

POLICY 910

BEYOND BARGAINING - *Building on our skills to build a better future*

It's up to us!

As workers and union members we want decent, secure jobs, fair pay and benefits. As citizens we want protection for the weak, the sick, the old and the underprivileged, and equal treatment for all, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, age or religion.

In the past we have looked to employers to provide jobs with reasonable pay and benefits. We have looked to our governments to provide services such as education, health care, pensions, environmental protection and to maintain a social safety net for us when we are unemployed, unemployable, or otherwise unable to provide essentials for ourselves or our families.

However, those with power in our society - our employers and our governments - have failed to create the kind of economy and the kind of society that benefits ordinary people like ourselves.

Employers are willing to make large profits from the efforts of their employees, workers like us, but are not willing to invest these profits in job creation. (In 1995 the Big Five banks reported total profits of \$4.9 billion, but cut 2,800 jobs.)

Working people, like the members of our union, want a choice of decent jobs. Instead we find high levels of unemployment.

We want job security. Instead we face insecurity, the threat of job loss and, all too often, actual lay offs.

We want fair rates of pay. Instead we have company chief executive officers who make more in a year than their employees earn in a lifetime. (In 1995 Bank of Montreal chair Matthew Barrett's salary was \$2.5 million.)

We want decent benefits. Instead we have employers who want to roll back our benefits and contract out our work to exploited, under-paid non-unionized workers who receive no benefits.

We look to our governments to provide decent schooling, health care, adequate pensions, support for the underprivileged. Instead we find governments, by and large, reducing or eliminating services, cutting back jobs, removing controls that ensure our safety, protect our environment and support the weak.

We look to the Canadian Human Rights Commission to protect us from discrimination. Instead complaints are caught up in a bureaucratic maze. Justice is deferred, all too often indefinitely, as in our Bell pay equity complaint.

Traditionally we have used collective bargaining to pressure employers, and political action to influence governments. We reaffirm our belief in these processes and intend to strengthen our ability to use these mechanisms to further our aims.

But, these tactics are clearly not enough. So, in addition, we have been taking other, more direct approaches to further our aims.

As members of one of the largest unions in the country, we propose to expand our efforts to take direct action on important issues.

We also propose to encourage other unions to work with us, and we vow to work with other unions, to pursue these ideals within a renewed labour movement that has removed its internal conflicts. We aspire to a union movement where the leading unions each regard themselves as first among equals.

Recent activities

Collective action is the main source of union strength. As CEP members we have exercised collective action in many ways - principally through collective bargaining. Other collective action strategies have also proven effective.

Labour investment funds

We cannot rely on large corporations to invest in job creation. Labour investment funds are one way we can do it ourselves.

Labour funds deliver capital to small companies and provide investment opportunities for small investors. Investment decisions are based on the needs of workers and their unions, rather than meeting the short-term (and often short-sighted) needs of traditional capitalists.

Because the law encourages individuals to invest in labour venture funds and receive tax breaks in return, the funds have experienced considerable growth.

CEP founding unions were involved from the start, with the 1984 establishment of the first labour fund, the Québec Solidarity Fund. Other funds, such as the British Columbia Working Opportunity Fund, the Manitoba Crocus Investment Fund, the Saskatchewan Development Fund and the First Ontario Fund followed, with CEP support. This year CEP members and other unionists in New Brunswick are seeing the fruits of several years' labour with the establishment of their Workers' Investment Fund.

CEP representatives sit on labour fund boards and many individual CEP members invest in them.

Labour funds are increasingly coming to dominate the venture capital industry. A Canadian Venture Capital Association survey found that in 1995 start-up companies attracted 37% (\$248 million) of the total venture capital pool, almost all generated through labour funds.

We will continue to encourage and support labour investment funds that share our values and work to establish such funds where none exist.

Pension funds

Pension funds are increasingly important sources of capital in our economy.

Pensions are deferred wages. Pension fund money is our money. But we often have no control over it. Sometimes it is even used against us, e.g. to finance corporate buy-outs that result in job losses.

Yet our experience suggests that, where we have significant control, pension funds are invested prudently, ethically, in our best interests and in the best interests of other working people.

The British Columbia Pulp and Paper Industry Pension Plan, for example, is a joint trustee fund with significant union control. It provides higher than average returns and has invested to create good paying, unionized jobs.

We will strive to have as much influence over pension fund investment as possible. A union controlled fund, within the usual prudent investor requirements to provide appropriate returns for fund members, is more likely to be invested in worker-friendly ways.

Further, if limitations on the operation of pension funds go too far, and restrict our ability to invest these funds ethically, we will work to change the legislation.

Workers may move among several employers in the course of their employment careers. In such circumstances the portability of pensions can make an important difference to our quality of life once we retire.

