

CLC TENTH BIENNIAL NATIONAL

WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

A REPORT



WOMEN'S AND HUMAN
RIGHTS DEPARTMENT
SERVICE DE LA CONDITION
FÉMININE ET DES DROITS
DE LA PERSONNE

Offawa,
Ontario

97

Organize!
Mobilize!
Create
Our
Future!



Union women
respond
to the
changing
world
of
work



Women United

We started the '97 Women's Conference
Halfway up the mountain.
The energy of sisters careening off the walls
Streamers waving, voices singing,
Women marching, united once again.

Facilitators at the ready,
Delegates eager to begin the work
Of sharing - learning - strategizing
Expanding understandings,
Breaking down barriers,
Pushing limits,
Building the power of sisterhood
In the making of new friends.

And, so, the energy grew.

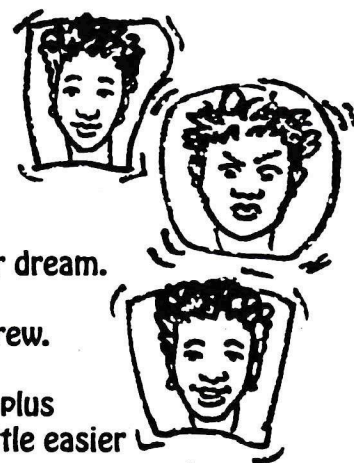
Kiké urging us to board the coalition airline
Deal with the turbulence of difference -
The only way to build
Bridges of unity and solidarity.

Joan reminding us of the pain of activism,
The need to replenish the spirit,
of eating the elephant bit by bit
Until only the skeleton of
oppression remains.

Brought us news from sisters in
other countries.
The struggle is alive
In places where we have never been.

And so, the energy grew.

Tuesday had to be
Capitalism's worst nightmare.
Busloads of pumped and angry women
Tearing across the city,
Threatening the sources of profits.
"Could this be a trend?
what is the matter with them?
They want what?"
Corporate analysts fretted anxiously.



Their nightmare - Our dream.

And so, the energy grew.

Five hundred women plus
Must be sleeping a little easier
Having felt their own empowerment
Witnessed others' come to life,
Home, now, awash in new-found energy,
Dreaming of the possible.

Oh, yes!

The 1997 Women's Conference
Achieved what it is set out to do.

Energize - mobilize -
Ignite the collective consciousness,
Instill confidence and determination
In each and every sister there
To work and work and work
To awaken our "unconscious civilization"
To end racism, hatred and discrimination,
To demand equality - now,
Secure in the knowledge that the strength
Of five hundred, five thousand, five million women
Is behind their every step.

Women! United!
We'll never be defeated!

Cindy Wiggins,
CLC

Conference Program

Sunday, June 15, 1997

1:00-7p.m. Conference registration and child care registration at the Citadel Hotel

Afternoon

3:30-4:30 Orientation session for new delegates
7:00 Opening session

Welcoming Remarks

- Nancy Riche, Executive Vice-President
- A Celebration of the Participation of Union Women in Action on the Occasion of the First Anniversary of the Arrival of the Women's March Against Poverty

Monday, June 16, 1997

8:00a.m. Late registration
8:00 Designated Group Caucus Time
9:00-5p.m. Organize! Mobilize! Workshops!

1. Building Union Women's Committees
2. Working in Coalition with Community and Women's Groups
3. Community Unionism: From a Woman's Perspective
4. Overcoming Barriers in our Unions
5. Building Inclusive Unions
6. Young Women: Issues and Outreach
7. Building International Solidarity
8. Bargaining for Equality
9. Political Action: Getting Involved Politically
10. Strategies for Organizing More Women into Unions
11. Brothers in Solidarity

12:00-1.30 Lunch Break

12:00 Designated Group Caucus Time
1:30-5p.m. Workshops Continue
5: Designated Group Caucus Time
7:30 International Solidarity Evening-Special Cheung Lai Ha, Vice-Chair, Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions;

Nair Goulart, Secreteria da Mulher (Women's Secretariat), Forca Sindical, Brasil; Lois Stewart, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, (ICFTU) Women's Bureau; Funmi Elesho, Women's Desk Officer, National Union of Textile, Garment and Tailoring Workers, Nigeria.

Tuesday, June 17, 1997

8a.m. Designated Group Caucus Time
9:00 Panel of Speakers: How can we organize mobilize and win?
 Sisters from Canada and the United States, our unions and communities
 Kike Roach, Activists and Author of *"Politically Speaking"*;
 Marie Bergeron, Vice-President, Québec Federation of Labour;
 Karen Nussbaum, Women's Director, AFL-CIO

Afternoon BIG SURPRISE EVENT

- Union Women Take on the Anti-union Employers!

3p.m.-5p.m. Create Our Future! workshops continue on the same topics
 Special Event: Delegates meet and greet Alexa McDonough, Leader of the New Democratic Party and Members of the Federal Caucus!

Wednesday, June 18, 1997

9a.m.-12:30 Conference summary and strategies to create our future

- Nancy Riche, Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Labour Congress provides an overview of our discussions and identifies key directions
- Joan Grant-Cummings, President of National Action Committee on the Status of Women
- Tributes and Farewells

12:30 Adjournment

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Introduction

The 10th CLC Women's Conference was held in Ottawa between June 15 - 18, 1997. Over 600 union women from across Canada participated in a lively and challenging Conference.

There were eleven different workshop topics all designed to help delegates develop strategies for our unions to respond to the changing world of work. The workshops also looked at the CLC Women and Work Report, and examined the recommendations it contains.

This Conference was held to mark the first anniversary of the arrival of the Women's March Against Poverty in Ottawa. We celebrated by recalling the events of the March across the country in our opening plenary. Sisters from each province reminded us about what we did during the March and since that time. As each speaker talked of the region's experiences, sisters from that area began marching around the hall until the entire Conference was on its feet recreating the Women's March and recommitting to the fight against women's poverty.

Plenary sessions focussed on International Solidarity on Monday evening, with speak-

ers from South America, Hong Kong and Africa. The incredibly informative and moving presentations of the sisters are presented in this report to make sure that their stories and struggles are recorded.

A plenary panel also helped delegates focus on the question: How Can We Organize and Mobilize and Win? This panel set the stage for the second round of workshops which were designed to discuss concrete strategies and tactics that delegates could use upon their return home. Again, their presentations are reproduced in this Report.

This was a Conference of union activists and as a result the Conference included a public action to demonstrate women's issues in the community. In fact - four actions! On the second day of the Conference, delegates participated in a demonstration at Treasury Board, demanding that the federal government meet its obligations to its women employees under the Canadian Human Rights Act's pay equity provisions. The government owes its employees more than \$2 billion in pay equity settlements and consistently has refused to pay.



From Treasury Board delegates marched to the newly opened Starbucks restaurant to emphasize that unions are good for workers in the service sector. Several Starbucks coffee shops had recently been organized in British Columbia, and delegates made the point that our unions will continue to organize across the country.

The entire Conference delegation then boarded buses (Ottawa's unionized bus drivers valiantly endured singing and chanting across the city and back!). The first stop was Ottawa's Wal-Mart, where the management closed the doors and refused to let 600 women in to "shop" and talk to the women workers. Intrepid "shoppers" and trade unionists managed to gain entrance to the outer doors, but after making the point that Wal-Mart's anti-union tactics were not welcome in Canada withdrew and hopped back on the buses for the final stop.

McDonalds - of course! This time in Hull, Quebec. The first ever organized McDonalds is in Quebec and delegates made the point here - in French and English - that this would not be the last! Back to the buses and back to workshops - only five minutes late!

This day held another special event for delegates. We were lucky to be able to have the leader of the newly re-established official New Democratic Party federal caucus, Alexa McDonough speak at the end of the afternoon. She, along with the members of the caucus, joined us to celebrate the victories won by the NDP in the last federal election with an NDP-sponsored wine and cheese for the delegates. This was certainly a long - as in twelve hours, no breaks - but very exciting and rewarding day.

This Report is in three main sections. We have included information from each of the workshops, including topics covered and recommendations from participants. The presentations of the keynote speakers at our Conference are reproduced here as well. The Conference speakers were a central part of the experience of the delegates, and there are many important insights and lessons we did not want to lose. Finally, the suggested actions or "Action Alert" sections of **Women's Work: A Report** are included along with additions and modifications from the Conference and updates on activities taken since that time.

Organize! Mobilize! Create Our Future!

**Celebrate The First Anniversary Of
The Women's March Against Poverty!**

**June 15, 1997
Welcoming Remarks**

**Nancy Riche
Executive Vice-President
Canadian Labour Congress**

Let me officially open the 10th Biennial Women's Conference of the CLC.

We've been at this twenty something years! I would just like to ask any people in this room who were here at the first ever CLC National Women's Conference to raise their hands. I know there is Dorothy McKinnon here, Sue Genge, Nancy Riche. I said then as I sat in the audience: "One of these days I'm going to chair that conference if it kills me." So, only three of us. How many people are here for the first time? I thought that all those who were here for the first one would be the mentors for all those who are

here for the first time. So Sue and Dorothy and I are going to be pretty busy for the next three days!

Let me start with a message from Joan Grant-Cummings, the President of NAC, who couldn't be with us tonight. This is the anniversary of the Women's March Against Poverty; it would have been quite wonderful to have had Joan with us. Joan says "I would like to share my favourite inspirational quote from an African-American sister, Rachel Bagby: "Sisterhood is not an entitlement. Sisterhood is a gift. It is something that is developed to be honoured and respected." I would only add that sisterhood is to be valued

through our lifelong commitment to eradicate what potentially can separate us, by using tools that will potentially guarantee our lifelong solidarity. What we are building between NAC women and CLC women is sister solidarity. On behalf of the NAC Executive Committee of 1997 and the NAC membership I would like to say that, despite the many difficult moments, there have also been emotionally and politically rewarding times as NAC President. During many of those, I have felt the sisterhood from yourself, the women in the Human Rights Department, and many women in the difference affiliates.

Today, as we celebrate the anniversary of the March and the opening of another women's conference, you do so under conditions that have never been so bad for many Canadian women, or so good for very few Canadians. Both the "Women's Work: A Report" by the CLC and "The NAC Voters' Guide: Women's Agenda for Social Justice" give cutting edge analysis of our situation. With other coalition partners, both of our organizations have a major responsibility to women in Canada especially those women who are starting from a place way off in the margins - Aboriginal women, lesbians and other women whose sexu-

ality is seen as a crime by some, black women and women of colour, world majority women, poor women, single mothers, older women, young women, women with disabilities and unionized and non-unionized workers whose rights are being viciously violated daily. And finally, Joan says: "I look forward to relaying in person to you and the rest of the delegates the thanks of the NAC Executive. I also look forward to sharing with you where we see feminism going into the 21st century."

"Until then, walk good, in solidarity and sisterhood." Joan Grant-Cummings. Joan will be with us on Wednesday.

I now want to introduce some international guests. Let me first introduce Cheung Lai Ha. Where's Lai? Lai means beautiful, so when Lai told me that, I told her my name is Lai Nancy. Lai is Vice-chair of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions. And chair of the Women's Committee. The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions is the politically independent trade union movement for now. This union represents private and public sector workers. Lai Ha comes from the clothing industry. In 1991, she was elected as the President of clothing industries, Clerical and Retail Trade Employees General Union.

From Brazil, my very good friend and dear sister, Nair Goulart. Nair has been newly

elected chair of the Women's Committee of ORIT, which is the Inter-American regional committee of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. She is with the Força Sindical Confederation in Brazil. She came from the Metal Workers. She has been involved in unions since 1974 when, in fact, Brazil was under a military dictatorship. She is also very much involved in the women's movement in Brazil, where there are three major union confederations. On International Women's Day 1997, for the first time ever, the three confederations came together through the organizational skills of Nair to have an incredible International Women's Day event.

Up until yesterday we had three sisters coming from Nigeria. Tonight we have one. One could not get a passport, the second was stopped by Canadian Immigration and finally Funmi managed to get here. Funmi Elesho. Funmi is with the National Union of Textile and Garment Workers of Nigeria, Executive Officer in charge of the Women's Desk, which is part of the Education Research Department. In Nigeria, Funmi tells us, as we know and read in the papers, the union movement is facing a very difficult situation. The military govern-

ment is ruling by decree and placing severe limitations on trade union activities. All three of these sisters will speak tomorrow at International Solidarity Night.

We are now ready to start this Women's Conference. A few years ago, we decided to take on the issue of women and work as a specific project and we stayed with that issue. The CLC Women and Work Report, researched and written by Winnie Ng, the Coordinator, was released on International Women's Day of this year. The Report is the basis for this conference. Our last women's conference was called "Women Work Everywhere". I never can remember that theme, because I wanted the theme to be: Women Work and Work and Work and Work and Work ...

From that conference, we developed the Women and Work Project. We released it on International Women's Day, 1997. I've never seen such a response to a CLC report. The Report was from the trade union movement and the press understood that we were speaking of what we knew. These were the real voices of women across the country and people understood it. We've received to date over 7,500 requests for the Women and Work Report from unions, from working women, from women's groups. A lot of



these are academic institutions. A lot of universities, a lot of secondary schools, and post-secondary schools. This report is appearing in classrooms.

