoming two years. When asked, 40% of delegates identified themselves as first-time delegates to a CUPE national convention. We welcomed them warmly.

As customary, a number of sector meetings and forums were held throughout the week, including a very successful first-time ever Cabaret Evening. A record number of caucuses were held daily. The 2005-2007 Strategic Directions Policy Document was debated on three separate convention days for a total of some four hours.

Keynote speaker Dr. Linda Rae Murray gave a passionate speech on the relevance of unions and the public sector services they provide to communities. She cited recent events in the U.S. such as the devastation of Hurricane Katrina to emphasize the need for stronger public infrastructure and services, and the focus on military investments which take away much needed resources for social infrastructure.

Regardless of the sleet and snow delegates bravely participated in our October 5th Communities Day rally, listening to Sister Lesley Sacouman from Rossbrook House a well-known shelter for children in Winnipeg and the pressing need for continued governmental and community support. During our convention week, delegates were also struck by the tragic death of an 11-year old Aboriginal girl, and in response CUPE pledged a \$2,500 donation to assist the family with their expenses and to support the Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre.

In my very first National President's report (December 2003), I had made personal observations as to what I viewed then as a gender imbalance at the highest levels of our leadership and expressed concerns that all levels of our great union ought to be more representative of our overall membership. I did not have answers then, nor do I profess to have any now, but I am very proud of how our union has taken on this issue, brought it to our 2005 convention, and the respectful and deep level of debate that occurred.

Delegates adopted Resolution No.106 calling for the establishment of a National Women's Task Force to study barriers faced by women at all levels of CUPE and to make recommendations to our 2007 National Convention. In the weeks and months ahead we will need to listen and talk about gender and diversity representation, and how we might positively move forward.

2. 2005-2007 Strategic Directions Document

As mentioned, the 2005-2007 Strategic Directions Policy Document was adopted after over four hours of debate, spread over four days of the national convention.

This Strategic Directions document speaks to the need to continue to focus on the three strategic objectives (strengthening bargaining power, increasing our effectiveness and intensifying our campaign to stop privatization) set in the 2003-2005 Strategic Directions. Our new Strategic Directions include:

- Strengthening our sectors
- Establishing measurable bargaining objectives
- Organizing the unorganized
- Increasing participation of women
- Communicating directly with members
- Gaining ground with other unions
- Resisting privatization and contracting out

CUPE National is now focussing on the important task of deepening its integration of Strategic Directions into every single aspect of how it does business – our initiatives, our programs and structures, staff and activist training.

I will report further as work unfolds on Strategic Directions in future reports, as I look forward to hearing from all of you on the planning and work you do within your regions and at your local union level.

3. Federal Scene

January 2006 Federal Election

CUPE members and staff, along with many Canadian social activists, are once again mobilizing to participate in a federal election campaign, bringing to the forefront issues that are of upper most concern to Canadians and all working people.

This federal election comes at a critical time with health care, child care and ethical government emerging as top issues in the campaign. CUPE is participating in the election in a variety of ways – through our Web site with policy updates and campaign analysis on a daily basis, through the CLC's labour issues campaign, and for many of us, directly in support of labour endorsed candidates.

Much discussion has centered around so-called strategic voting. The theory advanced (outside of Quebec) is that NDP candidates should be supported where they stand a chance to win and Liberals elsewhere in order to prevent a Stephen Harper led government.

I find this flawed on a number of fronts. Firstly, I know of no examples where strategic voting has worked. How on earth will voters determine who has a chance of winning and who doesn't? Secondly, as our election web page outlines, on virtually all policy fronts, the NDP clearly has workers' interests front and centre. Finally, we are proud members of the CLC, who were founding partners of the federal NDP and have had a convention endorsed pro-NDP policy for some 44 years. In short, I believe we should all (outside of Quebec) vote as if our jobs depended on it, meaning, we should vote NDP.

I am very proud that the following CUPE members and staff have offered themselves as NDP candidates:

Sid Ryan, NDP – Oshawa
Ric Dagenais, NDP – Ottawa-Vanier
David Robertson, NDP – Scarborough-Agincourt
Rodolphe Martin, NDP – Madawaska-Restigouche
Dennis Kshyk, NDP – Charleswood-St.James-Assiniboia
Terry Albright, NDP – Saint John

PSAC Pay Equity Award

A Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) pay equity complaint has resulted in a Canadian Human Rights Tribunal awarding pay equity adjustments to some 6,000 current and former clerical workers employed by the Canada Post Corporation. The award provides for adjustments retroactive to 1982.

