

International Solidarity Report

2008-2009



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Global justice is economic justice

As the economic crisis deepens, CUPE's pledge to build global solidarity is more important than ever. Canadian workers have been hit hard, but the corruption and excess in corporate boardrooms have been harder on those who are the most vulnerable – our sisters and brothers in the global south. The impact of the economic meltdown is compounded in those countries that have seen their public services privatized to the same corporations that are guilty of creating such misery. In tandem with harmful trade agreements and inaction on climate change, millions of the world's citizens are facing extreme poverty.

To alleviate poverty and ensure a future for our children and grandchildren, we need to invest in public services and in clean and green employment, and to work in solidarity with our brothers and sisters across the globe. Access to quality public water, health services and education, food security and sustainable agriculture, and respect for human rights and trade union rights, those are the answers for global economic health – not more bailouts for the wealthy.

As we head toward our 2009 Convention, it is time to reflect on the Global Justice program that was adopted as part of CUPE's Strategic Directions. Last year we stressed the beginning of a new era of global solidarity. CUPE members took that commitment seriously, and you will see in this report that we are moving forward.



Colombian opposition party Senator Jorge Enrique Robledo visits Canada.

We can all be proud of the work we have done. We established clear objectives and have made good progress in our goals. It is a great start – and there is so much more to be done. We are committed to continuing on this road. Building a global movement is a huge challenge. With our allies here in Canada and our partner unions around the world, we will succeed.

Paul Moist
National President

Claude Généreux
National Secretary-Treasurer

Standing with our sisters and brothers in Colombia

In Colombia, a country that is the worst human rights violator in the Americas, CUPE has focused on solidarity work with unionists and their community allies. Since an initial solidarity tour in 2001, CUPE has worked hard to get the message to Canadians about the horrific circumstances facing any Colombian who works for social justice.

More trade unionists are assassinated in Colombia than any other country in the world – 2,694 have been assassinated over the last 23 years. In 2008 alone, under the Uribe presidency, 46 trade unionists were assassinated, 157 threatened, 15 arbitrarily detained, 13 taken hostage and four disappeared. The repression and violence are carried out primarily by the paramilitary that, with clear ties to the government, has operated with almost complete impunity.

At the same time, the Colombian government, in collaboration with large

corporations, has set out to privatize the entire public sector, and to open up lands held in common by indigenous communities to corporate exploitation. Millions of people have been forced off the land and into vast slums.

Canadian union leaders' tour

Aware of the dangers for trade unions in Colombia, and the harm that unregulated corporate exploitation was causing elsewhere under free trade agreements, Canadian public sector union leaders, including National President Paul Moist, toured Colombia July 18-25, 2008.

During their tour, the leaders learned first-hand about the violation of human and labour rights, working conditions, and the impacts of privatization. They attended important meetings with leaders of the United Workers Central (CUT), members of the opposition Polo Democratico Alternativo, leaders of



In a poor community above Medellin, Colombia.



indigenous organizations, several non-governmental organizations, representatives of Afro-Colombian peoples, and activists in communities of displaced peoples. They also took the opportunity to raise concerns with representatives of many sectors of Colombian society, including the Colombian Minister of the Interior and other government officials, and the Canadian ambassador.

The leaders pledged to act as these groups' voice in Canada, to tell Canadians what is really happening to their country, and to call out for justice and a democracy free of paramilitary death squads and corporate exploitation. A report on what they learned, called "Forever Solidarity," is available online at <http://cupe.ca/global-justice/Forever-Solidarity>.

Young Colombian unionist tours Canada

While Canadian union leaders were touring Colombia, Maria Fernanda Bolaños, a Colombian municipal worker, visited Canada from July 15 to August 15, 2008. Her tour was organized by CUPE on behalf of the Frontlines group, a coalition of public sector unions dedicated to working with frontline service unions in Colombian.

Sister Bolaños' union, SINTRAEMSIRVA, represents about 450 waste management workers in Cali, Colombia. The 34-year old single mother described her experience of being under threat from paramilitary groups for her outspoken trade union activism in meetings with politicians, union leaders, municipal workers, media reporters and others.

Sadly, on March 26, 2009, the workers at EMSIRVA were forcibly removed from their workplaces and barred from re-entering by anti-riot police. The members' protests were met with tear



Sister Maria Fernanda Bolaños with Jim Daily (CUPE 825) in B.C.



Colombian union leaders Carlos Gonzalez and Maria Victoria Erazo.

gas, batons and water cannons. Liquidation of the public sector company is now complete, and all union members have lost their jobs.

The campaign continues

Since the leaders' tour, CUPE has joined the Canadian Labour Congress campaign opposing the Canada – Colombia Free Trade Agreement, and has been involved with an ongoing campaign to educate and lobby federal Members of Parliament.

In March 2009, solidarity between Canadian and Colombian unions and progressive community organizations was key to paving the way for Jorge Enrique Robledo to come to Canada to speak to the parliamentary sub-committee on trade. Robledo is a member of the Polo Democratico Alternativo and the National Senate in Colombia. He also addressed the CUPE National Executive Board on the importance of continuing to campaign against the Canada – Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

Joint commentary by Canadian union leaders

Colombia, July 2008

“We visited the slums of Cali, known as Agua Blanca (White Water), and the hillside shanty town of La Onda high above Medellin. There we saw abject poverty created by political and corporate decisions in far-off countries, decisions that have been condoned by the Colombian government and that often fuel the armed conflict that has plagued the country for 50 years.