At this conference, we will take that report and go further. We will be doing a bunch of things. This is your workbook, but it's also a report card on the Women and Work Project. And I think the main author of this is one of those women who attended the first women's conference, Sue Genge. This has the workbook for your workshop plus the report card which talks about what has happened since the Report, what we've accomplished, what has been done, what needs to be done, what can WE do, what can YOU do.

The Women and Work Report is an extremely important report for this country at this time, because it shows the picture of women and what's happening in their daily lives, and what's happened with their jobs. It looks at the health care sector, for example what's happened to frontline workers in health care, some of whom are still there. They're still working, but how drastically their jobs have changed! Women who are not working are saying "I want to keep in touch with my union", something we haven't quite figured out how to do. What

happens when someone gets laid off? We haven't talked about that. There should be some great ideas that will come out of this conference.

We are going to show you our new, "Women's March Against Poverty" video. I want to first of all pay tribute to the two women and the man who did this. Because we are very, very proud, not only of the video of the Women's March, but of the people who did it. It was done by Maria Shin, the videographer. Maria was recently working at the CLC in our PR Department. Melina Young who was on the Eastern Caravan as a videographer, and Rob Thompson, who was the editor. June 16, one year ago today, we were on the Hill - the Western and Eastern caravans had been welcomed to Ottawa Parliament.

We are going to have just a little bit of fun to feel the movement of the March and relive as we went across the country from coast to coast. My Co-chair for this, is Sister Huguette Leblanc, from CUPW.

Those of us who were there will want to think back to May 14, 1996, at the CLC Convention in Vancouver. Women's March T-shirts were everywhere. The CAW delegation is a sea of purple. Around the same time, I think in the Yukon, they were marching around the Legislature. Women were hovering, chatting, gathering around the

stage, so excited. Alexa McDonough, then the newly elected leader of the NDP, had just spoken to the convention and then Bob White introduced Sunera Thobani, President of NAC. She spoke and brought the house down. After I spoke Sunera and I held hands and led the women, followed by the men, to the Vancouver Art Gallery. Those of you who were there will remember as we walked out of the Convention Centre, the women at the information booth applauding us, people hanging out of their windows and people coming out on the street. Will the Yukon and the B.C. delegates get up and start marching?

Marianne McKinnon, President, Yukon Federation of Labour: I'm Marianne McKinnon from the Yukon and I have one other delegate from the Yukon here. In the Yukon we did an equivalent kind of march from the women's shelter down to the government legislature where they made their demands. We started at the same time that the march started from the Convention in Vancouver and we had a good turnout and good newspaper reporting. It was great!

Angie Schira, Secretary-Treasurer, BC Federation of Labour: As I said to start off the March in British Co-

lumbia, poverty in Canada is totally unacceptable and the only person that talked about that in federal election was Alexa McDonough. She constantly did it from last year right to the end of that election and she continues to say it. And, I say she is our leader.

Michelle Dieu: Michelle Dieu, Québec Federation of Labour. We held a 24-hour vigil in Québec City. From 1:00 p.m. on Saturday until Sunday, women circled the legislative buildings to tell our elected politicians what social measures we want against poverty. We experienced 24 hours of solidarity, sisterhood and brotherhood. The next day, our brothers and sisters joined in to uphold and step up our efforts.

Louissette: It is indeed a great pleasure to be here with you tonight to continue celebrating this wonderful march. I wish to thank the CLC, who participated from start to finish, and the women from the CLC who helped us ensure the success of this Canada-wide march. Many many thanks!

Nancy Riche: Then the caravans moved to Ontario. Big Ontario that did not elect one Reform member in the last election. Two caravans, one from the North West, the other from the South East both heading to Ottawa. I want to give some of my highlights. In Windsor, the slow drive to the bridge led by



three mini-vans - Ford, Chrysler, and GM, driven by three CAW women. Sudbury, cold, wet. Barry's Bay, the first ever march in that town. Algonquin, coffee on Ethel LaValley's deck. Cars with banners against the privatization of provincial parks. Hamilton in the rain. Renfrew, my rose bush that blooms outside my door, Ransom the teddy bear. And Toronto, the March to Queen's Park and joining the Colony Hotel workers who were on strike. And who won a collective agreement! But these are my memories. Could we hear some sisters from Ontario?

Hello Sisters my name is Irene Friend and I am from Windsor, Ontario where for an hour and a half, a hundred vehicles stopped the flow of capital and our jobs South of the border. Nancy was with us and the police tried to get us into one lane because we took the whole highway. We just obeyed the officer and then went back into our original formation. So he stood there with his hands on his hips and said: "Oh shit."

Ethel LaValley,
Secretary-Treasurer, Ontario Federation of Labour : Over 48 communities in Ontario took part in the March last year from Windsor all the way to Whitney. As Nancy said, we did a demonstration in

Algonquin Park against the privatization of the provincial parks. Also, the first march ever held in the town of Barry's Bay, making history as women marched against poverty. We continue that fight today in Ontario as the Harris government continues to attack pay equity. We'll never be defeated. Women united will never be defeated. Let's keep up the fight sisters.

Huguette Leblanc: It was a long journey from East and West, making our way to Central Canada. Women sang as they marched and stopped along the way to eat. Meanwhile, Women in Ottawa were setting up the Tent Village. An organizing committee worked day and night to ensure the success of the National Women's March. I would now like to ask the organizing committee to joint us in front.

Anne-Marie Delorey:
On behalf of the women from Ottawa, welcome again. In Eastern Ontario we organized in 18 communities. And I know that the women on the caravan were mighty pissed off when they had to stop 18 times, but that's what happens when women want to end poverty, when women have something to do. The other thing that was exciting was the march to Parliament. If you remember when we marched down Queen Street, between the tall office buildings, the noise

just vibrated. You could feel it through all of your body. It was absolutely wonderful. It's wonderful to be here again celebrating. Thanks a lot.

Joyce Smith: Also on behalf of the women of Ottawa as the other co-chair of the Ottawa group with Anne-Marie I would like to say thank you to all the women from all over Canada who participated in the March of 1996. Thank you for coming to Ottawa again.

Huguette LeBlanc: I also wanted to say that ... is part of the organizing committee. I wanted to talk about the solidarity we felt ... along the journey... the solidarity in the regions... and I hope you appreciated it. We really appreciated the show of solidarity... in the heart of the National Capital following the Women's March against Poverty.

Nancy Riche: Believe it or not, for this March, although there were hundreds and thousands of volunteers, there were only two full-time co-ordinators. Monica Mulvahill, who is here tonight and Jo Jo Abendsetts. Finally on June 15th, the Hill.

Sisters and brothers our demands are still there: child care, pay equity, Unemployment Insurance, feminist services against male violence, elimination of the head tax. A different Parliament though, more friends, more sisters, more voices on our side. The march never ends. Wear your shirts. Take your streamers home and hang them as a symbol of our success, our sisterhood and our commitment. Continue the struggle for equality and social justice!



Cheung Lai Ha
Vice-President
Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Union

June 16, 1997
International Solidarity Evening

Now that I'm speaking, I hope you people won't be sleeping! When you are sleeping, please let me know!

I would like to thank the CLC for inviting me to be here at this significant moment, just two weeks before Hong Kong would be returned to China. In recent years Hong Kong has undergone drastic economic restructuring. The major manufacturing industries have either moved up north to China or out to countries where the production and labour costs are much lower. For example, the number of workers in the garment industry has dropped drastically. With the rising unemployment rate women are usually the ones who are sacrificed and marginalized. They are now the contract workers, multiple job holders and temporary workers. As there are no minimum wage standards in Hong Kong, women's wages have gone even lower. Three months ago we conducted a woman's employment survey: from the 600 interviewees, over 90%

were low wage workers, earning less than 2/3 of the average wage; 64% did not receive any benefits as stipulated by the labour law. Age discrimination is rampant: it is virtually impossible for women workers over 35 to find employment of their choice. They are considered too old or too slow. The Hong Kong government has failed to recognize it as a serious problem. We organized a petition campaign and a protest action with hundreds of women wearing masks which featured them as young pretty women. We received a lot of media attention and heightened public awareness.

The president of the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions, Mr. Lau Chin Shek, has helped ensure that in the remaining two weeks of Hong Kong's legislature, the government will propose two bills that would prohibit discrimination based on age and family responsibilities and would strengthen the protection of women's rights.

As more Hong Kong employers move their busi-

ness to China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Sri Lanka to take advantage of lower labour standards and high profit margins, they have also brought along their exploitative management practices. We continue to monitor the labour situation in these countries, and we are prepared to extend our solidarity.

Last year in a government factory in Sri Lanka, the Hong Kong owner refused to pay months of back wages and benefits. We raised money and brought the Sri Lankan workers and their relatives to Hong Kong. We staged protests, sit-ins and finally fought the employer to pay up.

Several months ago, a group of Cambodian workers also faced abusive treatment and a reduction of wages. They demanded to meet with the employer. Their peaceful action was totally crushed by the government. We immediately gathered information about the owner and organized a protest action in front of the owner's garment factory in Hong Kong as well as at the Cambodian consulate.

The situation of women workers in China is equally appalling. With the lack of effective government enforcement of our labour code, foreign corporate owners have been able to have a free reign. Many women workers were

killed, or disabled as a result of factory fires and other industrial accidents. The plastic toys of McDonalds are made in China under horrendous and unsafe working conditions. Recently, three women workers died of toxic fume poisoning and over two hundred and fifty people were hospitalized. Others endured abuse and harrassment, and our repeated pleas have no effect on the oppressive and closed off policies of the Chinese government.

Right now all eyes are on Hong Kong because of 1997, because of the repatriation in 1997. In less than two weeks Hong Kong will really be going back to China. The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions has been supportive of the repatriation. As Chinese people, it is good to see Hong Kong freed from colonial rule.

However, we are concerned with the pending legislation that would tighten the space for workers to exercise our democratic rights.

We believe that women's issues would be further marginalized. As of June 30th the democratically elected legislatures would be asked to quote "step off the train" and in come a new group of legislatures. Since they are not elected by the people, there is no accountability. They are basically the state's agents, the promoters of the Chinese gov-



ernment. How can we expect any improvement on labour and womens' issues from this group of new legislatures who are predominantly wealthy business man and employers? On July 1st, the gains that were made on womens' equality, may well be over and we will be going back to square one. We are prepared for the worst but, we will not give up!

We want to strengthen our sisters' participation and space in our labour movement. We want to devote more time in training more grassroots local women's leadership. The fight for women's rights, workers' right and human rights are all parts of the same fight for workers in Hong Kong and in China. So please do not forget us after July 1st, when Hong Kong is no longer the centre of attention for the world's media. Your support and solidarity will even be more critical for us in the days to come.

Thank you for your support . . .

Finally, I would like to let you know, that we have been working on the streets of Hong Kong, to raise money. We have been doing that for half a year, to raise dollars in order to purchase an office for us where we can continue our work - not a big office but just an office-where we can operate.

We thank the unions and the supporters which have enabled us in raising some money, but we have only succeeded to raise half the amount that we need.

I hope that you will support our efforts, in fund raising and also in the other work that we are doing. I will be sending out some letters to let you know the way that we've been raising dollars and where we are at.

Thank you very much.

Nair Goulart Chair, ORIT Women's Committee Forca Sindical Brazil

June 16, 1997
International Solidarity Evening

Buenas noches. It's a great honour and a great pleasure to be here tonight to share some experiences with you. I think that this Conference is a very important one, not only for women workers in Canada but throughout the continent. I really appreciate the theme that you've selected "to organize and to mobilize". I think that with the work that we're starting - no, we're not really starting it - it's work that has been ongoing and that we are now pursuing within ORIT.

ORIT will represent 34 million working people in the hemisphere, and about 40% are women. Very briefly I would like to talk about our experiences in Brazil tonight. There are 150 million inhabitants in Brazil. 52% are women, and 47% of the activists are women. In the discussions I've heard so far, there are many similar problems among women. Our women in Brazil are facing very difficult conditions. They work in precarious jobs. They work in ghettos. They're mostly found in centres such as education, health care, services,

retail, and of course what is growing at the fastest pace is the informal sector. Something else that is happening in Brazil is that there is a greater number of women working in sectors that were traditionally male dominated.

But nowhere do women get the recognition that they deserve. They also get lower pay than the men who work in the same positions. Our priorities are to give value and to prioritize the value of women's work. We want to improve women's working conditions, and the quality of women's work. We want to raise their skills and educate them so they have access to better paid jobs. And we want also to give them the skills necessary to occupy positions in the decision making structures of our organizations. Despite identifying those two priorities, we find that women in Brazil still face tremendous challenges, barriers and obstacles. Trade unions in Brazil are very much still male dominated and it's very difficult for women to participate in unions. Women who actually join unions and want to play an active role are labelled as being this or that,



and they're ostracized. So we've been working a lot with the women to give them the skills, the confidence, the self-esteem necessary to face these barriers and to be able to act. One of the things we've sought to promote is the establishment, the creation of women's committees, women's structures and women's departments in our affiliated unions.

We have also worked closely with different women's groups and NGO's. When we drew up our work plan we set out as one of our priorities, a plan for equal opportunity. We will be working a lot on the pay inequality that exists in Brazil. We are also developing a very big campaign to protest - to put an end to the practices of sterilization. Because in many workplaces women are still forced to undergo pregnancy tests before they are hired.