Congratulations to our Sister union for its persistence and this great victory!

4. Organizing

On November 8-9, 2005, the National Executive Board participated in a Strategic Session on Organizing. This discussion led to a renewed commitment to regional Priorities and Planning meetings, clearer governance on the issue of organizing, and a decision to discuss organizing as a priority item at each Board meeting. As well regular reports on organizing will be included in the National President Reports.

The Organizing and Regional Services Department is working closely with the Technology Branch to develop a new organizing project-based reporting system that will provide us with an ability to review instant up-to-date reports on individual projects and expenditures.

A commitment to holding a national meeting on Aboriginal Organizing has been made and will take place early in 2006.

Across the country from east to west, activity is taking place. The **Nova Scotia** region has successfully launched its childcare organizing campaign and as part of their strategy has recently released "Child Care at the Crossroads", a research report. As a result of the **PEI** government's Program Renewal initiative, CUPE in this region is lobbying for a public ambulance service and will work toward winning representation votes. **New Brunswick** is also helping to develop plans. In **Quebec**, some 600 new members (formerly SEIU Local 298) have joined CUPE. Health care restructuring has resulted in massive efforts, and CUPE in Quebec has been successful in maintaining bargaining rights for over 11,000. Two major health care campaigns remain to be completed. In **Ontario**, an additional 59 new member-organizers have been trained bringing the total to 67 trained members from all jurisdictions. Key Ontario initiatives identified are childcare, libraries, long-term care, hospitals and Local Health Integration Networks restructuring. The region also faces a number of representation votes. CUPE-**Manitoba** is working on a provincial organizing plan. **Saskatchewan** has been working hard at creating a focussed plan in the education sector in anticipation of the school division amalgamations. In 2005, 13 certificates in this sector were obtained and an additional 10 involving 1,100 members are likely to be successful in 2006. Alberta has successfully beaten back a raid attempt at the Mount Royal Care Centre (70 members). Two major projects are underway in **British Columbia** at the Royal Roads University and the new Save-On-Foods Memorial Arena in Victoria.

For the year 2005, a total of 51 certifications were achieved bringing into CUPE 2,462 new members.

5. CUPE Solidarity

CUPE BC demonstrates unwavering support for the BC Teachers' Strike

Under the strong leadership of the CUPE BC Division Executive and president Barry O'Neill, CUPE members in the province rallied to support the BC teachers' strike and to fight the Campbell government's assault on workers' rights to free and fair collective bargaining.

BC teachers walked off the job on October 7th to protest a contract that the province wanted to legislate on them. 25,000 CUPE school board workers immediately began honouring their picket lines. Mass rallies were held on a rotation basis across the province where the BCTF and 25,000 CUPE school board workers received the support of all BC CUPE members. I was very pleased to be able to attend October 21st rallies held in Vancouver and Surrey.

Undeniably, this show of solidarity has strengthened and unified every CUPE member in BC and inspired our members from coast to coast.

CBC/Radio-Canada, Telus, Lakeside Packers

Across the nation, major difficult and lengthy labour disputes took place. As much as possible, CUPE members participated by attending rallies and offering both financial and picket line support.

The National Union financially supported sisters and brothers at CBC/Radio-Canada (Canadian Media Guild) and Telus (Telecommunications Workers Union) with a donation of \$10,000 each. It further agreed to extend a loan to TWU so that they could continue to remain strong.

We also lobbied Premier Ralph Klein to use the power of his office to end the labour dispute at Lakeside Packers in Brooks, Alberta. This dispute ended prior to the National Union making a supporting financial contribution to strikers, members of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), but we are committed to the Alberta Federation of Labour's campaign to secure first contract legislation in Alberta.

6. CUPE National

2005 Strategic Initiatives

The final 2005 targeted strategic initiative projected for within the 2005 national budget was a gathering of CUPE Pension Trustees.