“Colombia continues to be the most dangerous country on earth for trade unionists and civil society activists. Colombia has no meaningful legal framework that permits free collective bargaining. The result is that more than 95 per cent of the public sector workforce has no enforceable collective bargaining rights.

“In our view, the Canada – Colombia Free Trade Agreement can only convey the opposite of hope for the majority of the 45 million Colombians. It must not be implemented.”

NOMADESC and CUPE support Colombian sugar workers

The Global Justice Fund and CUPE BC have supported the work of NOMADESC, based in Cali, Colombia, since 2001. The goal of NOMADESC is to promote and defend human and labour rights among trade union members and the broader community, with a focus on fighting the privatization of public services.

Currently NOMADESC is working with the graduates of the human rights diploma program in a Human Rights Network in the southwest region of Colombia. The network includes leaders from the labour movement, indigenous communities, Afro-Colombian communities, student groups, human rights groups, women's organizations and others.

In 2008, NOMADESC was involved in supporting two critical initiatives for

peace and justice in Colombia: the sugar workers' strike, and a popular "minga" to get the government to respect the rights of indigenous peoples. A minga is an ancestral custom of the indigenous peoples of the Andes, a collective effort for the purpose of achieving a common goal.

When they were in Colombia last July, CUPE National President Paul Moist and CoDevelopment Canada staffperson Barbara Wood met with four leaders of the emerging sugar workers' union. The sugar workers were facing major obstacles in their goal to unionize. As in other sectors of the economy, Colombian sugar workers have been forced to join labour cooperatives in order to obtain work. Widely seen as a government strategy to break the union movement and get around labour code protections, the labour cooperatives make organizing extremely difficult.



Meeting with sugar cane-cutter union leaders near Cali, Colombia.

Making a difference with the Global Justice Fund

Like our work in Colombia, CUPE has chosen to raise our voice in support of workers and activists around the world, challenging governments that abuse human rights. We are very proud to have started to support sisters and brothers in the Philippines and Burma in 2008.

Human rights in the Philippines: A worker-to-worker solidarity exchange

Public sector workers in the Philippines are on the front lines in the struggle against privatization of public services. But in the Philippines this fight exposes union activists to political repression, threats, even abductions and killings. The 2008 annual survey of violations of trade union rights, conducted by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, states that “the Philippines continues to be one of the world’s worst offenders in the numbers of murders, abductions, arrests and imprisonment of trade unionists.”

With assistance from CUPE National’s Global Justice Fund, CUPE 4600 at

Carleton University and its community partner, the Ontario Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines, have strengthened their relationship of support and solidarity with the Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees (COURAGE) and the Alliance of Concerned Teachers-Philippines (ACT). Philippine workers toured Canada in May 2008, meeting with CUPE members from coast to coast, and a tour of CUPE members to the Philippines is being planned.



The goal of this project is to establish an ongoing and sustainable partnership with both ACT and COURAGE, through the sharing of ideas and campaigns that affect public sector workers on a global scale. The relationships will help to expose the threats faced by these organizations in their struggle for the rights of working people.



Protesting the privatization of public services and union-busting in the Philippines.



Kelly Scarrow (CUSO-VSO), with members of the Burma Issues Video Project.

Building capacity of human rights defenders from Burma

Burma has been ruled by a succession of dictatorships since 1962, making it into one of the poorest countries in Asia. The actions of the current military dictatorship have led to widespread human rights abuses and displacement of many hundreds of thousands of people, mainly ethnic minorities. There are an estimated 130,000 registered refugees and 1,350,000 undocumented migrants in Thailand, and a further 500,000 internally displaced people in eastern Burma, some of whom have been in refugee camps for over 20 years.

Ethnic minorities have responded by organizing themselves into community-based organizations with bases in northern Thailand. CUPE is supporting a project, in cooperation with CUSO-VSO, to bring together eight of these organizations for training and mentoring so that they can improve their ability to advocate on behalf of Burmese refugees, illegal migrants and displaced peoples inside Burma. Workshops and training will be provided through the Human Rights Education Institute of

Burma (HREIB), a non-profit organization based in Thailand. Members of these eight organizations will have the opportunity to develop advocacy strategies and deepen their understanding of human rights and international law. They will also build their skills in research and documentation as well as lobbying.

Que viva Cuba! A solidarity visit to Cuba

The Cuban National Union of Public Administration Workers (SNTAP) held its 9th National Congress in Havana, December 3-5, 2008. SNTAP represents 64,000 workers in the Cuban federal ministries, public energy, municipalities, courts and banking sector. Hundreds of these workers have been through training courses with CUPE support. For the first time, CUPE leaders – CUPE National President Paul Moist, CUPE National Secretary-Treasurer Claude Généreux, CUPE BC President Barry O'Neill and CUPE Quebec President Lucie Levasseur – were invited to attend the meeting.

Beginning with CUPE BC's initial steward training project over a decade ago, CUPE National was quick to understand the value of supporting our Cuban brothers

and sisters, and the project soon expanded, with funding from CUPE National's Global Justice Fund.

Brother Moist's solidarity greetings touched on closing the Guantanamo Bay military prison, freeing the Cuban Five and ending the U.S. economic embargo of Cuba, and praised the strength of the Cuban people. The 300-plus workers assembled in the convention centre outside Havana rose to their feet several times, applauding his words of solidarity.