We are also working on a campaign on the issue of violence against women. In Brazil, sexual harassment is a major problem, not only in the workplace but also within the trade union movement.

Another issue that is very important for us today is the issue of collective bargaining. We have sectoral bargaining in Brazil - municipality by municipality; it is done on an annual basis. There are thousands of collective agreements negotiated on an annual basis.

But, women are not there, and therefore, their concerns and their needs and their problems are not reflected in the agreements that are negotiated. The only real issue we find in most of our collective agreements is maternity leave. That's really the only one. We want to introduce new clauses, we want to raise women's issues in collective agreements.

Another issue I would like to talk about briefly, that is of concern to us, and one we're working on, is affirmative action. This specifically is of concern with regard to multinational corporations that come into Brazil that don't have any kind of concern for the conditions of our workers, of our people, even though in their countries of origin, they act in a different way.

We're working on the issue of quotas for women in our organizations. It's important for you to know that there are three national labour centres in Brazil. The largest, most representative, organization is CUT which has a 30% quota for women in positions of leadership. In my organization, Forca Sindical, this is one of the issues that we will bring to our next Congress. We will demand a 30% quota in leadership positions in my organization.

Finally, I would like to raise three points, related to the issues that you're looking at here, in terms of organizing and

mobilizing. I want to talk about one of the major barriers to women's participation. One of our major problems is how to reconcile our family responsibilities and our work. The structures of our organizations simply do not allow for greater participation of women. The lack of child care, the hours when meetings are set, all of those are tremendous obstacles for women's participation.

Another issue is lack of solidarity among women themselves. We need greater solidarity, more solidarity, we need to support each other more. And we know the men have mechanisms which divide. They use mechanisms to divide and to create divisions among women, pitting one woman against another woman, groups of women against each other, fostering divisions and disputes.

There is another important point. It's the difference between our public behaviour and our private behaviour. We've been trained, we've been socialized to act in a private way. We know how to do this in our families and in our communities, but when we go to the union, it's a public place and we don't know quite how to deal with that face. Men have thousands of years of experience in this!

Finally I'd like to refer to an experience that we're working on in all of the countries of the southern cone, that's the

southern most part of South America. We have just established a women's committee within a co-ordinating body of trade unions from these different countries. That's Argentina and Chile and Bolivia and Brazil and Paraguay and Uruguay. We've just managed to create a women's committee. The main objective of this committee is to enable us to share experience, to share information, to share knowledge among ourselves, particularly as it relates to the process of integration and the Mercosur process that's happening in our countries. Because up to now the impact of integration on women has not been dealt with by our unions in an adequate way.

I'd just like to share with you as well, that in Brazil, the women of the three union organizations really have been working together in this last while. We've been working together to develop joint strategies, so that we can move forward on our issues, within our organization. As Nancy mentioned, on March 8th we had a wonderful event in Brazil which brought together thousands of women, organized by the three organizations, and we dealt with issues of importance to women like health, violence against women, women and politics. And now I would like to invite Nancy who is with us, to come and show you how we talk about solidarity in Brazil.

(Anna Nitoslawska did consecutive translation)



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Funmi Elesho
Women's Desk Office
National Union of Textile, Garment and
Tailoring Workers, Nigeria

June 16, 1997
International Solidarity Evening

Funmi is the Executive officer of the National Union of Textile in Garment Workers of Nigeria. She's responsible for the womens' desk which is part of the education and research department in the union. The political persecution in Nigeria is severe. Back in November 1994, the assassination of Ken Saro-Wiwa prompted world wide protest.

Since then, the union movement has faced very difficult situations. The military government continues to rule by decree, and places severe limitations on trade union activities. That context may give you a better sense of what women workers in Nigeria are facing in this politically repressive time. It is my pleasure to be with you even though three or four were supposed to be here for the Conference. I'm the only one who could make it because of the immigration problems we have. Also, I could not pre-

pare a written speech from Nigeria, because if I had done so, they would have seized it at immigration. So, what I have here, are pieces of papers, I tried to put together.

After the presidential election of 1993, which was a free election, the military government annulled the election. The political and economic situation in Nigeria was very unstable. As a result, investors relocated their industries outside Nigeria, and the people that were really affected by the destabilisation are mostly women. Now there are many small industries and we've been having some problems organizing them into the unions. I work for the National Union of Textile, Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria. It is supposed to be a national union of textile and garment workers and tries to organize smaller sectors.

The Nigerian Labour Congress itself was dissolved in 1994 by the military government and they appointed the whole administration of the

Congress. We have this whole administration which is supportive of the military government and to make sure that the rule continues they dissolved the union leaders. We don't have a leadership and anything we do is by military decree. It's making union activities very difficult for us in Nigeria. Most of our leaders, who are very active, are men. They are locked up in prison for no reason, and we don't know why they are detained in prison. Before I left Nigeria, still we could not affiliate with any international organizations. For that reason, I suppose my superiors fear that if they to come to Canada there could be problems, knowing that the relationship with Nigeria and Canada is to be discrete. Now since most male leaders are locked up, we the women are coming out to test some of the decrees.

We had programs creating awareness amongst our women at the grassroots, to know what our government is trying to do. How they are creating this disability between the union and the people. Part-time officers do not have any rights to be elected to be president of the union. Our leaders are not allowed to go in for leadership election. The federal government said by July 1997 we are

going to come out with candidates for the Nigerian Labour Congress. The government has its own people for the Nigerian Labour Congress. We have a group called the progressives. The progressives are now - most of them are women - coming out to say: we don't want the elections. If the election comes at the end of July 1997, we decided we will boycott the election. The federal government will not listen to our union leaders, so, the women trade unionists have formed a group. We have a group now, and are talking to the first lady of the country (Mrs. Miriam Abacha) telling her that she should look into the issues.

Our leaders should be released and the government should allow free and democratic elections of the Nigerian Labour Congress. Because if we don't have elections and we see how this will happen with the government control, we are still handicapped.

There is no activity - we cannot say we really have a democratically elected union - so there is nothing going on in the trade unions in Nigeria. We have the women's commission at the national level of the Nigeria labour congress, then we have the women's week in the union. Since the national body is not functioning, what we do is we each take the opportunity or try to get funds to organize the program of the workshop, or the



seminar. You do your part to help others to attend the program. We don't have a national body so, we cannot have national conferences. We never had one - what we have are small meetings.

We also organize educational activities. Because what the federal government does is, they go around the industrial unions, try to create divisions and break the union institute. Because we have some for the government now and want another group for the progressive movement. So what we are doing now is to go around and talk to the grassroots, people at the plants, we want to form industrial unions instead and let our government know of our intentions to start industrial unions. We've not really had any assistance from the federal government for the programs that we've been having. And what we have is instability.

There was a program we had and they came in. They drove everybody out of the hall and seized all the seminar materials. It is very difficult inviting women to such programs because most of them don't want to come out again.

We wrote letters of protest to the federal government, we wrote to the commission. Still, they did not say anything. We had another program and we thought that these people are coming to the opening ceremonies. We saw the opportunity we had to let them participate. They were from the government. What we now do is organize meetings between ourselves because we cannot really know who works for the government. Still, you can be detained for no reason.

With all the problems that I have mentioned, the women are not able to do a lot because of the military.

We hope maybe by the end of next year, we can have a democratic election and be able to elect the leaders we want. The women are contesting - in our own way - in the highest way we can. We are dealing with the situation as best as we can, and we hope that at the end of year that we can all look into the issues for women. I will be happy to talk with you following the meeting and maybe something can come of our talks.

Thank you.

Kiké Roach Activist and Co-author of *"Politically Speaking"*

June 17, 1997

Panel: How can we organize,
mobilize and win?

How's everybody?
That's the kind of
response you get from union
women! I like the energy in
this room!

Bonjour !

You know I'm constantly
seeing things in the news
everyday that just add to my
inventory of rage. You know
what those things are; you
know those proclamations
that Canada is the number
one country, only because
they're ignoring what happens
to women in this country,
ignoring the fact that when
women in Canada are taken
into account, Canada comes in
47th in the world or when it
comes to pay equity between
men and women. These are
not the things that we hear
about. We don't hear about
the fact that child poverty is
the worst in Canada of all the
industrialized nations. We
don't talk about the fact that
we have a long way to go.

And when I'm walking
through my inventory of rage,
I start wondering, who is
responding to this malaise of
mean spiritedness that we're
seeing in society today? Who
is resisting the economic are

anguish that the money lenders
are exacting on us today? Who is
standing up to pro-poverty politi-
cians, who are constantly singing
the gospel of globalization? Who
is counteracting the right-wing
intellectual fashion of co-opting
our language, co-opting the word
"revolution" and "equality"?

You know, Preston Man-
ning is going around talking
about how he wants equality for
all the provinces. But when he's
asked how recognizing the fact
that Quebec is a distinct society
creates inequality, he can't an-
swer the question.

Who's counteracting that
intellectual fashion of co-opting
our words? You can see it in the
young women. Somebody is
counteracting it with a radical
chic, a radical chic of building
real solidarity, between
marginalised people. And I'm
glad to be here, to be here today
with you, because I know that I
don't have to wonder who's
doing all of this. I don't have to
be worried that there's no oppo-
sition. Because I know that it's
women doing it. It's women
doing it, it's women doing it, it's
women doing it! It's women in
unions, women in communities,
who are setting the pace, who
are taking up the challenge, who



are putting forth the foot of leadership. You can see it everywhere. You can see it in young women who tried to organize a union in the retail clothing stores. You can see it in the young people who organized a union at McDonalds. You can see it in the women, the laundry workers in Calgary. You can see it in the Maritime women who are organizing to save unemployment insurance. You can see it in the hundreds of thousands of people who came out - I think by no accident under the leadership of two powerful sisters - during the Days of Action in Toronto. You can see it all across the nation, as women gather together, demanding bread and roses, jobs and justice. You can see it in the young women that I joined with to form "Embarrass Harris". You can see it in the women leading coalitions against racism.

And then of course, you can feel it. You can feel it in the feminist forerunners who fought to give each one of us a piece of the freedom that we hold today. Sometimes not even knowing, not even being aware and fully conscious of how hard our freedom is fought for. It was struggled for at a time when unions were illegal. It was struggled

for at a time when women weren't even considered persons. You can see women in leadership, and so I think that Mary McCloud Bethune, was right when she said: "Next to God, we are indebted to women, of course for life itself, and then for making it worth living".

And we saw it, we saw incredible women's energy pouring out across this nation, in the March against Poverty, which was a tremendous achievement, an historical achievement. No other time in history have we seen such a huge gathering of women of all different backgrounds, all different races, all different classes, sexual orientations, languages, gathering together in huge numbers to demand justice. And what we saw there was even more important, another important signal that I want to talk about today. We saw coming together as a coalition between labour groups and community.

The question I want to ask today is how do we build on that power? How do we build on that momentum? How do we keep that going and sustain those kinds of relationships so that we're not always dealing with each other in an ad hoc kind of way? And so the question I have today is really: Can labour and community go steady?

It's a question we have to ask ourselves. I'm proud to be at this Conference because we're talking about organizing, we're talking about creating our future and not just reacting to an agenda imposed by the right. This Conference is on the right track because we're asking these questions. We know that our most powerful, non-violent weapon is - as would be expected - also our most demanding. And that is organization. Organization of people. We know that to produce change people must be organized to work together in units of power. And more and more progressive movements and labour movements are becoming engaged on a critical path, a critical job of organizing people into permanent groups to protect our rights. And I stress permanent.

But what happens, what happens when two different movements that have different cultures come together? What happens when we try to build alliances and become allies when we have different organizing strategies? When we have different organizational cultures? When we sometimes have different everyday problems?

Well I think what happens is like the plane ride that

I had coming over here. You know, we get tired of being grounded. We get tired of being isolated and we want to go to freedom land. We want to arrive there. And so we remember that we have to line up and board the coalition airline. And when we board this coalition airline, we realize that each one of us is bringing some baggage. Baggage that we need to deal with. What's strange about this airline is that when you get on the plane, there are no passengers, there are only participants. And each one of us plays a role in steering our plane to freedom land. But we're not so used to co-piloting labour and community, we're not so used to that relationship. We're charting new skies in that area.

Along the way, we experience a little bit of turbulence, like the kind of turbulence I felt coming over here. And I think that turbulence comes from several different sources. It comes from the two different cultures, the two different realities, and sometimes that leads to some misperceptions between us. Community often is operating on a collective model relying on volunteers, setting an agenda outside of having to deal with men on a constant basis in the women's movement. But com-



munity faces funding problems and insecurity. Sometimes the community organization's mandate is directed or dictated by funders so that you find for example, shelter workers cannot always get out into the streets and do political action. Then on the union side we see a more formalized power structure, where we have a paid staff, and we have layers of decision making happening. And we have different access to resources, so we have to deal with those two different cultures.

We have to recognize that in a society where community groups are coming more and more under attack and labour groups are coming more and more under attack, we're going to need each other more and more. But we have power differentials that we have to address. Community women sometimes don't always see and appreciate what labour women have to deal with in their organizations. Community women sometime do not know about the fight for inclusion, the feminists' fight for inclusion inside what is still pretty much a male dominated kind of structure, and we have to recognize that. Labour women sometimes

might see and know objectively that community groups are facing financial difficulties. But labour groups, labour women might not have to deal with those kinds of financial pressures on a day to day basis. Union women might not see how sometimes those goals that we are trying to reach together might become difficult because of the outside external pressures operating on those community groups.