A very successful meeting of some 80 pension activists from across the country, members of our National Advisory Committee on Pensions, and National Executive Board members with a keen interest on pension issues and staff met to discuss broad strategic questions and share their knowledge and experiences.

The following keynote speakers joined the meeting:

- Carolyn Widener – Chair, California State Teachers State Retirement System
(Defending public sector unions' pension: A California success story)
- Hugh Mackenzie – Mackenzie and Associates
(Pension investments, keeping our fund portfolio P3 free)
- Monica Townson – Consultant
(Protecting our pension benefits in today's funding climate)
- Ken Georgetti – President, Canadian Labour Congress and Réjean Bellemare,
Researcher, Québec Federation of Labour
(What are governments up to?)
- Susan Philpott, Lawyer, Koskie & Minsky
(Accountability and fiduciary responsibility)

The conference also heard first-hand from a panel of individual CUPE trustees about the challenges they faced as labour representatives serving on pension plans, the diversity and complexity of issues on their specific plan. More information can be accessed from www.cupe.ca.

National Women's Task Force (2005 National Convention – Resolution #106)

Following the adoption of Resolution No.106 at national convention, the National Union immediately began an informal process of consulting with CUPE women leaders, members and staff to seek feedback and advice as to the structure and work of the National Women's Task Force. The Task Force will be formally struck in January of 2006 and will begin immediately. I urge each of you to support this major initiative through active participation when the Task Force surfaces in your region.

CUPE National Committees and Working Groups

The 2005 Strategic Document adopted at national convention called for CUPE to introduce a new procedure for appointments to CUPE's national committees and working groups to allow any member to apply for nomination.

Candidates would be selected to ensure that CUPE's committees and working groups are made up of knowledgeable members who are representative of regions, sectors, gender and diversity groups within CUPE.

With this in mind, a letter and application form was sent to all CUPE chartered organizations in a November 15, 2005 general mailing. Committee appointments should be completed by the end of February 2006.

Union Development

The new Women Breaking Barriers five-day workshop took place in Nova Scotia bringing together 26 women from both the Atlantic and Maritimes regions, and then again in Ontario. The workshop, first delivered for BC and Alberta women in early September, explores the distinct problems and issues CUPE women face in the workplace, home, community and union. The workshop builds the political analysis skills of the participants with special sessions on the economy and key social political issues of the day, including pensions, child care, and privatization. As well, the participants develop public speaking and debating skills. But most importantly, the workshop brings the participants together to build strategies for progressive change. In total 76 women have participated at the expense of CUPE National and the workshop is drawing rave reviews. Plans are underway to expand delivery through CUPE's regular education program, beginning in 2006.

The Women's education and training program is only one of several new CUPE Education initiatives being carried out by the Department of Union Development. Training of new member facilitators is being carried out, and the department has embarked on an ambitious project to ensure that every CUPE member serving on a pension board receives a full week of CUPE pension trustee training. As well, new programs to combat privatization and contracting out are being developed in coordination with our National Contracting Out and Privatization Co-ordinating Committee, and a full range of new equality rights courses are being developed in coordination with our Equality committees.

Organizing and Regional Services

An intense three-week residential Trainee Representative Orientation Program was developed and offered to thirteen CUPE members from across the country from October 16 to November 5, 2005, in Ottawa. The program included sessions on collective bargaining, grievance handling, political action and campaigns, arbitrations and labour law, and health and safety issues.

The residential program is then followed by a seven-week field placement program. We are budgeting to include this program as our ongoing succession planning initiative.

The newly elected National Executive Board held a two-day strategic planning meeting focused on organizing the unorganized, one of the key sections of our Strategic Directions document adopted at convention.

At both the NEB and Provincial Division levels, we want to make organizing a major focus to defend our turf when governments order restructuring votes, and to ensure that we increase union density in our traditional jurisdictions. Organizing is the lifeblood of all unions and while our union continues to grow, the growth rate has slowed in recent years and we must take positive steps to address this.

National Services

An election team comprised of staff from National Services (Communications and Research, Organizing and Regional Services, and Union Development) are meeting every morning leading up to the 2006 federal election to plan strategy for our CUPE issues campaign. The focus of the campaign is to “Vote Positive, Vote Public” and is designed to encourage members to vote for the Party that promotes public services and opposes privatization.

