



APRIL 28 ACROSS THE COUNTRY



National Secretary-Treasurer Claude Généreux addresses the crowd at the Day of Mourning Ceremony in Dauphin, Manitoba.



National President Paul Moist and CUPE B.C. President Barry O'Neill lead the Day of Mourning March in Vancouver, B.C.

The Canadian flag on the Peace Tower flew at half-mast on April 28 to honour workers who have been killed on the job. And from coast to coast to coast CUPE members gathered to pay respect to the fallen and protest against Canada's failed health and safety record.

"It is a day to mourn and to acknowledge that each worker's death is not only a tragedy for families," said Paul Moist, CUPE's national president. "It is a tragedy for co-workers and for all of society."

Events across the country marking April 28th included:

- Paul Moist and CUPE B.C. President Barry O'Neill marched with hundreds of CUPE members in Vancouver. Marchers carried 188 caskets representing workers who were killed on the job last year in B.C.;
- Claude Généreux, CUPE Secretary-Treasurer, addressed delegates in Dauphin at the Manitoba division convention and attendees at a commemorative ceremony at Dauphin City Hall;
- In Montréal CUPE members gathered with other workers for a 10-hour vigil in front of the commission de la santé et de la sécurité au travail (CSST) building to protest the lack of enforcement of health and safety regulations and legislation;
- Danny Cavanagh, president of CUPE Nova Scotia, CUPE members and other workers called for stronger enforcement at a ceremony in Sydney;
- CUPE members gathered at Tom Davies Square in Sudbury, Ontario to remember the dead and injured. Wyman MacKinnon, president of CUPE 4705 and a CUPE regional vice-president for Ontario, pointed out that among developed countries Canada "Has the worst record for reducing workplace fatalities over the last 20 years;"

- In Saint John, N.B., CUPE members joined other workers at the International Longshoremen's Association monument to mourn for the dead and call on the provincial Conservatives to carry out an inquiry into the workers' compensation system;
- About 60 CUPE members and staff joined Anthony Pizzino, director of the National Research, Job Evaluation and Health and Safety Branch, in the Day of Mourning ceremony outside Regina City Hall. The names of 34 workers killed on the job in Saskatchewan in 2005 were read out. About half of the killed workers were in their 20s and 30s.

ALERT NATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY BRANCH TO FATALITIES

When a CUPE member is killed on the job we ask that Locals use the Workplace Fatality Reporting Form available from the National Health and Safety Branch. We ask that you inform your staff health and safety representative as well.

Every year about 1,000 workers are killed on the job, one million injured and thousands are made sick by their work in Canada.

- dispute resolution process. A mandatory mediation process if CUPE and the employer cannot reach a decision was also bargained;
- Training language ensures the employer acts to protect the health and safety of CUPE members;
- Personal protective equipment language calls for the employer to provide all CUPE members with the necessary PPE;
- Communicable diseases language aims to reduce contamination and infection of members;
- Harassment and violence language now includes bullying and calls for working "towards the elimination of the causal factors of violence."

HEALTH AND SAFETY GAINS FOR SASKATCHEWAN HEALTH CARE WORKERS



Pearl Blommaert, co-chair of the National Health and Safety Committee, president of CUPE 4980 and member of the Saskatchewan health care bargaining committee.

Health care workers in Saskatchewan have made significant health and safety gains in the last round of coordinated bargaining. The CUPE Health Care Council, which represents 13,000 health care workers, worked with other health care unions in Saskatchewan to push for gains in health

and safety language, especially workload.

"Achieving the improvements to our existing workload language is a credit to our membership, considering the employer came to the table to delete the language," said Pearl Blommaert, co-chair of the National Health and Safety Committee, president of CUPE 4980 and a member of the bargaining committee.

"Our members identified workload as one of their priorities and they were prepared to do what it takes, including job action, to support this and their bargaining committee," Blommaert added.

The council bargained improved language on workload, training, personal protective equipment, communicable diseases, harassment and violence:

- Workload language establishes a health and safety sub-committee to deal with workload and a

These gains show the strength of CUPE and coordinated bargaining to move health and safety issues forward.

"Without the support empowering the bargaining committee, we would have had a very difficult time holding onto what we had, never mind amending and improving the language," Blommaert said.

THOUSANDS AT MEMORIAL FOR CUPE PARAMEDICS

Paramedics Kim Weitzel, 44, and Shawn Currier, 21, died in the line of duty on May 17, 2006 at the decommissioned Sullivan mine near Kimberley, B.C. They were members of CUPE 873.

Thousands remembered Weitzel and Currier on May 29, 2006 at a memorial service in Kimberley.

Members of the B.C. Ambulance Service organized the tribute to the fallen pair. Emergency service workers from across Canada came to pay their respects at the memorial service.

The CUPE members were attempting to rescue two mine workers – Douglas Erickson and Robert Newcombe – at a water testing shed near the mine when both paramedics collapsed. An investigation is ongoing to determine the causes of all four deaths.

“The fatalities at the Sullivan mine are a heart wrenching tragedy,” said CUPE National President Paul Moist. “We need to make sure that Sister Weitzel and Brother Currier didn’t die in vain. We must learn from this tragedy and demand better protection for workers.”