Radio Libertad, Guatemala

The community radio station *Radio Libertad* is run by a group of mostly young people from a campesino community in the northernmost state of Petén, Guatemala. During 2008, *Radio Libertad* participated in important events at the national and international level.

Radio Libertad was the only independent media group covering the 3rd National Meeting for People Affected and Threatened by Hydroelectric Dams held in La Taña, Quiché, Guatemala April 22–24, 2008. An FM transmitter was installed to guarantee live coverage of the event so that people in the area could tune in to the discussions and debates around hydroelectric dams, and proposals regarding more sustainable development.

CUPE National's Global Justice Fund helped *Radio Libertad* improve broadcasting coverage, upgrade equipment and improve the electric system in the radio studio. Finishing touches are underway to fully resume regular programming.



CUPE leaders at the SNTAP Congress.

Solidarity with maquila workers in Central America

In Nicaragua, CUPE National's Global Justice Fund and CUPE BC continue to provide support for vital work defending *maquila* workers rights, working with the Maria Elena Cuadra Movement of Employed and Unemployed Women. The Mediation and Conflict Resolution Centre provided legal advice and support to 730 individual cases of workers rights' violations. As well, the Centre was able to resolve two collective labour rights cases, assisting a total of 3,307 individuals. Workshops on legal rights were also provided to workers in the Managua area.

The Hospital Employees' Union (HEU), with assistance from CUPE National's Global Justice Fund, supported several projects in Central America:

- In San Pedro Sula, the Honduran Women's Collective (CODEMUH) continued its direct health work with women *maquila* workers, and mounted an extensive educational campaign. As well, CODEMUH developed a proposal for reform of the Honduran Labour

Code. After many meetings powered by the workers themselves, a member of the National Congress formally introduced the proposed reforms in March, with 35 endorsing signatures from other Congress representatives.

- The Central American Women's Network in Solidarity with Maquila Workers focuses on regional women's and labour rights. As a result of their efforts, individual women are better able to communicate regional issues to colleagues in their communities, understand the importance of an organization that is defending their rights, and influence the democratic policy-making process from the grassroots.

South African Municipal Workers Organize Privatized Workers

Leaders in the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) have been grappling with the problem of organizing workers in services that have been privatized. A project, co-sponsored by CUPE, has focused on marginalized women workers employed in low-paid jobs like street cleaning.

Organizing workers in privatized municipal services is a huge challenge for

the South African labour movement. The official unemployment rate is around 40 per cent, and an estimated one million people are employed through a labour broker system. Labour brokers are companies that recruit and send workers to work for private contractors, in some cases through more than one broker, making it extremely difficult to identify the actual employer.

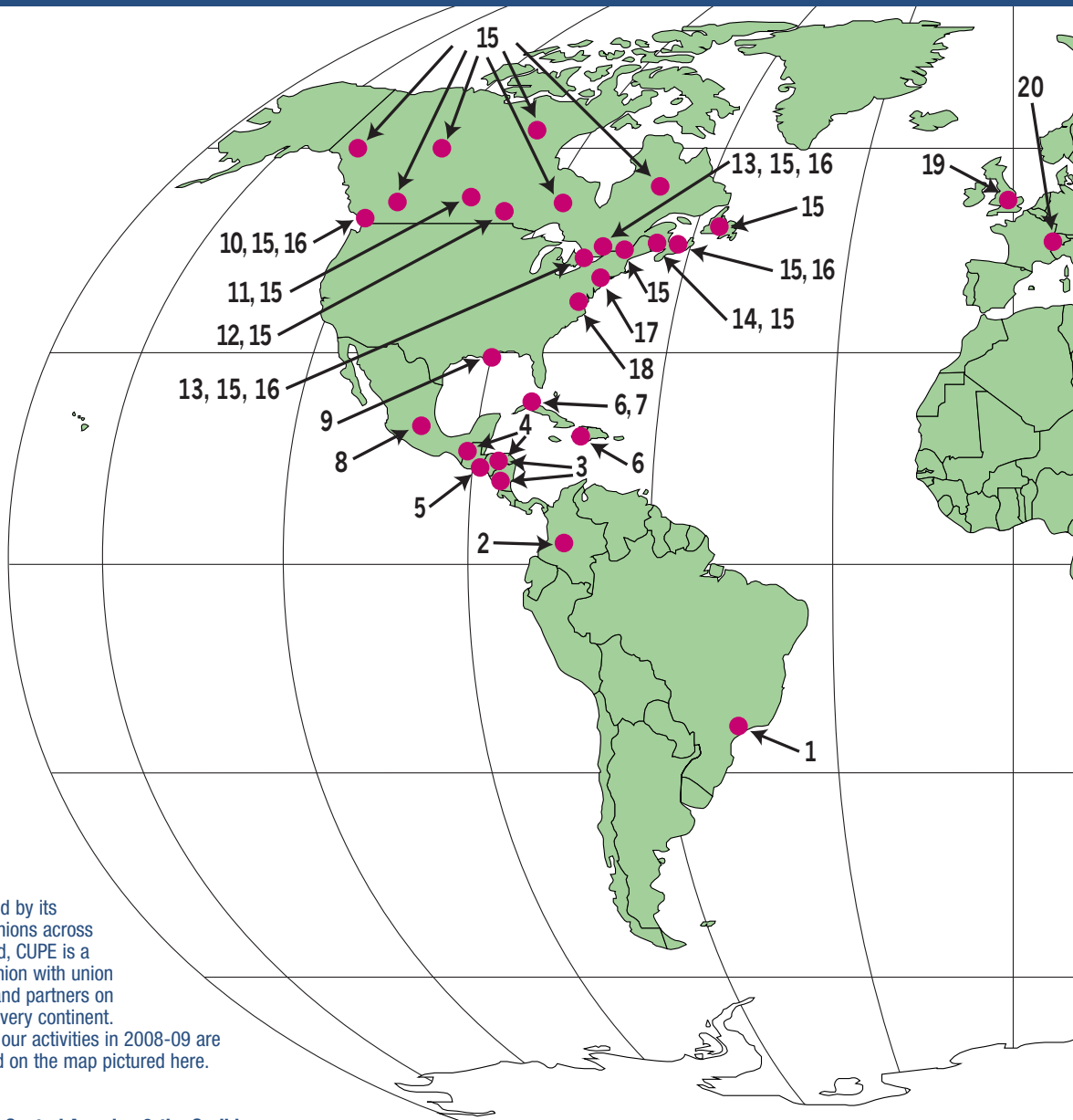
Despite these severe challenges, SAMWU activists are determined to protect the workers and bring the services back to the municipalities. In March 2009, CUPE National International Solidarity Officer Rhonda Spence joined SAMWU activists. Over the course of three days, they developed detailed and practical organizing plans. In some provinces, organizers have already made inroads, with contracted workers joining the union and, in some instances, the work has been brought back in-house.