A new issue of the day is posted every day to www.cupe.ca and the site has fact sheets, issues flyers, reality checks on Party positions, quizzes, an election pool and hyperlinks to other important background information. A leaflet has been designed and will be distributed to CUPE members in targeted ridings across the country.

Planning is well underway to host a first-ever political action conference for the Atlantic and Maritimes Regions to be held March 2 – 5, 2006 in St. John’s, Newfoundland. The conference will explore ways to build our capacity to influence elected officials, to elect progressive politicians and to lobby for progressive policies at all levels of government.

Planning is underway to develop a plan of action for implementing the recommendations of the Strategic Directions Document adopted by delegates at Convention. One of the first steps is to bring all National Services specialty staff from National Office and the regions together in Ottawa on February 13 & 14, 2006 to establish work plans to implement our priorities over the next two years. The Strategic Directions initiative will involve all CUPE departments and staff with our National Services Department taking the lead on a number of key policy areas.

7. CUPE Provincial Updates

Newfoundland and Labrador

Health care locals in Newfoundland and Labrador have begun to prepare for their next round of negotiations. Our locals face huge challenges based on the last experience with the Williams government.

Reform initiatives in health care and school boards continue. This has resulted in the need to negotiate transition agreements. Negotiations for these agreements with health care authorities are commencing in January 2006 with the school board sector expected to commence during the course of the year.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Division recently made submissions to the provincial pre-budget consultations with special emphasis on the unfunded liability of the provincial pension plan. The Division is optimistic that the government will initiate actions in this regard as the province’s Auditor General has supported this initiative.

It was recently announced that the NDP Leader Jack Harris was stepping down following 15 years in the House. Brother Harris has been one of our strongest and most reliable allies in Newfoundland/Labrador and will certainly be missed by all.

Nova Scotia

CUPE Nova Scotia continues to bolster the work and image of public sector employees. They have successfully launched a major campaign entitled “Our work builds strong communities”. This initiative, which involves provincial television ads, is being cost-shared between the locals, the Division and CUPE National.

Our childcare organizing campaign has been gathering momentum with meetings taking place with unorganized centres. Included in our childcare organizing strategy was the release of a research report “Childcare at the Crossroads” which has received wide media coverage across the province.

Three major health care groups (acute care, long term care and home support) recently met to review their approach to coordinated bargaining while taking into consideration various models from across the country.

Submissions were made to the government by CUPE Nova Scotia, the Highway Workers and our child care local supporting amendments to the Trade Union Act. These changes would establish more realistic time frames for expected arbitration as well as moving the “duty of fair representation” process out of the civil courts and into the realm of the Labour Board.

Prince Edward Island

Restructuring initiatives by employers continue to preoccupy our attention. A review is underway which could see the maintenance of school buses, currently being performed by CUPE members, transferred to the Department of Transportation. The suggested move would result in the loss of twenty positions within our bargaining unit.

The five ambulance services presently in operation have been merged into. A campaign has been initiated to ensure the combined service remains a public service. CUPE PEI continues to solidify its Strategic Directions Plan of Action with the intent of ensuring readiness for mobilization campaigns.

New Brunswick

Coordinated plans of action and Solidarity Pacts continue to be the major impetus in reaching memorandums of agreement in the province.

The effectiveness of these actions has resulted in a 22.6% increase in wages for members of Local 1840 (Court Stenographers). It has also provided for our members of Local 1251 (Nursing Home) with a wage increase of 14.73% over a four-year period, including a full job evaluation plan as well as protection against threatened pension changes.

Local 4598 (Home Support Workers) ratified an agreement following three months of strike action. The agreement provides for a wage increase of \$1.48 per hour as well as a commitment that hours reduced prior to the strike would be restored.

CUPE has presented a comprehensive brief to the provincial body examining the issue of moving to one ambulance operator. The brief outlines various models of ambulance services that currently exist in Canada while putting forward that best public service format wherein EMT's will be public employees.

Quebec

While the government has the legislative power to bring in draconian legislation, the labour movement in Quebec is united in their objective to ensure the defeat of the ruling Liberals in the provincial elections which are slated to take place within the next 18 months. The Quebec motto "Je me souviens" will undoubtedly take on its full meaning for the Quebec labour movement in the upcoming weeks and months.