But we are breaking new ground. We are breaking new ground here. That's what the Women's March was all about. It was about charting new waters. That's significant, and that needs to be celebrated. We were not meant to make these kinds of connections. So in a huge campaign, like the campaign that we had, the Women's March Against Poverty, where we called for bread and roses, it's no surprise that in the process we weren't always smelling the roses. But let me tell you that life is more rewarding, life is always more rewarding when we deal with the difficult, when we name it, when we walk through it, because that's the only way that we can transcend.

Sometimes, you know, when you're in a plane and you experience the turbulence just at that moment when you think that your stomach is going to fall

through the floor, the plane soars higher and you get above it. And that's what can happen to us.

I want to relate to you a story about how we weren't all smelling roses during this important time. I was talking to Judy Rebick, my co-author on the book "Politically Speaking", and she was telling me that after the whole March was over, a woman from NAC came up to her and expressed some frustrations with the work that was being done with the CLC. She was saying it was a really hard time, she was having difficulty communicating with labour women sometimes, and she wasn't feeling in peace. And she said to Judy "they treated me like a peasant". Then quite separately, quite separately, a CLC woman approached Judy and she said, you know this was a really rough ride. You know, I think the NAC women didn't really understand us, they didn't know where we were coming from. They were kind of giving us the cold shoulder sometimes and it was really difficult. And you know "they treated us like peasants". Now, I don't know if this is another instance of great minds thinking alike or what. But it just goes to show you that sometimes in even in our most difficult moments, when we think that we're most

different from each other, we're feeling the same things.

But what happens when we don't articulate that. What happens is that we fall into what I call "activist malpractice". Activist malpractice is when you sweep internal problems under the carpet and you don't name those dynamics. What happens is the baggage gets heavier and heavier. Mistrust comes and it becomes more difficult for us to work together the next time. We have to name those dynamics and recognize those power imbalances, and recognize that each one of us, whether we're in community or in labour groups, each one of us has power. We must recognize and analyse how we use that power.

We must ask ourselves a critical question here I think today. And that is how do we create structures that will deal with those kinds of problems, because now that we've gone through it, we can anticipate the turbulence and veer away from it. We have to put in place those kinds of structures and think strategically about how we're going to deal with those kinds of problems. Because we know, I think if you're like me, we have a sneaking suspicion that's there are going to be more meetings before we achieve what we want to achieve. We're going to be here at the Citadel a few more times before the revolution occurs.



So, we know it's coming. We have to recognize how institutions, whether they're community institutions or labour institutions, shape people's choices. They'll continue to shape our choices in ways that we might not like, as long as we remain unaware of their influences. I think that it's important for us to recognize the ways that difference operates. Audrey Lord said that refusing to recognize difference, makes it impossible for us to see the different problems and pitfalls facing us. There are real differences between race, class, age, sex, labour, community. And it's not those differences that are there that are separating us, but rather it's the refusal to recognize those differences, and examine the distortions which result from the misnaming of them and their effects on human nature and human behaviour.

I remember when we were organizing against Mike Harris, when we were organizing in the Days of Action, there were some great signs out there in the crowd. One of my favourites signs in the protest against the Mike Harris government was "testing, testing, this Mike's not working". There were some other signs that were troubling, and one of them I remember was "First they killed employment

equity; now they're killing employment" I think that is a big message for us, in both labour and community.

Sometimes people in community-unorganized workers - don't feel the presence and the power and the potential and the positivity that can result from being in a union - they feel isolated. They're wondering: where are people, where are they speaking out against affirmative action, continued affirmative action for white men? They're wondering: what happened to all of those groups, all of those groups that were working for employment equity, how come they were silent when it was killed?

This is a big message for us because we always know that we have to look at the patterns of oppression and when we do that, we notice time and time and time again that the most vulnerable in our communities are attacked first. But what happens to the most vulnerable sisters will happen to unions next, will happen to even organized workers next. So that when they killed employment equity next to follow was Bill - 40, the attack on the unions. When they killed black people, when the police shot black people in the streets, next to come was the OPSEU workers who got bashed over the heads for trying to speak up for their rights. When we realized that

the first person that the Mike Harris government came after was Dudley George, a native man, who was killed by the police when he stood up to defend his territory, to make legitimate land claims. Where were we supporting that struggle?

We need to be everywhere. We need to be everywhere, and we need to build that trust back up by being in the forefront of all of those struggles for equality, because they're interconnected. Union walks in the fabric, union is stitched in the fabric of society, stitched in the fabric of community. You know only 30% or less of people are actually organized in unions. That means community is 70%. Unions need to tap into that power. Just as community needs to also come out and support unions when they are on strike. Just as community needs to be there when the teachers are on strike right now. When the postal workers are facing their difficulties.

This is how we will build trust amongst each other by being supporters of our struggles. We can achieve

that. We can achieve great things when we do that. But, what we have to understand is the challenge to ourselves is the greatest challenge, for it is only by making demands on ourselves that we can make successful demands on society. We want to change, we change ourselves, we want progress, we lead by example.

I just want to read a small quote to you from our book "Politically Speaking", where I say contrary to media mythology "feminism and the left do have answers". We've been offering them throughout human history. Today we need to do that more and better. As progressives we need to scrutinize our practices, mobilize our base and articulate our agenda. To paraphrase Martin Luther King Junior — the challenge for the left is to discover how to transform our considerable strength into lasting power. Without struggle there is no progress; power concedes nothing without a demand. We cannot give exploitation any alibis. We need to come together and we need to make the connection between labour and community. We need to speak out on every front when we're pushing forward for equality. Because (song)



***Soon and very Soon
we are gonna change
this World***



I said soon and very soon we are gonna change this world.
Soon and very soon we are gonna change this world.
For ever and ever, we are gonna change this world.
Peace, jobs and justice we are gonna change this world.
Peace, jobs and justice we are gonna change this world.
For ever and ever we are gonna change this world.
Peace, jobs and justice we are gonna change this world.
I said, peace, jobs and justice we are gonna change this world.
For ever and ever, we are gonna change this world.
McDonalds, WalMarts, Starbucks we are gonna change this world.
McD onalds, WalMarts, Starbucks, we are gonna change this world.
For ever and ever, we are gonna change this world.
McDonalds, WalMarts, Starbucks, we are gonna change this world,
McDonalds, WalMarts, Starbucks, we are gonna change this world.
For ever and ever, we are gonna change this world.



***SO SO SO SOLIDARITÉ,
SO SO SO SOLIDARITÉ,
SO SO SOLIDARITÉ,
SO SO SOLIDARITÉ (chant)***

June 17, 1997

Panel: How can we organize,
mobilize and win?

Marie Bergeron Vice-President Québec Federation of Labour

Good day. It is my pleasure to introduce to you Marie Bergeron. Marie Bergeron has been Vice-President of the Women's Bureau at the Quebec Federation of Labour since 1995.

Sister Marie has been active in the Social Affairs department of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and this year celebrates 20 years of union activism. Congratulations.

Sister Marie is going to tell us about a struggle which bore fruit in Quebec—a struggle which brought about pay equity legislation. This victory is owing to the solidarity of central labour bodies and women's groups. We congratulate our sisters in Quebec for their victory. Let us hear their story. Thank you.

Hello!

Quebec is represented here in this room. So I will take a deep breath, because I am very moved to be speaking to you today, and particularly happy to do so on behalf of the women and men in the QFL who have fought this lengthy battle, and for the

women of Quebec who fought along with us.

In one of his fables, Jean de Lafontaine wrote about a wolf, who faced a considerable challenge, but the cunning beast was big enough to boldly defend himself. Minxes that we are, we have encountered some wolves, with big drooling faces, and mischievous little eyes, too. Huge, hairy ears full of wax; big paws, big harmless-looking paws, but ready to beat us about the head. But these wolves faced a pack in Quebec. We came out of our lairs; we spoke out, and finally, in the fall of 1996, legislation; our proactive pay equity legislation was adopted, and will enter into force this fall.

In Quebec, the pay equity saga has been going on for 10 years. In 1987, the YWCA organized a conference on social equity, and invited women who belonged to unions and women's groups of every stripe. A resolution was passed in favour of creating a coalition to promote pay equity. Its slogan was: "We will be quiet when our demands are met". Today, we have lowered the pitch, but are silent no more. The exercise has been too positive; we have yet to enjoy what we have won. In other words, we have



obtained the essential tool for continuing our struggle; the struggle that belongs to us. In 1989, the QFL organized a major symposium on pay equity, and at the convention that followed, the whole proactive aspect of the legislation we were demanding was raised. It is worth noting that the QFL, during the election campaign of the Parti Québécois in 1994, was the only labour organization to demand that the party include proactive pay equity legislation in its platform. Beginning in 1990, the word "solidarity" assumed its full significance.

A genuine united front developed of women, unions and anti-poverty groups. These activists made pay equity one of their top concerns, and decided to support all phases leading up to this legislation. QFL leaders, members, affiliates—all worked closely and came together to defeat the constant opposition of employers and show what makes good sense in a rather gloomy economic context. In Quebec, a number of labour organizations: the CNTU, the QFL, and women's groups, including the Fédération des femmes du Québec, worked in unity. Quebec will recall that a movement is possible when it is supported mainly by women. And so the various activities are multiplying. We

raise our members' awareness, inform them, train them, and decide when there has been harassment.

For once, it will come from us, and the government has just understood that it will never again have peace. Women take pleasure in the struggle. The knowing pleasure of taking power that is not given to them. The power of solidarity, that comes honourably of mutual recognition, mutual respect for our differences and a coming together through the simple recognition of the injustices we have suffered in silence since the time of our grandmothers, since Eve and Adam (that is, since Eden). Together, nothing can stop us.

In 1994, during its election campaign, the Parti québécois promised to consider the matter. In 1995, it was elected, and promised us, during the referendum campaign, that its government would enact proactive legislation with teeth. Could it be that the wolves lost their bite? The whole country will not forget, in the spring of 1995, the Women's March Against Poverty organized by the Fédération des femmes du Québec, in which the QFL joined and which made pay equity one of its top nine demands. Bread and Roses came to symbolize the struggles of those women and men concerned about social injustice, and I am sure that some of you will pass on the posters and photos we had laminated.

In this regard, in the wake of the 1995 March, women worked to get the Fédération des femmes to organize a worldwide March Against Poverty. A first letter has been sent out, I believe mostly on the Internet, and 150 women's groups in 42 countries have expressed their interest in a joint event in response to this letter. At the last general meeting of the Fédération des femmes du Québec, a joint demand was formulated and adopted unanimously. It states, more or less, that women should benefit from 50 percent of the world's wealth while producing no more than 50 percent of this wealth, including work in the home. According to the latest world statistics, women produce 70 percent of the wealth, and reap barely 20 to 25 percent of the benefits.

Another letter is now being prepared and will be sent out early in the fall to all interested women and groups, proposing that a week of activities be organized in each country, ending October 17 in the year 2000—October 17, because the UN has declared that day World Poverty Day. So I think I can announce to you that all CLC affiliates should receive this letter in the fall.

Let's get back to us sheep. In the summer of 1996, the Fédération des femmes, again with the QFL, organized

a vigil on Parliament Hill to reiterate our demands, and that same summer, the National Women's March Against Poverty was organized by the CLC and NAC. What these large gatherings have in common is that they revealed to us the pleasure of being together.

Other, shall we say smaller-scale, demonstrations were organized in Québec. In March 1996, the QFL went back on the attack during the summit on the social and economic future of Québec, and made equity a priority at that summit. The QFL took part in many public and government consultations, and numerous early-morning meetings took place between QFL and government officials.

Open letters, all kinds of forums, press conferences—we attended numerous public events that received extensive media coverage.

I can tell you that there are women seated here in this room who came close to running their personal expense accounts into the red. Sometimes it took a last-minute perm, a new blouse, a bit of professional make-up to hide the signs of fatigue which were becoming increasingly visible. The forums multiplied.

Activities were organized by the Status of Women Committees of the three central labour bodies: the QFL, the CNTU, and the CSN to put pressure on the government.



Our media campaign centred on the theme PAS QUESTION DE NOYER LE POISSON [NO SIDESTEPPING THE ISSUE], and including the distribution of buttons and handouts, was a big success and showed that labour organizations and women throughout Québec would not be stopped in their struggle.

So all these activities, meetings, political interventions helped mobilize our ranks and allies. In a few words, what are the factors of success in a mobilization of this scope? I would say first of all our union leaders must have the political will to make pay equity a priority. Every opportunity, every forum, every strong political moment, networks, every network, must be used to speak about it. There must be an action plan, and alliances formed between labour organizations, as well as with other interest groups, such as other women's groups. Links must be formed and contacts cultivated in the political parties, including among the female members of the various parties and with MPs, to get information and get our messages through. This important issue must be among our main union priorities and given prominence whenever possible. Never, never, never let an opportunity go by; every opportunity is a good one. Of course, we must inform, raise awareness, organize activities and encourage each other.