We will press for maximum possible pension portability, through legislation, in pension plans we establish and in our pension negotiations with employers.

We also reaffirm our belief that the government has a duty to ensure adequate retirement income for all Canadians. We will continue our efforts to ensure the federal government lives up to this responsibility.

Worker ownership

In some cases, we have declared a firm "No" to ill-considered employer proposals that threatened jobs or wages, and have negotiated worker ownership schemes. For example, our members became owners or part owners in Temiscaming, Trois-Rivières, Kapuskasing, Sault Ste Marie and Thunder Bay.

At Cornerbrook Pulp and Paper (Kruger) in Newfoundland and at Avenor in Dalhousie, N.B., our members gave the thumbs down to wage roll backs and plant closure and agreed to invest in their workplace. Assistance for this financial restructuring was provided by an investment bank which works exclusively with labour.

In 1996, Bell Canada announced it was abandoning its inside wiring installation and maintenance business. Approximately 1,000 CEP jobs were immediately placed in jeopardy. CEP had to respond quickly and decisively to this ill-timed employer decision.

We played a key role in the establishment of Entourage Technology Solutions - a wire and equipment installation and maintenance company - funded by the Québec Solidarity Fund. The company has many positive features such as a flat organizational structure and employee participation in decision making.

Worker ownership is not our first choice. It has often been very difficult, associated with job loss, decreases in wages, reduction of benefits.

But, we will do whatever is realistic and wanted by the affected members, including worker ownership, to protect our jobs and our working conditions.

We will develop codes of ethics, principles and guidelines for boards of directors and supervisors in worker-owned establishments. We will provide counselling for members who serve on boards of directors of companies.

Further, we will always maintain the distinction between workers as owners and workers as unionists. We still need a well functioning, traditional union structure to protect and expand the rights of workers, even in worker ownership situations.

Defending social programs

CEP has provided strong, positive leadership within the labour movement, co-operating with other unions, our political allies and social partners to defend and enhance social programs.

Our 1994 convention provided resources to dedicate staff specifically to our national social programmes campaign, to develop educational materials and to support local actions across the country. All our national representatives were involved.

We intend to continue to lead in this important struggle.

Medicare campaign: Our campaign to save Medicare, a principal component of which was the 1995 Ambulance Tour, was a wonderful example of collective action at all levels of the union.

The national union set the framework, within boundaries established by the broader labour movement. Each region provided resources and support. Local unions participated in ways that reflected their own resources, their degree of political sophistication and readiness and conditions within their respective communities.

We maintained pressure on the federal government, which showed signs of weakening political commitment to medicare.

All who participated can be justly proud of this campaign. But, as our first, large scale, national effort, it was not without imperfections, from which we all learned. It provides an excellent experience base for future national campaigns.

U.I. campaign: We have also shown ourselves able to run campaigns that have national dimensions, but are focused in one or two regions.

Enthusiastic demonstrators took over the bridge between the Gaspé peninsula and Campbellton, New Brunswick. They symbolized the united fight of our members in Québec and the Atlantic region, who carried the gauntlet in the Unemployment Insurance campaign. There were other demonstrations in the Gaspésie, Shawinigan, the Outaouais, Grand Falls, Cornerbrook and St. John's Newfoundland. A huge demonstration put Employment Minister Doug Young on the defensive in his Bathurst, New Brunswick riding.

Many other actions: letters to the editor, people's commissions, op ed pieces, kept up the pressure.

We enjoyed some positive results. The federal government has modified its proposed harsh treatment of seasonal workers. But, there is still a long distance to go.

We will keep the pressure on.

"As we come marching, marching..." Earlier this year, thousands of women "came marching" in the Women's March against Poverty, sponsored by the Canadian Labour Congress and the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. Strong CEP support was evident from coast to coast to coast in dozens of communities. We were in Ottawa, too, in mid-June making sure our demands were heard.

Equity issues and economic justice will continue to be important areas of action for us. We will continue to fight for bread and roses for all.

Defending our culture and jobs

As ordinary Canadians we are losing our influence on the media. The right wing is increasingly controlling the message. Canadian culture and democracy are suffering.

Recent concentrations of ownership, technological changes and restructuring are leading to increasingly centralized production and severe job losses. The print and electronic media are sacrificing quality in general and local coverage in particular to the cost cutting idol.

As Canadians we suffer the cultural and social consequences. As media workers we suffer the workplace consequences. As unionists we have been responding vigorously.

CEP members at the Southam Caucus and at conferences in B.C., *Tomorrow's News: Media Workers Face the Future*, and Ontario, *Talking Tech: Workers' conference on Communications Technology* developed strategies to deal with the changes affecting their industries.

CEP has regularly lobbied the CRTC to increase the commitment broadcasters must make to communities and local programming.