In mid-December the Charest government called a special session of the National Assembly to impose Bill 124 on "Centres de la petite enfance" child care centres including a special act imposing working conditions and salaries for half a million public sector employees.

Other legislative actions by the government saw the introduction of Bills 25 and 30, which had dramatic impacts on the health care sector by altering workplaces across the province. This government's action forces us to engage in run off votes with other labour organizations.

Ontario

On the legislative front, the Ontario government recently introduced Bill 36, the Local Health Integration Network (LHINS). LHINS threatens to introduce managed competition, privatization, reduced access to local services and reduced government accountability for vital health care and social services.

CUPE/OCHU in conjunction with other unions (SEIU, OPSEU, ONA) have formed a coalition to combat the introduction of LHINS. If Bill 36 is passed in its present form we could see thousands of workers negatively affected by the realignment of services in these sectors. Needless to say a line has been drawn in the sand by labour and mobilization efforts to defeat this regressive legislation is underway.

Community opposition to P3 hospitals continues. Recent results from plebiscites carried out in Ontario communities soundly and overwhelmingly reject the introduction of P3 hospitals in their communities. The plebiscites sponsored by the Ontario Health Coalition and strongly supported by CUPE are to continue as the government moves forward on these initiatives. The votes have achieved significant media exposure and discussions within the communities affected.

The Ontario Division has been leading the call for major changes to the OMERS Pension Plan which covers over 100,000 CUPE members in the province. The government recently introduced legislation Bill 206 which effectively hampers our efforts for proper governance, including enhancements of benefits to the plan. The Division continues to mobilize our members in opposition to this legislation with a vow to effect changes.

I was pleased to be able to attend the Ottawa 5th Annual Early Childhood Education/Child Care Worker Appreciation Day, organized by Sister Shellie Bird. The successful event was hosted by counsellor Alex Munter and attended by some several hundred childcare workers and early childhood educators from the region.

Manitoba

After many months of hard bargaining, health care workers were able to ratify an agreement that sees long awaited wage parity across the province.

Members in other sectors continue to push hard in bargaining, taking strike votes and walking the line when necessary.

In December, I had the privilege of walking the line with members of Local 1897 at the Turtle River School Division in McCreary, Manitoba. They began their strike on November 4th and braved the cold of winter to support their demands for wage parity. They were able to return to work on January 23rd after the employer agreed to send the outstanding issues to mediation and binding arbitration.

Saskatchewan

Government restructuring in education has provided opportunities to organize the unorganized leaving no doubt that CUPE is the education union in Saskatchewan.

CUPE Saskatchewan hosted the first ever "Solidarity Conference" bringing members from all sectors together. The lively discussions that were held and the concrete strategies that were developed will result in increased coordinated bargaining and political action.

In early January, the CUPE Saskatchewan Health Care Council was part of a landmark collective agreement settlement. They had spent many months bargaining in a coalition with other health care unions and achieved long awaited wage parity. Once again, our sisters and brothers in Saskatchewan are to be congratulated for their leadership in bargaining coalitions which make great gains for our members!

Alberta

Locals continue to protect gains made at the bargaining table and wage settlements are in the 3 to 4 percent, with some as high as five percent. Local 4655 settled their 43-day strike at the Calgary Casino with wage and language improvements. Most importantly, they resisted an aggressive anti union employer's attempt to break their union. P3 proposals are on the increase across the province and locals are taking them on. Congratulations to local 30 for their recent win to keep sewer and drainage public.

Local unions from across the province will be gathering in early February at a re-vitalized Union Agreement Conference, where they will share strategies on strengthening bargaining.

British Columbia

Very soon the teachers dispute, CUPE members geared up for municipal and school board elections on November 17. Dozens of volunteers phoned hundreds of CUPE members and, once again, labour friendly candidates were elected.

The Island Water Watch Campaign has been called on to provide research and advice to many of their communities, with great success. Campbell River city council voted to keep water testing public. And the successful campaign for public water in Nanaimo spilled over into both the municipal and federal election campaigns.

Negotiations in the public sector are set for the spring. Bargaining will be affected by a recent announcement that the government wants all contracts completed by March 31, 2006.