It is also very important to lay the groundwork, because both unions and employers will be obliged, under this legislation, to implement it in the struggle that is yet to come which will not be an easy one. The QFL has an action plan that emphasizes basic and specialized labour training. The development of course materials, the freeing up of sufficient resources within our ranks in the area of pay equity; the exchange of experiences between different QFL affiliates; the continuation of the work of the Pay Equity Coalition: information, awareness, political pressure; continued contacts with the Pay Equity Commission; influencing the work of the Commission; participation in consultations and task forces with the Commission; the continued negotiation of all aspects of pay equity; seeing the legislation as a minimum, as a new tool in the struggle for equality.

So you, the women of Quebec, provide us with a very fine opportunity to thank you most sincerely for all the co-operation and support you have given us and shown in our long quest for pay equity.

In closing, I will recall a phrase cited by Edouardo Galiano in *Open Veins of Latin America*—about the jungle of the defence in La Paz in 1809. "We have kept a silence that seems very like stupidity." It is now 1997. For all of us, all women in Quebec, all women across the country, silence never again.

Thank you.

Karen Nussbaum Women's Director AFL-CIO

June 17, 1997

Panel: How can we organize,
mobilize and win?

Bonjour, merci beaucoup. Thank you, good morning. Thank you Nancy Riche, Pat Wright. I bring greetings from the new leadership of the AFL-CIO, from President John Sweeney, Secretary-treasurer Richard Tromka, and Executive Vice-president Lynda Chavez-Thompson.

I come from a newly created Women's Department. It's just a little over a year old. For the first time in the over 100 year history of the AFL-CIO in the United States we have a Women's Department. I like to think that they've been waiting for the right person for the job, but I think actually they were waiting for the CLC Womens' Committee to do it right. And clearly you do it right, with conferences which continually bring in new people, with your remarkable collaboration with women's organizations and your set aside for women and people of colour in your leadership. Although I do have to say that the Brazilian union federation has done you one

better on this. Our sister last night did talk about the minimum of 30% of women on the board the executive board of the union central. But in fact, she neglected to tell you that in an act of transcendent optimism, they also established a maximum of 70%. I thought that was really a wonderful example of opening your minds to the range of possibilities, which is what we must do. I am more hopeful now. I feel like my mind is more open to the range of possibilities than ever before in my 25 years of organizing working women.

It is the changes in the American workforce, and the changes in the American labour movement that I want to briefly talk about this morning. Twenty five years ago, I was a clerical worker, working in the University of Massachusetts. I joined millions of women who were newly entering the workforce in the United States, which was the biggest change that had taken place in that century. I thought we would be the next wave of union organizing. I thought we would ride the impulse of the women's



movement in the way that factory workers had transformed the labour movement in the 30's and public sector workers had transformed the labour movement in the 60's. We women would be the next thing coming.

But instead we operated against the backdrop of decline. The decline of the standard of living of American working families, the decline in political power of unions and the decline in our membership, a steep decline in the membership of the union movement. We operated with a growing gap between the rich and the rest, which has now reached historic proportions. It is greater than it is in any other industrialized nation in the world.

Well what do these changes mean? Let me give you a little snap shot of what it's like. There is a new study out, just last month, which says: "Older workers are forced to stay on the job longer because they can no longer afford to retire. The majority of children in child care in the United States are in child care arrangements which are deemed to be dangerous. Not just bad, but dangerous. Every year another million Americans go without health insurance; now 40 million Americans do not have any kind of help in the United

States. Yes, it is shameful. Again, we are the only industrialized nation, save South Africa, that does not have national health insurance.

Every hour in the United States one worker is fired for organizing. Someone loses his or her job just to have a say on the job. Trying to organize to have a right to a say on the job, is the most costly right that any American tries to exercise. It's far more costly than the right to freedom of religion, the right to free speech or assembly. It's only the right to have a say on the job that will cost you your job.

In April Business Week, our national business journal in the United States, came out with an annual report on corporate executive pay, CEO pay. Now it did say that average American workers' pay last year rose three percent. That is pretty good, but if you want to hear "good", listen to this. CEO pay packages last year were up 54%. Now, that is astonishing. That means that if a CEO was working 10 hours every day, and let's say they work really hard and that they worked every single day last year - they would be averaging sixteen hundred dollars an hour! And this is on top of an increase the previous year of 30%! It means that top CEO's in the U.S. have seen their pay double in the last two years, making them earn - and I use the word earn advisably - 209 times what the average factory

worker earns. Of course, it would be even greater for the average clerical worker, the average retail worker, the average domestic worker, the average nursing home aids. If you have trouble rapping your mind 209 times 1,600 dollars an hour, and I do too, just think of it this way. In the US, we typically get paid Friday. I go home with one pay cheque usually. Imagine going home with 10 pay cheques. Imagine going home with 50, 100, 209 pay cheques every single week for the whole year. That is what a CEO effectively does. No wonder US business are having trouble figuring out what they are doing in the new world economy. They can't figure out how to spend their personal income. It takes an awful lot of time, just to manage that.

Now, the good news in all of this is that people understand what is going on far better than they did five or ten years ago in the U.S. Another way to put it is that consciousness is finally catching up with economic conditions. Changes that began a generation ago but were misunderstood or too frightening to contemplate are now being better understood by most Americans.

And even Business Week is alarmed. They wrote a cover story with the title: "Executive pay is out of control".

Even they know it's out of control and they are worried about how extraordinarily extreme it's gotten.

The AFL-CIO recently conducted a poll. In the poll, 70% of workers said that the following proposition was their number one concern: The corporations have become too greedy. That's the number one cause of their economic problems. A vast majority of workers believe companies are not loyal to their employees and boost short term profits, stock prices and executive salaries at the expense of employees. Workers did not think that five or ten years ago. Three out of four people say they don't trust employers to treat employees fairly. That is even worse than a year ago when we saw a new low of two out of three people who don't trust their employers. Now the reason that is especially important or appropriate to be talking about here at the women's conference is that women care about all of this much more than do men. Women understand it even better than do men.

In the US we have a phenomenon called "a gender gap in politics". Simply put, this means that women vote better than men. It's a very pronounced gap. In the last elections it was 17 points. Among union women it was even higher; it was a 21 point gap in how they voted. There is also a gender gap in



organizing and it's for very many of the same reasons. In the US this gender gap in politics often got referred to as the "soccer moms". Those women who actually live in working class suburbs and who balance work and family. Women are far more likely to identify corporate greed as our number one problem. In fact more women have organized in the last twelve years than have men. In the polling, in the U.S. when you ask an organized worker, "Would you vote for a union tomorrow?" 49% of the women say yes and 40% of men say yes. Now, in the U.S. unions have been on the decline. To hear the public talk about it, you would think that no one was in favour of unions. In this context, it is extraordinary that 49% of women say if they were given the chance they would vote for a union tomorrow. They also say that they believe in collective action, and that it is better to join together than it is to get ahead on your own. Now, I think that we need to act like we know this, and I don't believe that certainly our labour movement has done that in the past.

In fact, when I first started organizing women I got every excuse in the book about why you can't organize

women, which largely came down to a one simple word which was: WEAK. We're too weak: we don't have a strong attachment to the workplace; we're too close to the boss; we don't really think of ourselves as workers; we're not going to stay in the job; we won't confront problems. The whole range of reasons recently was supplanted by one union organizer when I said: "Women are actually far better potential sources of union strength". And, he said to me: "Organize women! Of course everyone knows you can organize women. It's the men we need to worry about". The fact of the matter is women are the future of the labour movement. I'm happy to report that the new leadership of the AFL-CIO finally understands that. The new AFL-CIO has organizing as our number one priority. In our budget, 30% of our dues goes to organizing. This is true for the AFL-CIO and we're trying to make it true for every single union, for every single local, for every single entity within the AFL-CIO. It defines our politics; we will hold politicians accountable to whether they will support the right to organize. It defines our international affairs. We will build on our new strengths, organizing particularly among women, among people of colour and among young people. In our

polling, we find young people are more supportive of unions. And that's where we will concentrate. But, we will also rebuild our traditional areas. The Steelworkers are rebuilding basic steel. The autoworkers are organizing auto parts suppliers. The public sector unions are chasing down privatization and organizing the workers who are moved out of the public sector into private agencies. We are also organizing in new areas in the U.S. that have not ever been organized. Doctors are organizing; bookstore clerks are organizing at Borders Bookstore among other place; and even strippers are organizing. At the Lucky Slipper Club in San Francisco strippers recently organized and had a hard contract campaign. Their slogan was "Bad girls want good contracts".

We're going to act like it's a crisis because it is a crisis, we're going to speak for all workers, not just workers in unions, and we're going to talk with all workers - have a very big broad conversation, in a language we share. The way we're doing that in the Working Women's Department is through our campaign called "Ask a Working Woman".

My experience has been that when you talk with work-

ing women these days, they are confident about themselves as workers, about their ability to hold things together in the home and to do a good job on the job, even though it's darn hard to do. But women show a remarkable sense of accomplishment in being able to do it.

But, do we ever ask women about what's wrong and how to fix it? No we don't. We have a wealth of experience and it should be brought right up to the surface, and then taken advantage of. That's why we have a survey called "Ask A Working Woman". Right after the session this morning, I want you all to take one and to fill it out. We're having that conversation not just with union women, but with women who are not in unions. Union women who talk to their best friends, who have distributed them at prayer groups and beauty parlours, in libraries and laundromats, at soccer games and baseball games. Just about every place you can think about. We've gone on a national tour, to talk to working women, on the job and in their communities. We're going to hold a conference in Washington, and we'd love to have many of you join us and show us even more about how you do it right.



We'll use all that information from the survey and the conversations for a mandate for organizing, for politics and for policy. Now if this sound somewhat like your campaign, that I've learned about since I've been here, it can only be for one reason, and that must be that great minds think alike.

I want to just end by telling you a story of a woman I met in New York, an office worker named Lynda. When I asked what she needed to make change on the job she said: "I've got plenty of information. It is power I don't have". She's waiting for us and we need to become, on both sides of the border, what she needs. A source of incredible power. Thank you very much.

Pat Wright

Sisters on your behalf, I'd like to thank Karen for her words of wisdom. It shows us that indeed wise minds do think alike, because we do still have the gender gap here, same as you have the gender gap there. We do know how to vote better than men, and that's why you'll see that our interests still have not yet come to the forefront, because we still have to get the guys out of the way so they'll let us at it. And we're working on that. As you spoke I was reminded of a statement by Deloris Beraro, communist leader in Spain around the turn of the century, who said, "it's better to die on your feet than live on your knees". And we ain't gonna live on our knees. Thank you very much.

June 17, 1997
Big Surprise Event

Judy Darcy, President Canadian Union of Public Employees Introduction of Alexa McDonough

We are hot tonight eh! What a great honour and privilege it is for me to be able to introduce our guest speaker for this session who is the leader of the New Democratic Party, Alexa McDonough.

I'm going to keep my comments very brief, because I am just barely recovering my voice - I left it in Alexa McDonough's campaign headquarters the night of the election! That day, that night, is one I'm sure everybody in this room will remember for many years! I know where I was and that was in a car with two sisters from CUPE Nova Scotia, driving from New Glasgow to Alexa's headquarters in Halifax - hearing the news come in. At that point they said six New Democrats were elected, and one leading just in Atlantic Canada. We had a hard time staying on the road! I remember I called back home to my partner and a friend of mine in Saskatchewan, cause I knew they hadn't heard the news yet, and kind of whispered it, cause you don't know if it's

quite legal. And they acted like: "Are you on drugs or something Judy? You mean we've almost got official party status, just in Atlantic Canada?" I said: "It's true, I haven't been smoking or drinking anything. I swear to God it's true".

Then as we went across the country the results kept pouring in. At the CLC Executive meeting last week, everybody wanted to claim they're from Atlantic Canada or have roots there because of the really impressive showing from Atlantic Canada. The results poured in from across the country and what a party there was at the Lord Nelson Hotel in Halifax, as there were parties across this country.

As Alexa was saying all the way in this election campaign, our goal is to elect a caucus that is going to wake up the Liberals and shake up Ottawa. And that's the kind of caucus we've elected. Eight women, count them. And I understand we're talking nine trade unionists. Is that the latest count? Ten, - our numbers are growing and we'll organize the rest of them, right? But in addition to the strong trade union representation, and representation from women, we also have



an Aboriginal member, we also have the first black Nova Scotian, and we have a caucus from sea to sea to sea.

Let me just pay a special tribute to Alexa McDonough for the kind of leadership that she showed in this election campaign. I know that it made every working woman, every trade unionist in this country proud. It was Alexa McDonough and her team who were out there saying jobs are the number one priority, and we've got to keep that issue on the front burner. It was Alexa who was the first one, not Jean Charest, the first one to call Preston Manning what he was, a bigot who was instilling hatred and she said we have to go on the offensive against that kind of

thing. It was also Alexa who was the only leader, the only leader who stood up and said we are one of the wealthiest countries on the face of the earth, yes, we can afford child care, yes we can afford pay equity. And she was the only leader prepared to come and debate the other leaders on women's issues.

Under Alexa's leadership, I don't think there's any doubt about it, neither Jean Chrétien nor Paul Martin, nor Preston Manning, are going to know what hit them. Because our party is going to shake up Ottawa and wake up the government. Please welcome Alexa McDonough, our leader.