CUPE members will be watching the SAMWU campaign closely – to learn what works and what doesn't – so that we can take the lessons learned by our South African sisters and brothers and apply them to our situation in Canada.



SAMWU members planning their campaign to organize privatized workers.

World map of CUPE solidarity



Measured by its ties to unions across the world, CUPE is a global union with union friends and partners on almost every continent. Many of our activities in 2008-09 are indicated on the map pictured here.

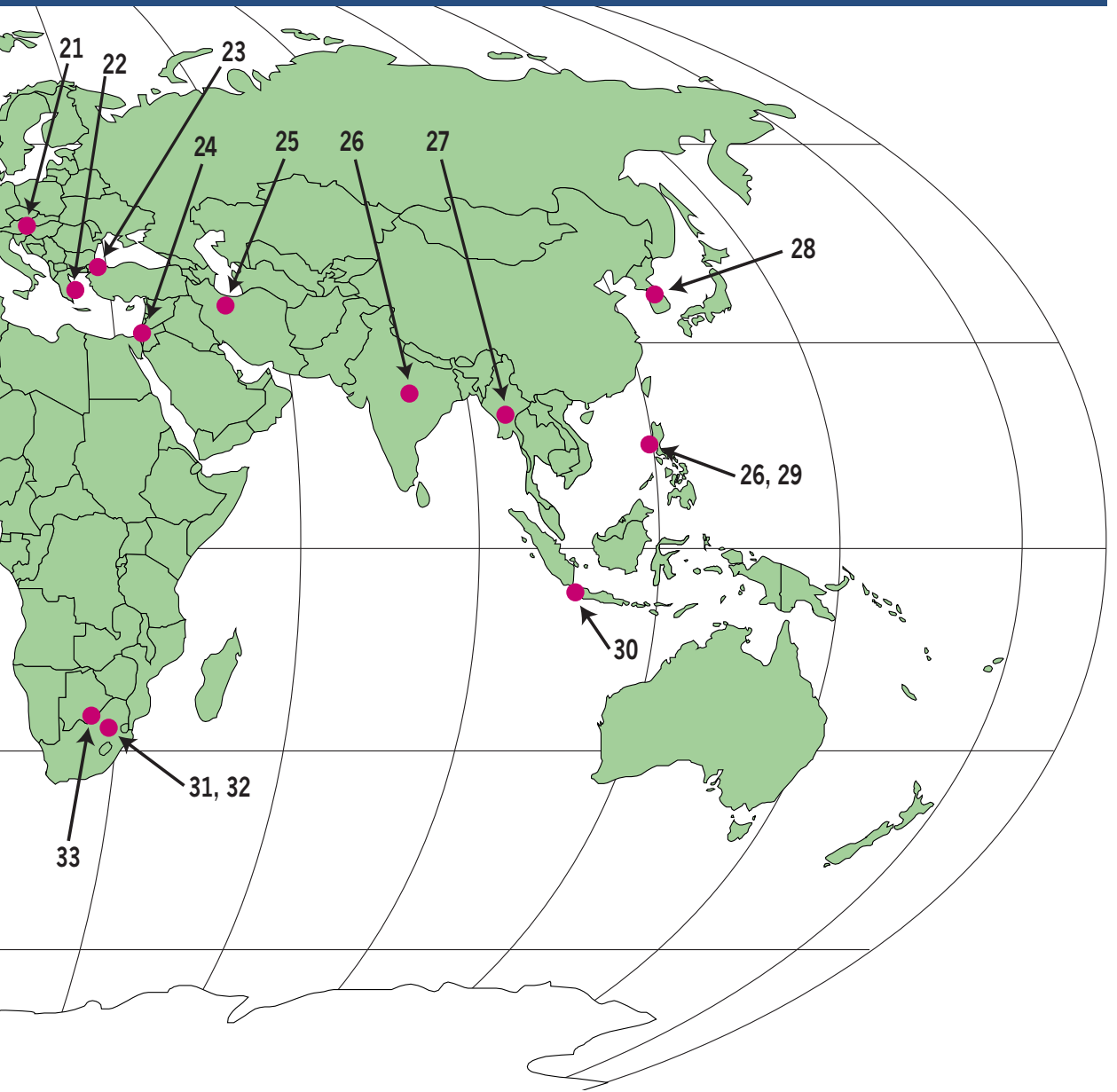
South & Central America & the Caribbean

1. Brazil: PSI Inter-Américas health sector meeting
2. Colombia: leaders' tour, supporting sugar workers' strike
3. Central America: supporting *maquila* workers
4. Guatemala & Honduras: assisting *Radio Libertad*
5. El Salvador: contributing to human rights relief fund
6. Haiti & Cuba: donations for hurricane relief
7. Cuba: solidarity greetings at SNTAP Congress