CUPE National sends its sympathies to the families and co-workers of all who died in this tragic event.

YOUNG WORKERS FACE HEALTH AND SAFETY CHALLENGES

Most college and university students are already in summer jobs, and high school students are about to enter the summer workforce. So, it’s a good time to consider the health and safety hazards that young workers face.

Workers between 15 and 24 account for about 20 per cent of workplace injuries and the fatality rate for these workers is generally higher than older, more experienced workers.

Young workers need education and support when it comes to their health and safety. For instance, the right to refuse unsafe work is only valuable if young workers know about it and use it. In CUPE workplaces and communities we should all educate young workers about their health and safety rights and responsibilities as much as possible.

Lowering working age a big mistake

Sadly, the governments of Alberta and British Columbia have amended their labour legislation to

allow children as young as 12 years-old to work. Saskatchewan is considering similar legislation.

Lowering the minimum working age typically leads to more workplace injuries and fatalities. All sorts of safety issues come into play when the minimum working age is lowered – things like safe transportation home after night shifts, comprehension and reading level skills to understand material safety data sheets and other safety material, and lack of training for young workers.

Because of the high injury and fatality rate for young workers, Alberta and B.C. need their minimum working age legislation repealed and Saskatchewan needs to back away from their proposed changes.

For more information on these and other issues, contact the National Health and Safety Branch and request copies of the Right to Refuse Cards to distribute to young workers.

NEW FACTS SHEETS FROM CUPE NATIONAL

The National Health and Safety Branch offers four new fact sheets:

- **Moulds:** This fact sheet contains information on types of moulds, why they are hazardous, what the health risks are and what can be done about preventing mould-related health problems in CUPE workplaces;
- **Critical Incidents and Critical Incident Stress:** A fact sheet providing examples of critical incidents, causes of critical incident stress, actions to prevent critical incidents and strategies to deal with critical incidents and critical incident stress;
- **Accident and Occupational Disease Investigations:** A fact sheet outlining the importance of investigations in uncovering and eliminating workplace hazards. There is solid information that lists the tools and methods required for collecting evidence for a thorough investigation;
- **Asbestos:** This fact sheet has information on the uses of asbestos, who is exposed, what the effects of exposure are and what can be done to prevent exposure.

Contact the National Health and Safety Branch to request your free copies.



YOU ASKED US

Q. What are attendance management programs? What purpose do they serve?

A. Employers say they use attendance management programs to stop absenteeism due to illness, personal problems, poor physical fitness and other factors. But attendance management programs are really a smokescreen used to blame workers when they are absent. Employers blame workers to avoid addressing the root causes of absenteeism, like poor working conditions, poor work organization, poor management techniques, stress and workload.

Many workplaces have some form of an attendance management program. Often these programs involve setting attendance “goals” and encouraging “teamwork” to get workers to cooperate with the employer but not necessarily with each other.

These employer measures are misguided and heavy-handed. Working conditions and work organization are the most significant factors contributing to absenteeism. Attendance management simply adds to the stress of being sick or injured.

The following working conditions increase absenteeism and harm workers:

- **Job insecurity** causes uncertainty and stress for workers. A World Health Organization (WHO) study showed that workers who experience job insecurity have higher rates of stress, illnesses and psychiatric disorders.
- A **work pace** that is intense, combined with little control over working conditions, can increase injury rates and stress levels.
- **Working long hours** is linked to high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease. Long hours also cause conflict in balancing work and family responsibilities, increasing stress levels.
- **Shift work** is linked to digestive problems, sleep disorders, cardiovascular disease and breast cancer in women.
- **Working conditions** and work organization have a big impact on health. Poor indoor air quality, poor ergonomic design, high workloads and poor management all contribute to stress, repetitive strain injuries, back problems, respiratory disease and other illnesses.

Attendance management programs are sold as a cure for absenteeism. In fact, these programs contribute to absenteeism by pressuring workers back to work, causing re-injuries and fostering an atmosphere that blames the worker for absenteeism.

Your health and safety committee should critically assess attendance management programs in your workplace. A careful look at working conditions and work organization will show what factors contribute to absenteeism and also show that an attendance management program is not needed.

STAFF CHANGES

We welcome new staff to the National Health and Safety Branch: Vanessa Wolff and Barry Doyle.

Vanessa Wolff is a health and safety representative in British Columbia. She was previously a servicing representative for CUPE 79 in Toronto. Vanessa has facilitated CUPE health and safety training, sat on numerous health and safety committees as a certified member and was an instructor at the Workers Health and Safety Centre in Ontario.

Barry Doyle is a senior health and safety officer at the National Office. Barry got his start at CUPE by writing workshops for the 9th National Health and Safety Conference in Montreal. He has sat on numerous workplace health and safety committees as a certified member and has researched and written on a wide variety of health and safety topics. He has also facilitated health and safety workshops across the country.

Health and Safety Update is published four times a year by CUPE's National Health and Safety Branch. For more information please contact:

Health and Safety Branch
21 Florence Street, Ottawa, Ontario
K2P 0W6
phone: (613) 237-1590
fax: (613) 233-3438
e-mail: health_safety@cupe.ca