June 17, 1997
Special Event

Alexa McDonough, Leader, New Democratic Party

Well Nancy, Judy, Caucus sisters and brothers, and fellow trade unionist sisters and brothers. I just can't tell you how excited I am to be here with you today. Obviously, there's a lot of excitement in this room and Judy is right. It is a lot like the campaign headquarters and the victory party on June 2nd, where people came together to celebrate a victory in which we all share, and for which we all share credit. I'm just delighted to be here today, to express, from the bottom of my heart, the appreciation of myself and my colleagues, for the tremendous support that you've given us. Not just during this election campaign, but over the last two years since we began this process of re-building and coming up to this very important election. Thank you from all of us. Canadians are going to be the better for it.

You know this is a first for me today. This is actually the first time that I have made a speech since I became a Member of Parliament, because this morning we were sworn in as Members of Parliament.

It's actually the first major occasion at which I have spoken since I've been leader of an officially recognized political party. I am absolutely delighted to say that I am the first leader, not just of the New Democratic Party, but of a federal political party that has an almost gender balanced caucus.

Let me say how thrilled I am to have this wonderful group of colleagues, ten of them out of the trade union movement - and, if I may say eight from Atlantic Canada - a tremendous team of New Democrats that are going to represent the concerns, the real concerns of working people from coast to coast to coast over the next four to five years in the Parliament of Canada.

I know how hard many of you have worked. You've worked hard as candidates, as campaign managers, as campaign volunteers and you've been with us every step of the way. Everywhere I have gone across the country, you have been working to get our message out and to get our votes out. Both are important. You did your job well and we're looking forward to continuing to work with you to make sure, now that we have



made history, that we're going to make a real difference in the years that lie ahead.

Thank you for helping us to progress this far, but the real work begins when Parliament convenes. We're counting on you to help us do that job. What is the real work in that upcoming session of Parliament? The real work is keeping our promise. Our promise is that not a single week will be allowed to go by, where the New Democratic Party will not hold the Liberal government accountable on jobs. Not a single day will be allowed to go by that we will fail to hold the Liberals accountable for the things that really matter to ordinary working people in this country. That means jobs are the real priority. That's going to be a big change, because we've seen over the last three and a half years, a situation where this government has been accountable for practically nothing.

You know there's nothing really startling about the Liberals not keeping their promises. I mean it doesn't exactly cause shock waves to find the Liberals abandoning their election promises. But what has been a shock to Canadians and what has caused immense hardship and heartache in this country over the last three and a half years, is the fact that the

Liberals **have gotten away with breaking all of their promises.** So let me tell you that "that" is going to stop because the last Parliament of Canada has let down Canadians. Let them down very badly. Nobody more so than Canadian women.

Just look at jobs for a moment. Last year the only increase for jobs for women was in part-time jobs. More than one third of women in Canada meet the OECD definition of low-paid - a disgrace in a country with the wealth of Canada! Look at the way Ottawa treats its own workers. The Liberals have reneged on a billion dollar pay equity settlement, for 80,000 women in the federal Public Service. They're not going to continue to get away with these things.

Look at the way Ottawa has targeted its cuts. Nobody disagrees that the budget has to be balanced, that we have to do something about the deficit, but corporate tax loop holes are absolutely sacred. You can't touch them. Apparently, you can gut unemployment insurance, you can make it harder to qualify for maternity benefits, and aim the cuts squarely at part-time workers, and seasonal workers and at women who make up 70% of the part-time work force. Apparently you can slash health and education, throw thousands of women out of work. Apparently you can

ditch the Liberal promise of a National Child Care Program and make things worse for women who are struggling to try to get out of the poverty trap. But the issue is not whether the Liberals have broken their promises. The issue is how we can make sure that they start keeping their promises, because we are there to demand accountability. We know over the last three and a half years, we've had the Reform Party absolutely pre-occupied with its own narrow agenda. And the Bloc that's been similarly pre-occupied with its own destructive agenda - not committed to make Canada work for all Canadians, but committed to persuading Canadians that Canada can't work, that Canada can never work. Let me say in the clearest possible terms, that the pledge that we as New Democratic members of Parliament make to you and to all the people of Canada is that we are going to make Parliament work for Canadians. That includes putting Canadians back to work, because that's what's going to make this country work.

There's a lot to celebrate, and it's exciting everywhere you go these days. I think people feel a sense of renewed hope. Exactly what we hoped to achieve in this campaign.

But, let it not mask the fact this is a very serious time. A very serious time for Canadians. The time demands that serious people with a serious commitment get down to business in the House of Commons, and that is exactly what we are going to do on jobs, on health care, on education, on the environment, on tackling the national disgrace of growing poverty and working towards real equality.

We went across this country and we said we have a clear set of priorities and that we're going to fight for them. We made that commitment and we're going to keep that commitment, and those are our priorities and they are clear. Canadians indicated that's what they want us to do and we're going to do it. But let's be frank, it's not going to be easy to make progress in this Parliament. Reform is absolutely determined, and I don't think we expect that to change, to continue playing with their hot buttons in public. There's no question that is what Reform thinks politics is about. And the Bloc is going to continue as well, to try to persuade people that we cannot make this country work. We are going to have to struggle in that environment. We are going to have to maintain a focus, and that means keeping the Liberals feet to the fire.

Most of all we're going to have to put forward a positive



agenda. We must continue to keep people on board, with a commitment to work for a better way to do these things. It's easy to say we have to make the top priority jobs, but we have to get on with talking about how we do that. We have to demand that the banks be required to re-invest in our communities, to create jobs. Heaven knows they're making massive profits. We have to re-commit to the public sector and that means child care, that means elder care, and that means recognizing that there are a lot of things that we do best by doing them together as community. That's what the public sector is. We've got to show the way in finding a better balance. A better balance between the unemployed and the overworked. Heaven knows women live with that daily reality. Underpaid, overworked and very often not recognized for the importance of the work they do. We've got to fight not just to save medicare, that's not good enough. We've got to move medicare forward, to include prescription drugs and home care, and primary home-health care, because that is what is required if we are going to have any semblance of a universal health care system left.

With respect to our young people, we're talking about two kinds of commitments. We've

got to make sure that our children are getting the best possible start in life; that is not happening in this country today, with the growing disgrace of child poverty. We know the increase in poverty among children is because there is an increase in poverty amongst families. We have got to develop a comprehensive strategy for what we do about that. The second kind of concern about our children relates to youth. We have an unbelievable situation in this country today: over 24% of the young people who do not have the benefit of post-secondary education, cannot find a job. Those who have done what they were told they needed to do to get ahead, to get on with their lives, stayed in school, studied, done well, then indebted themselves to try to get an education - these young people find themselves graduating with a mountain of poverty, a mountain of debt, graduating into joblessness. We have to put an end to that, because it's only fair to our young people and it is also the key to the future of our country.

So friends, those are our priorities. You know what it all boils down to? It all boils down to two very different visions for Canada. One vision is the Canada, where we race to the bottom with the lowest possible wages, the least job security, the highest unemployment, the weakest environmental stan-

dards, the least respect for human life, the most dangerous workplaces. The last Parliament of Canada was all about creating that kind of Canada, against the expressed will of the vast majority of Canadians.

Well this election, and this Parliament, is all about a very different kind of Canada. A vision where we compete, yes, but we compete fairly. A well educated, well trained workforce. Health care that is there for people when they need it, and where they need it. Children getting a decent start in life. Equality and justice in the workplace, in the home, and in public life. A healthy sustainable environment and a dynamic growing labour movement to keep this country strong. Sisters and brothers, we know that the struggle has only just begun. We know that we're going to have to fight hard, not just in Parliament, but right across this country for that kind of Canada.

After all, we have three and a half years to make up for. In the next Parliament that is exactly what we are going to do, because our vision for Canada, our vision of equality, of justice and of solidarity is a vision worth fighting for. On June 2nd we can all agree we took an important step in that struggle. I want to thank you again for your tremendous contribution to our success in that election. But I also want to say that we're going to be really counting on you in the weeks and months ahead. June 2nd, it's true we made history in a number of important ways, but in the next three to four years we are going to work together to be sure that we make a difference. Thank you very, very much. We're counting on you to be part of making that difference.



Organize! Mobilize! Create our Future! Where Do We Go From Here?

Summary by Nancy Riche
CLC Vice-President

June 18, 1997
Conference summary and
strategies to create our future

Let's go into the summary by looking at the process: your facilitators met yet again and reported what you had said in your workshop. A brief summary has been put together. For those of you who were in just one workshop, you will hopefully have some idea what went on in the other workshops. You will find, of course, that there is a lot in common! You will hear yourselves in this summary.

"What needs to be done?" You said things like: we have to celebrate our victories with the membership. We have to say thank you more

often. Encourage, educate, and support women to be active and hold leadership positions. And might I add, when they get there, maintain that support as well. Offer strength to create strength! Make sure our union newsletters have regular articles on women's issues.

We need instructor training at the local level, using all methods of communication, phone trees, phone banks, e-mail, all the new, all the old, bring it all together.

Prepare and support women to speak with their own voice. Human rights training at all levels and at the local particularly. I don't know if some

unions are doing that right now.

Within the union, internally, get women's issues on and not at the end of, the agenda. Get the leadership to understand and listen to the women's issues and take ownership. However, if you take one of the previous recommendations of getting women into the leadership, you won't have to do this, because they'll come to the position and already know.

Establish a women's committee - in some places, there still isn't one.

Survey the needs of the women and then respond. What are the women in your local, in your union saying? What are their issues? Some listed in the workshop were child care, breast cancer services, assertiveness and self-defence training.

Bring the union to the workplace. We can use an on-the-job canvass. And it's also suggested that you involve the families of union members.

In coalitions, and working with coalitions. First of all, the group talked about why we should be involved in coalitions. Because they said, it's a way to build a social justice movement. It begins the process of all right-minded people, progressive thinkers, speaking with a common voice. Certainly the issues

that we are facing in the current context, the conservative context, affect all of us. We want to build, not only with groups within the community, but people were very adamant about building inter-generational solidarity. This is very important, because one of the strategies of the right-wing has been to divide at all levels. The fight around public pensions for example, has been clearly set up to say to the younger people that you're paying the cost for the older people. They want the young people to fight us. This is no accident, this is a plan to divide. The workshop said if we, the labour movement, are there for our social partners, they will be there for us. We first of all must reach out into the community and look at the issues that are there. Because we are the community too. We as an institution, as the labour movement, must be there.

The coalition workshop participants did, however, say that there are difficulties. This is not an easy world. Kiké talked about some of it. We do make strong efforts to get past all these difficulties. We try to work through the major discussions. So what are the difficulties that they address? They say we have to be flexible, find accommodation, and work together on the basis of respect. Together we have to set goals and priorities; we have to know



that the goals are achievable and realistic. Also, within the area of coalitions, they said make your issue a community issue. Many times we go off alone, fighting a particular battle, when in fact, the community is supporting us. Think about the rural route post offices. When post offices were being closed down, CUPW worked with the people in the community. Because that post office is more than a little building with one person working; it was a very major sense of community, and the postal union and the community groups came together unbelievably.

So your issue, sometimes you don't have to make it so, is a community issue. You get that out through schools, through newspapers, write letters to the editor, write op-ed pieces, write articles. Don't worry about your ability to write a letter to an editor. It's your letter to the editor. There's no format. There's no style. There's no level of language. It's your letter to the editor. Don't be like me when I say... I gotta write that letter... and then I never do it right? Sit down and do it.

Peer training, leaflet drives, and lobbying. Lobbying is not only done at the federal level. It's done at every level where we exist.

I like this one: Know and get to know your allies. Don't make assumptions. A community group may support us. But in many community groups, a lot of people have never had any involvement with trade unions. You've got to remember, that as union activists we all come through the same education, the same stuff. We can finish each other's sentences. We are so tight. But it's really hard to explain all this to someone who hasn't been there. So we must be very understanding of different organizational cultures. So know and get to know your allies. They could be people on city council. They could be the local church. They sure will be the local women's groups. But it's also the CLC and the labour councils and our political party.

We must develop a plan to forge partnerships with the community. I think one of our weaknesses has been in coalitions, because we only go out and meet that group when we have a problem. We go out and say: "Will you walk with us on this issue. We need your support." And we make the assumption that it's going to come, yet we've never bothered to get to know them, to get to know their issues, to get to know each other personally. A lot of this stuff will just flow, and in fact, eliminate a lot of heart ache, if we get to know each other.

Become more involved in the community so that we can speak with a common voice. Share resources. They get fewer and fewer. Forge new partnerships. Make a long term commitment to the community. This is not a one issue deal. The fight that we are into is not a one issue deal. Let me tell you. So we need to make a long term commitment.

Then there were the proposals: the CLC will, the CLC must, we demand that the CLC ... So yes, to all of the above. Recommendation to reinstate the Labour College. Another recommendation: the CLC needs to evaluate their communications to become better, become more timely and use alternate formats. I don't want to report on every recommendation, but yes, we now have a web site. We are on the web. We are looking at - and I think you will be very pleased - you will see a new publication coming from the CLC very soon. So we are doing it, but I want to tell you that these recommendations will go back to the officers' table and the various departments within the CLC.

Recommendation:

To create a workshop on the double day. I mean is there anybody here doing only a double day? Because we've got some jobs for you. Women

do a double day, triple day, never-ending day. See women work and work and work and work. But we need to talk because a number of workshops talked about it. They didn't want to use the word stress. They were talking about crisis management. We don't like to use the word "management". But I think what's really interesting is that the women who are talking about it are also the women who are coping extremely well, although I'm not suggesting that's good. I agree with you that its a good idea to talk to each other and understand that other women are finding the same pressures and supporting each other.