North America

8. Mexico: opposing privatization of state-owned petroleum company & NAFTA, international AIDS conference, tri-national energy meeting, supporting *maquila* workers
9. New Orleans: strategizing against the SPP and NAFTA

10. B.C.: supporting international solidarity work in Colombia, Cuba & Central America
11. Sask.: supporting partnerships in Colombia
12. Man.: raising money for HIV/AIDS in Africa
13. Ont.: visit from Haitian labour leader Paul "Loulou" Chéry, supporting international solidarity work in Palestine, Sri Lanka, Venezuela & Bolivia
14. N.B.: visit from Jesus Brodero of Colombian Miners Union
15. Nationwide: campaign against Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement
16. Nationwide: Maria Fernanda Bolaños education tour
17. New York: participation in U.N. Commission of the Status of Women discussions on HIV/AIDS
18. Washington, DC: good jobs, green jobs conference



Europe

- 19. U.K.: supporting striking UNISON members
- 20. Switzerland: PSI pension forum, U.N. Durban review conference, transportation meeting
- 21. Austria: ILGA conference
- 22. Greece: Socialist International Congress
- 23. Turkey: World Water Forum

Middle East & Asia

- 24. Gaza: emergency assistance to Palestinians
- 25. Iran: protesting whippings and unjust jail terms for trade unionists
- 26. India & Philippines: supporting Maquila Solidarity Network

27. Burma: training and mentoring activists to work with displaced ethnic minorities

28. South Korea: protesting repression of the Korean Federation of Trade Unions

29. Philippines: partnering with government employees and teachers

30. Indonesia: protested treatment of striking airport services workers

Africa

31. South Africa: planning to organize the privatized

32. South Africa: supporting striking SAMWU workers

33. Botswana: training in job evaluation and fair and equitable compensation practices

Working together to build an international movement

CUPE knows that opportunities to gather with other trade union and social justice activists from other countries are essential to building a global movement for social justice. Face to face, we learn from each other, and strengthen our collective will and ability to make positive change.

World Water Forum

In March 2009, CUPE joined trade unionists and other activists from around the world to oppose the 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul, Turkey. The Forum, a trade fair for water privateers, is organized by the unelected and unaccountable World Water Council. High registration fees, a tightly controlled agenda, and repression of protesters by Turkish police meant grassroots voices were all but frozen out.

In spite of these challenges, Public Services International (PSI) was able to take a delegation of more than 50 members to the Forum to be a voice for workers and civil society. The PSI delegation included CUPE Manitoba President Kevin Rebeck, CUPE 1978 Victoria water campaigner Kim Manton, and CUPE National Representatives Rhonda Spence and Karin Jordan.



Leaders speak out at the People's Water Forum.

As part of the PSI delegation, CUPE helped expose the forum's bankrupt agenda of privatization, and added Canadian labour's voice to the call that water policies be decided in a transparent, open and participatory space. The CUPE representatives stepped in as needed, providing both the PSI delegation and NGO community with facilitation, media work, logistics and other support.

Our union also worked with the Council of Canadians and Polaris Institute to deliver a message to Canadian government representatives at the forum: recognize the right to water in the Forum's ministerial declaration, and make global decisions about water under the United Nations framework.

CUPE worked closely with water justice activists over the course of the week, attending nightly strategy sessions, and helping plan and execute a very successful alternative event, dubbed the "People's Water Forum." The event showcased success stories of public and community-led water governance structures, and application of local indigenous water conservation techniques and other smaller-scale, low technology, public alternatives to the policies promoted by the World Water Forum. The People's Water Forum adopted a declaration mapping out a future where public water and sanitation services are a human right for all.

Over the week, workers shared stories that showed growing momentum around public-public partnerships, where utilities and workers pool resources and expertise across cities and continents, as the way forward for public water.

After a jam-packed week of activities inside the official Forum and at numerous alternative events, CUPE has strengthened and deepened its



Kim Manton (CUPE 1978, right) and Rhonda Spence (CUPE National) join protests at the World Water Forum.

connections to the global water justice movement. The week ended on a high note for water justice activists when more than 20 countries challenged the World Water Forum's ministerial declaration by signing a counter declaration defining water as a human right.

Sharing experience and information

- **CUPE joins New Orleans "People's Summit":** A CUPE delegation of Brian Koski (CUPE 38), Catherine Bert (CUPE 4250), Pauline Niles (CUPE 1), National Secretary-Treasurer Claude Généreux, and CUPE National Representatives Carol Proulx and Blair Redlin participated in the summit in April 2008, arguing that the expansion of NAFTA under the Security and Prosperity Partnership agreement would increase free trade and militarization throughout the continent.
- **Workers' vision for energy security:** CUPE participated in the 3rd Tri-National Summit of Energy Workers, in Mexico City, March 16–18, 2009, joining allied unions in the United States and Mexico.