CEP's contribution to the campaign to save the CBC reflects our concern to protect a significant Canadian cultural institution and the jobs of our members.

We are particularly concerned that CBC mandate requirements to provide programming that reflects "Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions" are being ignored.

The campaign demonstrates our ability to co-operate with other unions and social partners in a very sophisticated campaign. Our media sector activists displayed an incredible creative capacity, an ability to use a wide range of new and old techniques to sensitize our own members and influence politicians and the public.

Already Radio Canada International has been saved. This, in part with the help of the international community and the international trade secretariats. We trust that this expertise and multi-faceted approach will bring further successes not only at the CBC, but elsewhere where such collective action is required.

Political action

The importance of political action is clear from what we have already discussed. We have been involved in various kinds of political action in the past. We intend to continue in the future.

Support for our political allies

Our union has a responsibility to play a strong role in political life. We have a clear policy, dating long before our merger, of supporting our own political party.

This policy serves us very well, particularly when we maintain close enough ties with our party and elected representatives to ensure a strong pro-union voice in federal and provincial legislatures.

We need to remind some fellow unionists that if we disagree with our party's actions, failing to support them at election time is not the most appropriate way to express our displeasure. It is better to have our party in power, with its faults, than another party which is less favourable to the rights and interests of working class people.

We will continue to support our political allies, to work within the party system to keep working people's interests and union principles at the forefront, and to support our candidates at election time.

In addition to election work and party activity, we will continue to engage in broader political action, including: demonstrations and strikes, lobbying, media events and community actions with our social partners.

Confronting our political foes

We continue to fight repression and anti-union, anti-worker governments such as those in Alberta and Ontario.

We were proud to participate in the fight back against the Klein government that initially focused on Alberta laundry workers. We were proud to participate in days of protest like those against the Ontario Harris government.

CEP members have been protesting in the streets in places like Bathurst, New Brunswick and Sydney, Nova Scotia.

Wherever there are repressive governments we will work on our own or in conjunction with our union brothers and sisters, our political friends and our social partners to uphold the rights of working people.

Future initiatives

Employment

For rising numbers of working people the economy is characterized by job insecurity, shorter duration of jobs, more frequent changes of employer, increasing and repeated periods of unemployment or under employment.

We increasingly have an hour glass structure of employment - a good jobs / bad jobs scenario, with what little job creation there is largely in the bad jobs category.

One third of employed Canadians - more than 4.2 million - are currently engaged in non-standard work (part-time, temporary, multiple job holders, self employed).

Over the next two years a major feature of our union activity will centre around preserving the good jobs we have, and pressing for the creation of additional good jobs. Naturally, collective bargaining will be crucial in this.

As part of these efforts, we will sponsor a major national job conference to examine the nature of work.

Social programs

CEP members are proud of the social programs we enjoy as Canadians. We and our predecessors fought hard and long to put them in place. We are dismayed at the short-sighted and selfish moves of neo-Conservatives to dismantle these state programs and move towards the uncaring American model.

We urge all working people and Canadians of conscience to fight to retain all our current social programs, to work to extend these programs and to improve delivery to all people who require them.

We will continue to participate with other members of the labour movement to preserve and improve the Canadian social safety net.

However, we also believe it is prudent for us to ensure, wherever possible, that we have mechanisms in place to provide our members with acceptable coverage and access to adequate safety net provisions where governments fall short.

Broader services for members

The world is changing. How can we improve our union to ensure it continues to be relevant to us, the members? We know how we benefited from our union in the past. In what new ways might we benefit in the future?

We will examine the possibility of expanding the services we provide ourselves through our union. This will be a careful, gradual process, based on sound research and cost-benefit analysis.

We recognize that some services may differ among provinces because of the differences of jurisdiction. We also recognize that some services may only be available at first on a limited basis.

We do not want to create unreasonable expectations. "The union makes us strong", but we cannot use the union to solve all our problems. Our sights will be set on realistic, achievable targets.

Some services might be integrated within the current framework, at no extra cost. In other cases, we may have to establish a system of premiums. Members who choose to use such a service will pay the appropriate fee.

Union-sponsored benefits: Many unions provide benefits which are not related to a specific employer. This is true of our own freelance local 700.

Many members are best served by arrangements negotiated with the employer to provide specific benefits under the collective agreement. In such cases we should continue with existing arrangements.

In other cases, it may be better to have the union arrange the benefits, either directly, or through the intermediary of some brokering organization. ***This is one area we will examine further.***

Group purchasing: One way to take advantage of our collective economic power is to tap into savings from group purchasing -- of cars or insurance, for example.

Locals will be encouraged to set up local, regional or national group purchasing arrangements for their company's products or services.