HEU

HEU held a series of occupational conferences in the fall to prepare for health care bargaining early this year. This will be a critical round of talks as the Campbell government knows from the 2004 strike that this union will fight for a fair agreement.

Just before the Christmas break, we received the final BC labour decision regarding the contracted out health care workers. HEU won another significant decision that paved the way for the ballot boxes at Compass to be counted. As with the previous votes at Sodexo and Aramark, workers chose HEU over the USWA (formerly IWA). Collective agreements have already been ratified with Sodexo (after a lengthy strike) and Aramark. Members at Compass will be heading to the bargaining table very soon.

Airline

The Airline Service Division is encouraging all CUPE members to assist in the 1:40 campaign. Moves are being made in the industry to have government allow an increase in the ratio of passengers to flight attendants. This is a major safety concern for the flying public. Log on to www.cupe.ca for more information on how you can help.

The following is a report on the current strikes/lockouts. The following groups are on the line as of December 31st, 2005.

| PROVINCE | LOCAL NUMBER | EMPLOYER | # OF MEMBERS | STRIKE BEGAN |
|----------|--------------|------------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Manitoba | 1897 | Turtle River School Division | 100 | November 4, 2005 |

8. Canadian Labour Congress

Political Action

We are working closely with the CLC and their labour issues campaign which builds on work begun during the 2004 federal election. New federal election spending legislation makes traditional union support more difficult, but through raising workers issues such as pensions, labour legislation and training (to name a few) and by communicating directly with union members we can have a very positive impact on election issues and assist in the election of NDP candidates.

MUSA

On November 25th, the McMaster University Staff Association (MUSA), who had been granted a CLC Direct Charter (in accordance with the CLC Constitution), held a CLC-supervised vote of its membership decided to join the Canadian Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation and General Workers union of Canada (CAW). In accordance with the CLC's constitution, a directly chartered organization must vote to affiliate to an existing affiliate within three years.

CUPE worked very hard in coordinating a good, solid organizing campaign under very difficult conditions and virtually no membership access. A team of some 30 members are to be commended for their efforts.

Congratulations

Many of you will undoubtedly miss hearing and seeing Brother Medhi Kouhestaninejad, former activist from CUPE Local 3261 and president of the CUPE Toronto District Council at our CUPE events this year. Brother Medhi has just recently accepted a position with the CLC as a National Representative and Project Planner. I know you all join me in wishing him all of the very best as he assumes these responsibilities.

9. World Events

CUPE wants to help

CUPE has risen to the challenge of doing what it does best – supporting people, supporting workers and their families.

Since my last report, unfortunately, three notable natural disasters have hit our world: Hurricane Katrina which has struck New Orleans and Louisiana and surrounding states; Hurricane Stan which has devastated Guatemala and El Salvador; and possibly the most severe of all, the South Asian Earthquake which has hit Pakistan and surrounding countries.

For each one of these, the CUPE National Executive Board has pledged and forwarded financial support on your behalf. Brother Génereux and I are proud of our Union and our chartered organizations' commitment to offering assistance to people and countries in need.

As public service workers, we also raise our hat to salute our counterparts, the many public servants who work relentlessly to re-establish order and essential services. Public services are the backbone to strong and caring communities.

World Trade Organization – WTO Talks

WTO talks resumed in Hong Kong from December 12th to the 17th in the City of Hong Kong, China. CUPE, along with representatives from other Sister unions (NUPGE, CFNU, CAW, UFCW, CUPW and the Quebec Federation of Labour) attended under the auspices of the CLC delegation.

The WTO talks centred on the issue of key U.S. and European agricultural subsidies. Militant farmer activists from various countries such as France and Korea were present and under severe security check. The WTO talks did result in a limited agreement on agricultural subsidies but family farmers throughout the world remain threatened by corporate agricultural interests. Talks will resume in early 2006 and labour and civil society groups will again be present to advance fair trade alternatives.

I participated in demonstrations, rallies, ICFTU Executive Board sessions, ministerial and non-governmental organizations meetings, the actual WTO sessions, and marched through the streets of Hong Kong. One day, our delegation visited the CLC sponsored migrant worker centre in Shenzhen under very tight security measures. It is pretty clear that China's extraordinary economic growth hasn't been shared with Chinese workers.