Members of the CUPE delegation were Hydro-Québec worker Catherine Bert (CUPE 4250), CUPE National Representative Corina Crawley, and Carleen Pickard from the Council of Canadians. The concluding declaration of the summit highlighted concerns about NAFTA, energy privatization, environmental protection, the need for further democratizing Mexico's labour movement, and the Canadian and Mexican governments' responses to the economic crisis.

- **Bolivia solidarity:** CUPE assisted the Bolivia Solidarity Committee in its January 2009 mission to Bolivia to observe and record the momentous occasion on the vote for a new constitution. The project was sponsored by eight organizations including CUPE National, CUPE Ontario's International Solidarity Committee and CUPE 4400. The group interviewed ordinary citizens about the proposed new constitution, and met with important leaders in the Morales government, the Central Obrera Boliviana (the chief trade union in Bolivia, representing about two million workers), the Confederation of Indigenous People of Bolivia and others.

Building common purpose

• **Public Services International Inter-American Health Sector Meeting:**

Norma Robinson (CUPE 1252) and Serge Lalonde, CUPE National staff, attended the August 2008 meeting in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Delegates from several countries in the Americas met to discuss quality public health services, regional network building, violence in the workplace, trade union rights in the health sector and the problem with migration of health professionals from poor countries to rich countries.

• **XVII International Aids Conference:**

Gerry Lavallée (CUPE National Pink Triangle Committee, CUPE 4092) and Roger Procyk (CUPE National Aboriginal Council, CUPE 2348) attended the conference in Mexico City in August 2008. They met with medical professionals, community health workers and activists to discuss the challenges in the global response to HIV/AIDS.

• **International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Conference:**

Kathy MacDonald (CUPE National Pink Triangle committee, CUPE 2343) and Gary Day, CUPE National staff attended the conference in November 2008 in Vienna. Delegates moved international organizing forward by creating an international entity, and established a Trans Secretariat.

• **PSI Pension Forum:**

Judy Henley (CUPE National Advisory Committee on Pensions, CUPE 4980) and Gary Johnson, CUPE National staff met with other PSI pension activists in Geneva in November 2008. The delegates put together a comprehensive action plan for PSI, including: global and regional support to assist affiliates to improve pension systems, an education program for trustees and directors on pension fund boards, and ways that affiliated unions can take action in their own countries to improve pensions.

• **Good Jobs, Green Jobs:** Robert Coelho (CUPE National Environment Committee, CUPE 3904) attended a conference on green jobs, forging green job policies and building alliances in February 2009 in Washington DC. The conference gathered more than 2,500 participants from labour, business, academia and environmental and social justice organizations.

• **U.N. Durban Review conference:** Yolanda McClean (CUPE 4400) and Brian Barron (CUPE 500), Diversity Vice-Presidents on the National Executive Board, and CUPE Equality Representative Harminder Magon, were part of a large international labour delegation at the conference in Geneva in April 2009. Labour called upon member states to use the decent work campaign as a tool to combat all forms of discrimination. Brother Barron addressed the U.N. Human Rights Commission, and spoke eloquently of the situation facing Canada's First Nations. The final Labour statement noted that certain vulnerable groups had not received adequate attention, specifically those who are discriminated against for reasons of cast, sexual orientation or gender.



Catherine Bert (CUPE 4250) speaks about public energy in Mexico City.

Solidarity = Action

CUPE members take action in times of crisis. The list of international solidarity donations and letters of solidarity and protest from CUPE locals, Provincial Divisions and CUPE National is long, reflecting the true spirit of generosity of CUPE members.

- **Emergency assistance for Palestinians in Gaza:** CUPE National donated \$10,000 to the appeal from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions to provide emergency assistance – medical supplies and other essentials – to Palestinians living in Gaza. The aid was shipped through the International Transport Workers' Federation, in cooperation with the Palestine Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU).
- **Fighting HIV/AIDS in Africa:** The CUPE Manitoba Global Justice Committee collaborated with community groups such as Friends of Uganda to host a dinner in October for 400 people. The funds raised will address the impact of HIV and AIDS on people in Africa, through the Stephen Lewis Foundation. Other provincial divisions and CUPE National make regular contributions to the Foundation.
- **Hurricane relief for Haiti and Cuba:** In early September 2008, the islands of Cuba and Haiti were pummeled with two Category 4 hurricanes that harmed significant numbers of people. CUPE National contributed \$15,000 through Oxfam-Quebec for relief in Haiti and

\$15,000 through CoDevelopment Canada in its appeal from our sister union in Cuba, the National Union of Public Sector Workers (SNTAP).

- **Condemning killings in Egypt:** CUPE condemned the police killings and arrests of textile workers on strike at a large factory in El-Mahalla in the Nile Delta, in a letter to the president of Egypt sent in April 2008. CUPE urged President Hosni Mubarak to stop the attacks on citizens and workers, release political prisoners and "guarantee citizens' democratic rights to gather, strike and protest."
- **Supporting strike action in South Africa:** CUPE sent a strong message of support to striking workers in Lesedi, South Africa, in May 2008. The 300 workers, members of the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU), faced picket line violence in a three-month battle for fair wages.



PSI

Public Services International



Quality Public Services for All!

www.world-psi.org

- **Marking Public Services Day worldwide:** CUPE joined Oxfam International, Education International and Public Services International to mark Public Service Day on June 23, 2008. The organizations called on world leaders to find the funds for the tens of millions of health workers and teachers needed worldwide to deliver quality public health and education for all.



