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Our unions will NEVER give up



LEE SAUNDERS ADDRESSES DELEGATES AT THE CUPE NATIONAL CONVENTION IN VANCOUVER IN NOVEMBER 2015

PHOTO: JOSHUA BERSON

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFCSME) President Lee Saunders inspired delegates at CUPE national convention with a fiery speech about the labour movement's durability in the face of ongoing and relentless attacks against it.

Saunders challenged CUPE members to stand together against attacks on working people and to protect past victories, saying that we are in

the fight of our lives.

"Currently before the U.S. court is the Friedrichs case. This case attacks our very existence," said Saunders. "What the case does is essentially say that you don't have to pay dues to the union, yet you will still receive the same level of benefits that are derived from union representation. What they (the employer and municipal governments) want to do is to take power and our resources

away from the union. The top one per cent in our country and in Canada want more power and they want more wealth at the expense of working families who are playing by the rules every single day, who are trying to put food on the table, who are trying to send their kids to school,

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CUPE DELEGATES AT THE 2015 CONVENTION IN VANCOUVER RALLIED TO CALL ATTENTION TO THE GROWING GLOBAL CLIMATE CRISIS.

Fighting climate change with green jobs

CUPE National Secretary-Treasurer Charles Fleury attended the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) in December. CUPE, the Canadian Labour Congress and other affiliated unions participated in a meeting organized by the International Trade Union Confederation.

Fleury argued for world governments, including Canada, to adopt ambitious greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions targets for 2020 that meet scientists' recommendations. "We can no longer rely on states acting in good faith: the final accord must include a mandatory review process for

all countries," said Fleury. "However, the fight against climate change cannot be waged at the expense of workers, communities or developing countries. The final accord should involve a just transition to a carbon-free economy, including financial incentives for the poorest countries," he said.

The fight against climate change also presents an excellent opportunity for the creation of new green jobs. "Public services are a main source of green jobs," said Fleury. "A growing public sector and public infrastructure will help us reduce the effects



NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER CHARLES FLEURY AT THE UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE IN PARIS IN DECEMBER 2015

of climate change. Private companies have created the problem; governments and the public sector need to be part of the solution."

CUPE is a signatory of the Leap Manifesto advocating

that environmental protection, economic development, and a fairer society go hand in hand. ●

Find out more at leapmanifesto.org

Global Justice is published 3 times a year to provide workers and their representatives an overview of international solidarity work taken on by the Global Justice fund and within CUPE as a whole.

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COPE491

End militarization of Filipino schools now

Canadian and Filipino public school workers face a lot of the same challenges—especially when it comes to issues like privatization and P3s, the struggle for fair wages and benefits, and the impact of government cutbacks on working conditions.

The similarities end at state-sponsored violence.

Benjamin Valbuena, national chairperson for the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) in the Philippines, spoke at the CUPE national convention about the increasing militarization of public elementary and high schools by his country's federal government.

Because of a Department of Education memorandum that allows military activity inside schools, some have been converted into barracks and camps, Valbuena said. The number of human rights abuses against teachers, administrators and

students has thus gone up dramatically.

“What is dramatic is the ongoing militarization in Mindanao,” said Valbuena. “They are attacking the schools and communities of our Indigenous people.”

On September 1, a teacher at an Indigenous school in Mindanao, and two union activists, were shot dead by members of a paramilitary-armed group—political assassinations are widely regarded as part of a U.S.-modeled counterinsurgency program of the Aquino government.

Valbuena thanked CUPE for its worker-to-worker solidarity with ACT and its efforts to help build grassroots unionism in the Philippines' education sector. ACT is now seeking international assistance in pressuring the Aquino government to rescind the memorandum. ●

Lee Saunders addresses Convention 2015

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and are trying to do the right thing. The playing field is not level and it's up to the trade union movement, our allies, our coalition partners to come together and say 'no more, enough is enough.'"