That is not the only answer. Some of the recommendations for bargaining had some answers as well. Because in the midst of doing all this volunteer work in terms of your union, people are also working longer and harder hours on the job. They never change the job - they just reduce the number of people doing it. So women are feeling that more and more. And I think that's a great discussion to have in terms of a workshop.

Recommendation:

Examine structures of affiliates in relation to barriers that have prevented women from participating. The CLC should examine systemic discrimination in unions. You will



find some of that addressed in the Anti-Racism Task Force Report. And some of it is addressed in the Women and Work Report. These reports will help lay the plans for strategizing and changing some of this work, because we want to go beyond examining for sure.

Recommendation:

People asked to create a labour history. They wanted a generic history, materials that unions can use in the schools, in the workshops. And I can tell you that there may be a very good major history project ready for the millennium. So look forward to that.

Recommendation:

We need internal harassment policies in the unions. We can again recommend it and talk to the CLC Executive Council, but you've got to get out there and demand this. We can start publicizing more that we still face harassment, so it's in their face. We need to work together on that. And we can talk about exactly what the role the CLC can play.

International Solidarity Workshop. I think the greatest line was one of the co-facilitators', Paulette Sadoway's. She doesn't have a flight 'til 5 o'clock, and she said "I'll go up to the CLC office." I said: "You've got nothing better to do." She said: "Well, I don't know if I

can shop after the International Solidarity Workshop."

They clearly had a very heavy agenda and worked on the issues of globalization, International Monetary Fund, structural adjustment programs, the Multi-Lateral Agreement on Investment, EPZ's, maquiladores. They took a t-shirt and worked through where it was made, where parts of it were assembled, where it went, who bought it. Very, very good in terms of awareness. I think that people would like to see easy, accessible material on these issues, so that if you're not able to get to a workshop, you can actually read and get familiar with it.

I think one of the things about this conference has been the wonderful integration of sisters from overseas. We've heard them speak. You've been able to talk to them and that too is the most accessible material of all, of course, actually talking to people one on one.

Young Women's Workshop. The CLC should sponsor one young woman participant from each union to attend the young women's workshop. I think it's a great idea. I really encourage you to go back and get your leaders talking about the youth.

The CLC to provide additional training for young women workers, especially in areas of organization and education. CLC to educate affiliates on barriers that exist for young women. And

they said at the end of their report: we need a youth caucus.

Bargaining For Equality Workshop. One workshop actually listed their "inventory of rage". Remember Kiké talked about her inventory of rage. Some of these can become bargaining issues as well.

Here's the inventory: Sexual harassment right on the top. Intimidation in the workplace. Old boys club in the workplace. Isolation from union sisters. Disregard for the collective agreement. Denial of employment equity, pay equity. Arbitrary promotions and dismissals. Child labour. Erosion of rights. The workshop developed two pages of bargaining demands that women are still calling for. I know some of you have won these provisions. But if they're on this list, it means vast numbers have not. So it's good to hear them, because I think some of us who've had seniority and maternity leave in our collective agreements for 20 years, may not be aware that some of our sisters still don't have that. On the top of everybody's list of course, is pay equity.

On the top of everybody's list is just getting paid what we're worth. That's what they mean by pay equity. Fully-paid and supported 25 week

maternity leave. The first women's conference made a motion that we weren't going to do anything until we got fully-paid maternity leave. This means we should not have been working for the last 20 years. We should have been out on strike, because we haven't got it yet. Fully indexed Long Term Disability Insurance (LTD). I'm going to just do some highlights. Higher starting salaries, not a bad demand. Anti-racism language. Equality for all members. Stop temporary positions, create full-time jobs. But where there are part-time jobs, benefits for part-time workers. Same sex benefits, including pension, life insurance, bereavement leave, etc. Special leave language for child care, for elder care, for personal care, no age discrimination, flex time, job security, contracting out language. Can you tell what's going on in this world when you hear the demands? You can write the neo-conservative agenda, based on the demands of the women. You sure can. Gender-neutral job evaluation, right to refuse unsafe work, including sexual harassment, modified work, duty to accommodate, 36-hour work week - isn't that too much? I think we say to ourselves, we shouldn't ask for less than 36 hours --- but yes we can. Paid meal break. I kept that in because that means there are collective agreements



and workplaces that still do not have a paid meal break. Flex hours, four weeks vacation after one year employment, zero tolerance against sexual harassment, discrimination and violence, shortage of work week hours - I love it - "shortage of work week hours", yeah.

One workshop said: we want the CLC to take a stand for women as representatives at all levels in the trade union movement, bargaining team, executive boards, councils, for all leadership roles at all levels in the local and on and on and on.

Then we had the workshop Brothers in Solidarity. Basically what they want to report to you is that they commit to go back to their unions and educate their brothers in terms of understanding of women's issues, of listening to what women are saying. Now that's not to say that once they listen and hear, they speak for us. That means they listen, hear and understand us and we speak for us. No union, they say, is the perfect union, when it comes to responding to women's needs. And they're prepared to push the agenda.

In the Political Action workshop, of course, the first statement is: the personal is political. What you feel in your daily lives is political. Let me tell you, you are not alone. A concern: what can the labour

movement do about people who are unemployed and people who have lost their union? This is a challenge. With the exception of some of our affiliates who have retirees' organizations, we've done very little on that. This is a big challenge for us. So you come up with creative and good ideas and let us know, because we are going to start talking about it, at the top level, as part of the Women and Work Report.

The workshop said the right-wing has mobilized. So we need to mobilize and serve on community boards, library boards, hospital boards, city councils. Get there, just like the federal election! Ten NDP trade unionists got elected. In the first caucus meeting, I heard our new MPs saying: my experience in the trade union movement is... what we do in the trade union movement is... So, they are also bringing our culture now to the caucus table of the NDP. This workshop said it is understood that our party is the NDP. And they expressed real joy at having legitimate party status at the federal level. But, they did say that they are disappointed when NDP governments stray from their social justice perspective and agenda.

What You Said You Would Do: Just to remind you. YOU said: Take what you learned, decide who you were going to tell and what you were going to say. Plan it on the flight or the car ride back.

A statement of fact: women work really hard. Women are working so hard at the workplace, picking up that half a job that someone else used to do, because of your loyalty and commitment and just because of the kind of people you are. Women are starting to say: bull shit... I've had it. So one of the workshops says to tell the employers: you make the rules, we'll work to rule! no extra stuff! And you said: I'm going to return to my work in community with the energy of 500 or 1,500 or 500,000 that were here on Sunday night. Five hundred wild women behind me.

When I was reading this and writing this morning I kept thinking about that ad. "You tell two, and he tells two people, and they tell two people, and they tell two people." And then I got right into it and tried to multiply. I was trying to figure all the women's conferences, and if they told two people, who told two people, who told two people. We've really had, at these women's conferences, we've probably had 10 times 500, which is only like 5,000. But if they told two people, who told two people, who told two people ... Plus the million who were on the Hill last June. And the 500 thousand who were here Sunday night, I

figure over the 20 years, there's been about two and a half million to our women's conferences! Is that about it? Yeah, 2,500,000 have been through these conferences, absolutely!

So some other statements you made: When women want to do something, they do it. You said we ARE the union. That is to say, we are not asking the leadership, we ARE the union. And I love this one, this woman said: the weather's not bad either, and we had a great day.

You also talked about the double day, the triple day, the never-ending day. And one of the things I think that women's conferences do, in spite of the fact that we have you going for about 18 hours a day, and the facilitators twice as much -- it still is a break, eh?! It just re-charges. You said how you felt. About coalitions; and I think this is really honest: a little scared, a little intimidated, sometimes feeling a little excluded.

I'll tell you a story. When I first got involved in the union movement and wanted to get involved in the women's movement, I was terrified to go to the women's centre. They had this bookshelf that had all the feminist authors and I hadn't read them. I was really scared. So, I never went, so I missed developing relationships with a lot of wonderful women in my city. So don't be intimidated. Just like yourself and know we're fighting



the same battles. Just go in there and say "hi", don't be scared. It's tough, but don't be scared.

Mostly you were so positive. How you felt was very positive. You said: I learnt something and I really enjoyed the story. "I felt included." "Everyone was given a chance to speak." "We trusted each other and felt that everyone's opinion counted." "We enjoyed the close sisterhood." The words you used were: energized, pumped, inspired, empowered, solidarity, overwhelmed, lots of energy in this room. And someone said it was an "energy vitamin". And

Michelle Shyrer: I'll steal her line - she said to me at least three times these past few days: "Oh, the level of estrogen in this room is so good."

Finally, I think this is the quote of the conference: a woman who's been in the union for six months wrote on her evaluation sheet: "The workshop was good, but I especially enjoyed the march. It brought tears to my eyes and helped me to solidify my positive experiences with the union. I now feel comfortable in saying 'I am in a union'.

Joan Grant-Cummings, President, National Action Committee on the Status of Women

June 18, 1997
Conference summary and
strategies to create our future

Thank you very much for having me here. What I really want to share with you this morning is another aspect of the activism that we have to do. We've spent the last three days talking about the work that we do, the work that's still to be done. But, there is one thing that we neglect all the time, as women. Coming out of the women's health movement, this is the thing for me that decides whether we can continue for another day. One thing I have learned in the 14 years that I've worked with women in frontline work and what I want to talk about, is the emotional face of women's activism. Because we have a repertoire of emotions that we bring into our work. We challenge one another and the progress that we make as women. And this is globally. Let's look at the backdrop within which we do this work. Globally, women own only 1% of the land. Globally, we control 10% of the economy. Globally, we do 66% of the work the world has to do.

Yet, we are 50% of the population. And here we are activists, feminists, advocates, womanists, whatever we want to call ourselves. The fact is that uppity women that we are, we have decided we are going to change all that. We reject being put on the margins. We reject being seen as not equal. We have decided that we are going to change that and that's a feminist imperative.

Do we understand what it means to change that? It means subversion. It means not "adjust". It means total eradication. We're not talking about adjusting or messaging. We are talking about changing permanently, infinite change, which is incremental.

The sister talked about equality being achieved in a hundred years. Let's not forget that aboriginal people have been working on that for 500 years alone in this land. So that is why when we speak words like inter-generational and multi-generational struggle, we need to really internalize what this



means because what we're doing today we may not live to see the end of. But, certainly your 16 year old daughter, or that woman who's going to be born in 10 years time, she will see the fruits of some of our labour today, as we have seen the results of women who did work 50 years ago.

Now let's look globally at what has happened to women in every single country. In terms of the deterioration of women's status - it has happened. I think that's one of the clearest messages in Beijing that sisters in the north had to understand - that we had much more in common with many sisters in the developing countries. What we had to do is to learn to analyse those differences. And we also had to convince sisters in the south that we do experience some of those oppressions; we had to expose the lie that women in the north are equal, as just that - a big fat lie.

Before I get into the different faces of the emotional repertoire, I just wanted to share with you some of the things that we have accomplished in the last 50 years. These are the things that are supposed to guarantee our equality. As I say then, let us think what it means to Canadian women. And when I say Canadian women, I'm talking about aboriginal women. I'm

talking about women of colour, I'm talking about immigrants, refugees, lesbians, poor women, rich women, young women, and women with disabilities. Women were successful in getting Canada to sign on to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. Where is that? The International Convention on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, eh? The Beijing Platform for Action that Canada signed in 1995, guarantees pay equity! The International Labour Organization conventions on labour standards. We have Wal-Mart! The international covenants in political rights, the convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. And aboriginal people and black folks will tell you as far as they're concerned, in terms of their interaction with the police, we have violated that convention. The international Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Where are we on that? We still have a namby pamby multi-culturalism program. We don't have an anti-racism program in this country. That's what we need! The international convention on the suppression and punishment of the crime of Apartheid. And let's be clear. From any aboriginal people in this country, Apartheid is what they experience.

So here we are as women activists doing all of that work.

There's been a proliferation of women's organizations, women's committees - all kinds of spaces we have carved out for ourselves about how we're going to do this work. Young women more and more can be found in every single area. You know, when you talk about women and the environment, health - it doesn't matter where, you have young women there. So there is continuation. The struggle is being continued from generation to generation. But we also need to pay specific attention to the needs of that group who are going to be here after us. We're standing tall because of the women who went ahead of us and they'll be standing tall on us. And we have to get to that point when we understand that means, "move over sister".

When you think about the work that we have to do, what has it cost us? We're not one-size-fits-all, we're not one-colour-fits-all. We come from a whole range of different backgrounds and we know the things - race, sexual orientation, ability, age, socio-economic background and we could go on and on and on. We know we are different. But do we really understand how we are different? Because in doing this work, not being able to deal with that, has a clear

emotional cost for us. In confronting the system and rejecting inequality in our society, that has a clear emotional cost for us. Wherever we are, we have to be all the time negotiating space at the table with the boys, strategizing how to get women in around the boys, subverting around the boys. And it doesn't matter how the boys support us, they still don't get it. We would not be having women's conferences still if we thought they were getting it.

With the kind of work that we have to do, we're always in a state of persistent motion, always fear, always fright, always challenge, always confront. We have to stop and think of what that costs us. Because the kind of support that sisters need, especially those who decide to risk by leading in this struggle, is something that we all have to take responsibility for. We cannot allow them to destroy themselves at our expense. And we are talking about sisters who work in solidarity. It means we have to figure out ways in which we can protect one another in this work.