- **Solidarity for UNISON strikers:** CUPE sent a message of support and solidarity during a nationwide strike of

municipal workers July 16-17, 2008 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The strike affected 600,000 social workers, librarians, school-meals workers, refuse collectors, surveyors and teaching assistants.

- **CUPE leaders respond to Iran's lashing sentences:** News of whippings and unjust jail terms for Iranian trade unionists prompted CUPE to write again to the president of Iran in August 2008. "The arrests and other actions are an attack on working people everywhere," the letter said. "We urge you to repeal all charges and sentences against labour activists in Iran." The letter also called for the release of Mansour Osanloo, the president of the bus workers' union, who has been in prison since July 2007, serving a five-year sentence for his union activism.
- **Protesting South Korean government arrests of unionists:** CUPE National leaders wrote to the president and police commissioner of South Korea on August 7, 2008 to protest the arrest warrants issued against the top leaders of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, as well as leaders of affiliated unions. The alleged crime of these union leaders was their call for a general strike in early July.

On the home front

CUPE members know that international solidarity work happens in Canada, too. Whether we vote to contribute to the Global Justice Fund, learn from our sisters and brothers in the south, or pressure our own government to improve our international record, we build solidarity.

National efforts

- **Partners in solidarity:** CUPE National made donations to two of its partners, CoDev Canada and Oxfam. CoDev has invested the \$100,000, and will use the interest each year to fund a campaign to defend public services by one of its partners in the global south. Oxfam will target the \$83,240 to continue promoting women's access to public services, water, health and education.

- **"Footprints for Change" campaign:**



CUPE's joint campaign with OXFAM, "Footprints for Change," drew attention to climate change, the number

one threat to human development, and a threat that hits the world's poorest, women especially, first and worst. If global temperatures rise 3°C, up to 600 million more people will face the risk of starvation, and water shortages can affect up to four billion people. At CUPE Division conventions, visitors to the Global Justice booth sent the Canadian government a message about how they individually would do their bit and how they expected the government to do the same.



Colombian union leader Jesus Brodero of the Colombian Miners Union, with CUPE NB President Daniel Légère (left) and NB Federation of Labour President Michel Boudreau (right).

- **Haitian union leader meets CUPE activists:** CUPE 4600 members (Carleton University TAs and contract instructors) met with Haitian labour leader Paul "Loulou" Chéry in Ottawa in June 2008 to discuss the challenge of trying to rebuild a labour movement within an economy that has 70 per cent unemployment. Chéry also met with CUPE members while he attended the Canadian Labour Congress convention in Toronto in May 2008.
- **CUPE debates global issues at CLC:** Global justice played a notable role at the 25th Canadian Labour Congress convention in Toronto in May 2008. Among the issues debated were CUPE resolutions on ending the war in Afghanistan, stopping free trade negotiations with Colombia, fighting human rights abuses in the Philippines, freeing the Cuban Five, and concerns about Canadian pension fund investments that are propping up the military junta in Burma.



CUPE Manitoba Global Justice Committee members with sisters and brothers from FENTAP in Lima, Peru.

Provincial actions

- Number of Global Justice committees growing:** CUPE Quebec, CUPE Newfoundland and Labrador and CUPE New Brunswick each voted to create a new standing committee on global justice at their annual conventions.
- CUPE NB says “no” to free trade in Colombia:** CUPE New Brunswick hosted Jesus Brochero of the National Colombia Miners Union in November 2008 as part of the campaign denouncing the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement.
- Education key on PEI:** The PEI Global Justice committee is up and running and has been active in promoting education on international issues by co-sponsoring the screening of a number of films. International Development Week focused on Mexico, and World Water Day was marked with the showing of the film *Flow*.
- Standing together for global sustainability:** The four CUPE National Global Justice Committee members from the Atlantic and Maritime regions are requesting that their provincial organizations join the Atlantic Council for International Cooperation, an umbrella group of organizations working for global justice.
- CUPE Ontario active around the world:** Ontario’s International Solidarity Committee actively supported several campaigns this year, including: the Palestine/Israel Peace Initiative with the Independent Jewish Voices (Canada), and Sri Lankan peace and solidarity through the Canadian Peace Alliance. It has also organized community events in support of both the Venezuelan and Bolivian social movements.

- **Manitoba making connections in Peru:** Several members of the CUPE Manitoba Global Justice committee – Dave Brown (CUPE 1063), Diana Ludwick (CUPE 2348), Zeeba Loxley (CUPE 2348, retired), Sue Roth (CUPE 1063) and Zully Trujillo (CUPE 2153) – visited Peru in April 2008. While there, they met with FENTAP, which is successfully fighting the privatization of municipal water systems and building coalitions to ensure all have access to clean water.

- **Manitoba support for the national fund:** Delegates at the 45th CUPE Manitoba Division convention held in Brandon, MB, on April 23-26, 2008 resolved to “encourage all locals to submit one cent per member per day (\$3.65 per member per year)” to the national fund.

- **Colombia-Saskatchewan partnership:** Members of CUPE 5111, Riverheights Lodge, Prairie North Regional Health Authority, have contributed \$1,000 to support the work of NOMADESC in Colombia. They are encouraging other locals in Saskatchewan to contribute as well.



Thanks to retired HEU President Fred Muzin for his 15 years as the NEB liaison to the Global Justice Committee.