Saunders told delegates that we need to examine ourselves, keep what is working

and change what we're doing wrong. AFSCME locals have committed to holding face-to-face conversations with 80 per cent of their members before their next convention. "We've found not only that members are glad to hear from their union, but also that they want to be part of the fight," said Saunders. ●



BERENICE CELEITA FROM NOMADESC SPEAKS AT THE GLOBAL JUSTICE FORUM

Colombia: It takes more than a cease-fire to create peace

The Colombian government and FARC (The revolutionary armed forces of Colombia) are closer to reaching a peace deal to end the five-decade long internal war in that country. The two sides have been in talks in Havana since 2012.

But any peace agreement will be incomplete unless social movements and victims of the armed conflict are also at the table, says Berenice Celeita from the Colombian human rights organization NOMADESC.

NOMADESC - CUPE's Global Justice project partner in Colombia, works to defend the rights of Colombian communities and trade unionists. They are an integral part of human rights defence work in the southwest of the country.

Celeita explained that the 50-year war in Colombia has left more than 350,000 dead – over 3,000 of them trade unionists – and displaced over six million from their communities. Colombia has the highest number of trade unionists killed in the

world and the second highest number of displaced people in the world after Syria.

“Millions of poor farmers have been displaced from their land by large agricultural producers,” said Celeita. “Artisanal miners (also known as subsistence miners – they do not work for a mining company) as well as indigenous communities are forced from their land so that multinational companies can exploit natural resources,” she said. Over 70 per cent of land has been given in concessions to multinational companies that exploit resources and the environment.

A lasting peace accord needs to address the social and economic inequality that is being entrenched by free trade agreements – such as the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

Celeita calls for the peace process to provide justice to the families of the victims of violence by prosecuting those responsible. The Colombian people want peace, but they want justice too. ●

A productive CUPE convention for Global Justice



CUPE's commitment and support for international solidarity was evident at the 2015 CUPE National Convention in Vancouver. We hosted labour and social movement leaders from six countries and incorporated international solidarity and common struggles into all aspects of the convention program.

Global Justice Committee members were present on convention floor when important resolutions were presented for debate. They were pleased that Convention passed Resolution 202, which mandates CUPE National to "present a financial plan by the end of 2015 that ensures, at a minimum, that our ability to fund project work is financially protected on an ongoing basis.

Committee members were also pleased to see National convention adopt resolutions calling for action in opposition to a new wave of international trade agreements that threaten public services and for us to work in solidarity with migrant workers.

1. Labour repression in South Korea Trade unions in South Korea are experiencing a crack-down on basic trade union rights as the South Korean government is violating rights such as freedom of assembly and association. The severity of union repression is shocking with multiple raids on union offices and investigation, arrest and imprisonment of several union officers and members.

Labour reforms presented by government will result in cuts to overtime pay and salaries for senior workers, make it easier for employers to fire workers, expand temporary agency work and weaken protections for subcontracted workers. The reforms will restrict the ability of a trade union to intervene when employers implement changes to workplace rules that are detrimental to workers.

2. Migrant workers are organizing The Coalition for Migrant Worker Rights Canada officially launched a new campaign in October called MoVE (Mobility, Voice and Equality). They are calling for regulatory changes to make it easier for workers to move from one job to another and for permanent residence immigration status for all workers upon arrival.

3. Global collaboration in the fight against privatization Public Services International (PSI), the global union federation CUPE is affiliated with, is building a global network of labour unions to fight privatization in the new year. CUPE National President Mark Hancock and economist Toby Sanger met with leaders of PSI's major affiliates from around the world in Washington, D.C. last December to discuss how privatization is undermining decent employment and quality public services, to share successes in our fights against privatization and to plan how we can work better together.

4. Trade and investment Hundreds of thousands of people marched in Berlin, Germany in October to oppose a planned free trade deal between the European Union and the United States that is anti-democratic and will threaten food safety and environmental standards. The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) would create the world's largest free-trade zone, encompassing some 800 million people.

More recently, as world leaders gathered in Paris for the COP21 climate talks, 23 government negotiators including Canada were in Geneva negotiating another secretive trade deal that will give oil and gas companies new powers. Wikileaks has released a section of draft text from the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) draft text that, if adopted, would prevent governments from favouring clean energy - such as solar - over more polluting sources - like the tar sands.

For more information visit cupe.ca/TISA