The national will support this concept by maintaining an inventory of group purchasing arrangements, negotiating national arrangements and co-operating with other unions.

Services for "General" members: Job security is becoming increasingly fragile. People who lose their job - an unfortunate possibility for many of us - often want to continue to benefit from the strength that association with other working people can provide.

Workers in workplaces where we do not have the necessary 50% plus 1 required for certification could still benefit from formal membership in our union. Retirees often could benefit from the strength that association with their former union can provide.

Workers who do not have a relationship with a single employer, e.g. graphic artists who free-lance from home would benefit from unionization.

We should not necessarily restrict our membership to people who are deemed by a third party - a labour board - to belong to a legally sanctioned bargaining unit.

The national union will investigate the possibility of extending general membership status to workers who fall into categories such as those outlined above.

General members, however defined, will not have the power to participate in or interfere with the voting rights, or any other rights of regular members in certified bargaining units.

Any dues structure proposed for general members will be based on the cost of services such a member can expect from the union.

Organizing

"They have bullied and oppressed us, but still our union grows." Joe Hill.

If you don't organize you die. Organizing new members has always been a priority for the successful union. We are a successful union, we will continue to be a successful union and we will organize.

The future of each local depends on its ability to maintain or increase current membership. The current scourge of down-sizing threatens the very existence of locals. Organizing is one of the fundamental roles of every local.

The national union will continue to pursue the successful organizing strategies of the past and develop new ways to attract people to the union. We will welcome young people and non-standard workers as well as those from our traditional membership base.

In our locals we will develop an organizing culture, to spread the benefits of membership in our union to as many working people as possible.

Many difficulties that we experience in our efforts to organize new members arise from inadequate labour legislation. ***It is essential that legal frameworks be set up which enhance rather than diminish organizing and collective bargaining. We will work with other unions to this end.***

Informing and educating the membership

Our communications and education programmes have been key to many of our recent successes.

An informed membership is an active membership, an educated leadership is an effective leadership.

We will expand our communications program to encourage more two-way communication with members. To this end, we will encourage more locals to publish regular newsletters that reflect the views of rank and file members . We will also establish a means of ensuring that local union activists are better informed of national and regional activities.

In addition to print, we will broaden our use of the internet and videos to share our message with each other.

Also, the CEP President will approach the Executive Council of the Canadian Labour Congress to sponsor a campaign to raise the public profile of unions generally . The CEP print advertisements -- "Unions: Everybody Benefits" -- that have appeared in various magazines, could be one campaign tool.

We will continue to offer in every region the successful range of basic education courses developed since the merger. We will continue to update them to meet the changing needs of our members, and to offer new courses as required.

Inter-union cooperation

Political cooperation: Unions have made progress in working with one another, but difficulties still reduce our efficiency. We will seek ways to improve inter-union cooperation, at every level of the labour movement.

CEP will approach other unions through the Canadian Labour Congress, to foster inter-union cooperation e.g. establish a multi-union organizing co-operation committee to co-ordinate organizing.

Co-ordinated bargaining: Some employers try to play one union off against another. Several of our bargaining units have suffered from "we strike, they collect" scenarios with other unions. Some locals have had employers try to whip saw us with other unions - CEP has to accept a low offer because another union already accepted one - and keep everyone down.

Co-ordinated bargaining is one answer. In British Columbia, our paper sector has done this effectively on an industry wide scale. In Ontario, especially in cases where we chaired joint bargaining, such as Quno, Thorold, Boise Cascade (now Stone

Consolidated), Fort Frances, Provincial Papers, Thunder Bay, we have enjoyed considerable success with co-ordinated bargaining.

We will actively pursue co-ordinated bargaining with other unions in sectors where we are facing a common adversary, e.g. where there is concentrated ownership in the newspaper industry.

Cooperation on purchasing: We will work with other unions, through the CLC, to maximize savings on the purchase of office equipment, etc.

Old meets new!

CEP is playing a key role in forging a Canadian labour movement for the 21st century -- a labour movement that combines the best of traditional unionism with the best progressive ideas.

Through our union we continue to organize and bargain collective agreements with salaries and benefits that lead in our industries. We defend our rights by handling grievances, and providing representation on a wide variety of issues such as health and safety and workers' compensation.

We are fighting hard on the political front to defend and improve social programs for ourselves and other working people. This is in line with a long tradition of Canadian unionism, which in the case of CEP goes back at least to 19th century political agitation for the nine-hour day, and includes the fights for public pensions, medicare and public education.

We are starting to pursue new opportunities that our collective strength provides us, such as group purchasing, union-sponsored benefits for laid-off, unemployed and retired members and labour investment funds.

CEP intends to pursue these initiatives, and to ensure the necessary mechanisms are in place for us to be able to do so.

**1996 Convention
September 17, 1996**