- **A voice for migrant workers in Alberta:** With large numbers of Temporary Foreign Workers brought into Alberta to work in the energy sector, CUPE Alberta has been speaking up for the rights of these migrant workers. At the Alberta convention in March 2009, delegates raised close to \$1,000 for the Global Justice Fund. Special thanks to Marle Roberts from CUPE 46 in Medicine Hat, who donated half of her winnings from the 50/50 draw.



- **Continued solidarity efforts in British Columbia:** CUPE BC and HEU have long been active in international solidarity work, with NOMADESC in Colombia, MEC in Nicaragua, CODEMUH in Honduras, SNTAP in Cuba, and with the Central America Maquila Network.



MEC Nicaragua

Justice and fairness: we're part of a global struggle

CUPE members have taken up the challenge to work for social justice at home and around the world. Our support for global justice and for international solidarity continues to grow. The level of activity by members, locals, provincial divisions and our national union has been commendable. We have been creative and strategic in our approach, and this has paid off. Members are excited about the work and willing to get involved, whether taking action with sisters and brothers in other countries, educating ourselves and our communities, or contributing to the Global Justice Fund.

Over the next year times will be difficult. The repercussions of the global economic crisis will start to affect CUPE members in their workplaces. We will need to support each other as never before to ensure that the vital public services that

we provide are protected. And we will need to stand up together should our employers look for a quick fix by attacking the benefits we have worked so hard to achieve.

When we go to the bargaining table to work to improve the lives of CUPE members, we go with a true sense of working for a better world for all. When we stand up, we are not just standing up for ourselves, but we are standing up for workers across the globe. Our belief in public services, equality and fairness extends well beyond individual CUPE members. Global problems demand global solutions, and it is working women and men who will be there to make the difference. A strong public sector is part of that solution, and CUPE will continue to take leadership at home and internationally to make it a reality.



CUPE National Global Justice Committee.

Members make an international difference

Members support the Global Justice Fund

Essential to our international solidarity work are the financial contributions CUPE can make to projects, thanks to the Global Justice Fund. Many CUPE members donated to the fund in 2008, showing their dedication to international solidarity, and their commitment to supporting the efforts of our trade union sisters and brothers around the world. We thank the following donors from 2008:

Individual CUPE members

CUPE staff

CUPE 374, Town of Sidney, Victoria, B.C.

CUPE 488, Western Memorial Regional Hospital, Corner Brook, Nfld. & Lab.

CUPE 569, City of St. John's (Manual), St. John's, Nfld. & Lab.

CUPE 709, City of Calgary (Foremen), Calgary, Alta.

CUPE 947, Greater Victoria School District #61 (inside workers), Victoria, B.C.

CUPE 974, Saskatoon Community Clinic, Sask.

CUPE 1174, Police and Fire Staff, Summerside and Kensington, P.E.I.

CUPE 1480, Limestone District School Board, Kingston, Ont.

CUPE 1860, University of Prince Edward Island staff, Charlottetown, P.E.I.

CUPE 1870, University of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, P.E.I.

CUPE 1876 Northside Community Guest Home, North Sydney, N.S.

CUPE 2019, Town of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Nfld. & Lab.

CUPE 2033, Eastern School District, Fortune, Nfld. & Lab.

CUPE 2305, Metro Community Housing Association, Halifax, N.S.

CUPE 2440, CUSO-VSO Canada

CUPE 2722 Oxfam Canada

CUPE 3008, Resi-Care Cape Breton Association, Sydney, N.S.

CUPE 3012, Saskatchewan Council for International Co-Operation, Regina, Sask.

CUPE 3067, New Dawn Guest Home, Sydney, N.S.

CUPE 3148, Corner Brook/Deer Lake/St. Barbe School District #3, Corner Brook, Nfld. & Lab.

CUPE 3479, North Island College, Courtenay, B.C.

CUPE 3912, Dalhousie St. Mary's and Mount St. Vincent Universities, Halifax, N.S.

CUPE 3963 Cooperative Health Centre, Prince Albert, Sask.

CUPE 4150, Western Regional Health Board, Kentville, N.S.

CUPE 4557, KAIROS (Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives), Toronto, Ont.

National Global Justice Committee 2007–2009

Jeanne Clarke, Newfoundland and Labrador (CUPE 1860); Barbara Moore, Co-chair, Nova Scotia (CUPE 3912); Maciej (Matthew) Zawadski, Prince Edward Island (CUPE 1870); Marian White, Prince Edward Island, CUSO-VSO (CUPE 2440); Serge Landry, New Brunswick (CUPE 2079); Ginette Paul, Quebec (CUPE 2000); Claude Arsenaault, Quebec (CUPE 2000); Edgar Godoy, Ontario (CUPE 2191); Denise Hammond, Ontario (CUPE 1281); Don Cockburn, Ontario, CUSO-VSO (CUPE 2440); Denyse Lambert,

Manitoba (CUPE 500); Vickie Angell-Scheler, Saskatchewan (CUPE 5111); Darrell Symbaluk, Alberta (CUPE 941); Doug Sprenger, Co-chair, British Columbia (CUPE 951); Barbara Wood, British Columbia (CUPE 1004); Miriam C. Palacios, British Columbia (CUPE 2722); Carol Bunch, Hospital Employees' Union; Fred Muzin, Hospital Employees' Union; Ricardo Miranda, Airline Division, Alberta; Ron Verzuh and Rhonda Spence, staff advisors.

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international
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