Throughout, I have been struck by the WTO deliberations and the state's projected image of its current economical strength, versus the very real social inequities in this incredible country. The spirit of their people as they joined to mobilize, often for the fundamentals of human rights, free democratic electoral voting (a demo 200,000 strong), workers' rights, and health and safety issues were nothing short of inspirational.

ICFTU

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) confirmed its support for a merger with the ten million-member World Confederation of Labour to be enacted at the November 2006 Congress in Vienna.

The ICFTU represents 148 million workers from 152 countries around the globe and is guided by enshrined constitutional principles as an organization that aspires to be unifying and pluralistic, representing the world trade union movement.

CUPE is a member through the Canadian Labour Congress affiliation since 1956.

HIV/AIDS Pandemic

As United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Africa for AIDS Stephen Lewis travels across Canada, he reaches out into our hearts as only he knows how to do so well with his passion and his commitment to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa, the unrelenting assault – in fact threat to the very existence of women in some countries – and the basic survival needs of orphaned and ill children.

He has just recently launched his book *Race Against Time*, and speaks to it within Massey Lecture Sessions which are aired throughout Canadian universities and which subsequently will be broadcast on CBC Radio.

I urge each and every one of you to read excerpts or listen in on the broadcasts, to lobby strongly for foreign aid policies, and to possibly consider a generous gift of support to the Stephen Lewis AIDS Foundation (www.stephenlewisfoundation.org).

Third People's Summit of the Americas

From October 29th to November 6th, a 10-person delegation from CUPE participated in two major events in Mar del Plata, Argentina: a PSI conference on the "GATS, FTAA and Health Care in the Americas," and the Third People's Summit of the Americas. Other Canadian unions attending the summit included: USWA, CAW, CLC, QFL, CUPW, OSSTF, FIIQ (Quebec Federation of Nurses), CSQ, and the B.C. Teachers' Federation. The Summit of the Americas talks among the political leaders did not lead to agreement and the FTAA appears to be dead with the United States left to pursue bilateral and multilateral agreements with only some of the countries in the hemisphere.

The CUPE delegation also met several times with the leadership of ATE, our sister union in Argentina. These meetings continued to strengthen our relationship with ATE for the coordination and implementation of a new common training project as well to consolidate plans for the third Health Care Workers' Exchange in Cuba in April – May 2006. We are building a long-term mutually beneficial relationship with ATE to fight against privatization and for public services across the hemisphere.

10. Our Retirees

Our sincere thanks and best wishes go out to the following staff who have indicated their intention to retire:

- Brother Ken Charsley, Atlantic Regional Office (December 1, 2005)
- Sister Beverley Buck, Manitoba Regional Office (December 1, 2005)
- Sister Brenda Léger, Corner Brook Area Office (January 1, 2006)
- Brother Duncan Haslam, Ontario Regional Office (January 1, 2006)
- Brother Bill Dingman, Kelowna Area Office (January 1, 2006)
- Brother Murray Craddock, Manitoba Regional Office (May 1, 2006)

A moment of silence was observed at our CUPE National Executive Board as we were advised of the passing of a CUPE pioneer, John Francis MacMillan to all of us, "Lofty". Lofty became a union member in 1945 (police force of Saint John, N.B.) and eventually became the second national organizing and servicing director in CUPE's history. He was one of the true founding fathers of CUPE, who dedicated his life to the betterment of all working people. Our sympathies to his wife Clara and family.

I also know that many of you have joined me in offering condolences to the family of Brother Barrie Davis who passed away on October 26, 2005. In his last years with CUPE, Brother Davis served as an Assistant Director in Organizing and Regional Services.

As well, our sympathies go out to the family of Al Worrall, representative of Cavan Enterprise who was a well-known face at many of our CUPE conventions and conferences.

11. Closing Remarks – and New Age Technology

As I reported in daily on WTO meetings from China, a "blog" was designed from the cupe.ca web site. (Even I must remain current with new technology!)

I intend to continue regularly reporting or commenting on national and international events and invite you to visit the blog and share with me your comments. Please visit <http://paulmoist.cupe.ca>.

To each of you and your families, my very best wishes for peace and health in the New Year.

In solidarity,

PAUL MOIST
National President

:nr/cope 491