Understand. We are talking about getting rid of an elephant and here's the women's strategy. We have this elephant that we have to put through the eye of a needle. But given that we're women, what do we do? Instead of sitting around, figuring how to push this elephant through the



eye of the needle, what we do is take that elephant and eat it bite by bite. You see we are not going to spend time trying to figure out how to push and shove and squeeze it through the needle for another thousand years: we're going to eat it. There is an African proverb that says: "When the revolution is won, the women will dance on the skeleton of the hump of the elephant."

We have to actively politicize our members while at the same time, we're politicizing ourselves. You know, where does the circle start and where does the circle end? For women who have to do the teaching and learning all the time, the pain, the fear, the shame, the guilt, the mistakes forever and ever that we make! How we beat up ourselves about this! How we shoot down one another who try to make changes. All of this has emotional costs. All of this, at points, sets us back.

If we decide we are going to change the world, of course, we are going to confront, of course we are going to challenge, of course it's going to mean pain. We have to own that. But, what we have to figure out are strategies we can use to deal with that pain, guilt, shame. We have to deal with it. It's part of the job. But let's figure out the strate-

gies to do it. The same way we're figuring out how to deal with Wal-Mart, or the justice system, we also have to work side by side to deal with the emotional cost of our activism.

It's remarkable. It's phenomenal that lesbians still come to these conferences even though they are the only ones who are supposed to raise the homophobia issue. They're expected to do it all the time. We still have to learn about this. You have to teach about this. Women of colour. You have to teach us about anti-racism. Still, even though you're experiencing racism, all the women still have to remind us we're still here. In fact, we've been doing this longer than you, so we actually have an even larger perspective on this, having gone through so many things. And young women who are seeing the mistakes that we're making. You know, understanding the progress that we're making, saying: "Where the hell do we get a voice here?" So all of these dynamics are happening at the same time while we go through the struggle. The parry and the thrust and the tensions that we feel sometimes we don't even acknowledge and that's a cost to us, because it means it takes us even longer to get there.

Sisters, revolutions are not nice, tidy little social events. They are not. They are messy. They are undiplomatic. They are

destructive and even as we make it through, we acknowledge that it can be the most rewarding time in our lives ever. There were women on the Women's March last year who never went on a march before and for them their feminist act has begun. This is how they're going to relay feminism to their daughters and sons. Today we stand up for communities in every way that we can. We have to continue to do this and sometimes it may not be the most diplomatic way in which we do this, but we have to do it, because silence means complicity. Complicity in the kind of social relations and policies and structures that confirm our inequality in this society. So there isn't an option.

If we're going to do this work, we are going to be politicized, every time, every day, as I said before. We don't have 9 to 5 jobs as women. So we have to be political in all four jobs, in all those other corners of our lives. Whether it's in that coffee shop, or you may have to challenge the family at the dinner table. Wherever! We have to stand up and speak all the time on all the issues. Even as you're learning, you have to be challenging and confronting people on all of the issues to build that strong

sisterhood and solidarity. That is going to make us invincible because that's the only way we're going to defeat the right - it's that plain and simple.

Transforming our society to one of social justice, in particular on gender equity issues, is not easy. It doesn't come automatically. It doesn't follow from a conscious political position that we have about sisterhood. It takes painstaking every day work.

When women say to me: "Joan, why aren't you angry and frustrated?" My answer is and always is: "I've been a black women for 38 years. I don't have a problem with it, others may. I have a job to do and I'm going to inch along with that work and you have to decide whether you are going to inch along with me, or you're going to stand in my way."

Because you see, every generation has a role to play in this struggle and our time is now. We have to understand that our time is now. The legacy that this generation has to carry forward is that women will not be defeated. We will not be defeated by the oppressions and the exploitation that keep us apart. We will insist and we will persist in harassing those who make us unequal. And we will persist in destroying those oppressions, the racism, the homophobia, and the sexism that



keep us apart. When we acknowledge and understand that is the way to our true sisterhood and solidarity, none on this earth, in hell, in heaven can defeat us. We would have won without even taking up a gun to fight a battle. We will win, if we can do that.

You know, Dickens said: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." I say what we have to do right now, especially given the change we have in government, is to make it the worst of times for the Liberal government, for the next four to five years. There is no best of times for the Liberal government! So, as we go through the revolution, let us understand that tomorrow we may topple the government. But it will not

make sense unless we also have an internal revolution. When we govern, we have to govern from a perspective of equality and social justice; that is why it is important to have internal liberation of our movement and of ourselves. And we have to do it with self-care. We have to support one another. We have to understand that eating the elephant one bite at a time, involves all of us. When the crumbs are left, we'll dance on Parliament Hill. Our coming together like this is the beginning of the process of keeping us together. It is the beginning of finding out, wherever we are, how to do this work as we move towards success. For me the eye on the prize is what guides me and my prize is equality and justice for all in solidarity and sisterhood. Thank you very much.

Women's unity will never be defeated.

**Conference
workshops:
summaries
and
recommendations**

conference workshops: summaries and recommendations

①

BUILDING UNION WOMEN'S COMMITTEES

In this workshop, participants looked at the question of how to build women's committees in unions. In many unions, such committees either do not exist or have become inactive.

Participants talked about why they first got involved in their women's committees or in their unions. They looked at why more women are not involved - what are the barriers? The barriers examined included personal as well as systemic or institutional barriers.

The workshops then moved on to ways of changing our union structures, issues around educational programs and communications strategies and came up with a number of ideas to build stronger union women's committees in our unions.

Key points raised in the workshop include the recognition that we need to celebrate

our victories with other union members and with the community. It is very important. We need to offer strength to each other to create strength! We need to motivate each other to successfully recruit. We need to praise and thank each other to help with our empowerment.

We need to find ways to get the leadership of our unions to understand and listen to women's issues and equality concerns and to deal with the barriers. Our leadership must be responsible; the onus must be on them to take ownership of women's issues.

Participants in the workshop came up with ideas about how to encourage the formation of women's committees in locals:

- find out the needs of the women in the union - for example, child care, breast cancer screening, assertiveness training, self defense - and begin to build your activities and program around that concern;
- bring the union to the workplace;
- build networks for support and ideas;
- use a member survey, especially done through personal contact, to set committee priorities; and
- involve the families of union members in union activities.

②

WORKING IN COALITION WITH COMMUNITY AND WOMEN'S GROUPS

Many coalitions already exist at the national and provincial levels. Sometimes we need to organize coalitions around specific issues in our communities. The workshop attempted to develop a better understanding of the importance of participating in and building community based coalitions.

The participants identified key reasons why unions need to work in coalition:

- it is the way to build a social justice movement over the longer term;
- speaking with a common voice raises the profile of the issues and the credibility of our position. It can prevent divisiveness when all are under attack;
- when new issues arise, it is easier to organize and mobilize resistance when trust has been gained and bonds made;



workshops' summaries and recommendations

- the issues we are facing affect all of us in one way or another - whether it's the loss of a health care service or the impact of unemployment on health care workers;
- strength in numbers;
- they build inter-generational solidarity; and
- they expand knowledge.

The group understood the interconnectedness in coalition work - that if unions are there for other groups, other groups will be there for them. Coalitions contribute to community unionism and build solidarity and understanding for labour issues in the community.

In the Coalition workshops, participants looked at the problems and some solutions to working within coalitions with activists from different communities. Different kinds of coalition activities were examined and ideas were exchanged about how to plug into existing coalitions. In looking at particular issues, the challenges of working with community partners were identified and ideas about different ways to deal with such challenges were exchanged.

We talked about the pitfalls and difficulties of working in coalitions and recognized that there are many ways to solve problems, but solved they must

be. We talked about being flexible, finding commonalities and building from there. We talked about being respectful of others' opinions when there is disagreement. The importance of setting goals and priorities and especially of setting achievable and realistic goals. Stay positive.

The younger women in the group as well as those new to union activism used the leadership development section to talk about how they were feeling at this conference as a parallel to how people might feel working in a coalitions for the first time - scared, intimidated by others' knowledge and experience, feeling excluded and so on. We concluded that awareness of this is important and that a supportive environment must be created to help people grow and move forward.

The experience in the group was amazing:

- women's movement;
- social/economic justice;
- anti-poverty;
- disability rights organizations;
- gay and lesbian communities;
- anti-racism activists;
- human rights groups;
- environment organization;
- political action; and
- New Democratic Party.

③

COMMUNITY UNIONISM: FROM A WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

In the Community Unionism workshop participants worked to develop a better understanding of the impact on women of the massive restructuring of work and examined a number of strategies to block the shift to non-standard work.

Community Unionism was located as one of the central strategies. Key components of community unionism were identified, including: community organizations have some sort of ownership in the union effort; active involvement of union and non-union workers in organizing; involvement of other unions, not just the union directly involved in a particular campaign and a realization that campaigns must be fought and won in the court of public opinion.

From a woman's perspective: Our signs declare: "We believe in ourselves. "We speak about values: we cut our apples in half and share them; those who are strong carry those who are weaker until they can become stronger. We talk about emotional connections; commitment

from both the head and heart. We talk about constantly learning and about telling stories; listening; forming relationships. (From "Women's Ways of Organizing, Labour Research Review #18)

During the workshop, union sisters talked about building a campaign from concept to action. They came up with a lot of ideas that are useful for all kinds of community and union campaigns. Some of these ideas are:

How to Make Your Issue a Community Issue?

- involve more than the union locally;
- do outreach;
- go to schools and offer to educate about jobs;
- make sure your union has an open-door policy;
- look to other unions;
- what about co-ops in the community?
- push the issue of corporate responsibility - get companies more involved; push for internships;
- work in coalitions;
- use local newspapers and media;
- sponsor community forums on jobs; and
- consider community rallies in support of the issue.



**We need to look at allies
in labour and the
community.
These include:**

- the CLC,
- labour council,
- federation of labour,
- city council,
- women's groups,
- students' councils and organizations,
- political party,
- local churches,
- anti-poverty groups,
- anti-racism groups,
- lesbian and gay organizations,
- seniors' associations,
- United Way and agencies,
- service clubs,
- local businesses who will lose if jobs and services are lost, and
- local media, alternate media.

**We need to define long
and short term objectives
for any campaign.**

Short term: action now!

Long term: respect and an enhanced quality of life.

What the community can do to support union issues has to be tied into what our unions can do to support community causes. Sometimes these links are clear and fairly direct - closing a local

hospital for example; sometimes the links are harder to make and may require supporting a number of different local concerns.

Community unionism requires the development of concrete plans in conjunction with community groups. Co-chairs from the union and from the community can work well. Input into local community papers or fact sheets developed around a particular issue can help build alliances.

**Barriers to community
unionism & suggestions
to overcome them.**

General stereotyping of unions - by media, politicians, general public; image of big labour with selfish interests; distrust of unions. General complacency of the public. Victims fear letting others know they have problems.

Some solutions include:

- put a personal face or faces on the issue;
- use alternate media;
- billboards;
- door to door information;
- take the "strong arm" out of the union image;
- make sure community partners are really involved;
- spread positive stories about what unions do; and

- make sure the community knows about unions' support for food drives, shelters and other services.

While You Organize, Take Care of Yourself!

Take care of yourself. Prioritize. Delegate. Reach out. Work in groups. Break out of male leadership styles. Network with women.

④

OVERCOMING BARRIERS IN OUR UNIONS

This workshop began with participants examining their own social identities - in terms of their age, sexual orientation, place of origin, race, economic status and so forth. They moved on to work on identification of barriers and the relationship of discrimination to the maintenance of the dominant corporate agenda.

The second part of the workshop looked at ways to value our diversity, break down barriers and build links.

Among the recommendations from this workshop:

- the CLC to fund the Labour College and encourage all unions to fund and support the college in the future;
- the CLC should evaluate their communications and become better and more timely. Alternate formats are needed;
- the CLC should develop a workshop on how to balance our activities and responsibilities as women (the double and triple day);
- the CLC should examine the structure of affiliates and look at how the barriers have prevented women in particular from participating;
- the CLC should examine systemic discrimination in the unions; and
- the CLC should create labour history material for unions to use as well as for use in the high schools and elementary schools. Our history needs to reflect our diversity. We need to encourage more union involvement in schools.



5

BUILDING INCLUSIVE UNIONS

A key focus of this workshop was on the structures of our organizations and whether or not they facilitate building inclusive unions. The workshop examined four key areas and came up with a number of ideas to facilitate the inclusion of all union members.

- participation;
- sustainability;
- leadership;
- respect for diversity.

Under participation and sustainability, delegates looked at structures locally, regionally and nationally. They also looked at our unions' constitutions and discussed why we need to know - and how to use - the constitution to make and maintain change. They understood that people must actively participate in creating solutions to the injustices that affect them.

Developing and promoting new leadership is an essential part of building inclusive unions. The participants reaffirmed that women, people of colour, Aborigi-

nal people, people with disabilities, gay men and lesbians must have the authority to make decisions and create change. Their central role in development must be recognized and supported.

Respect for diversity is central. Efforts for change must be built on the culture and values of the people concerned. We must work from the principle of parity in all that we do. An Aboriginal sister shared in a vivid way that this is the reason that the Native people sit in a circle. Everyone has equal status and voice.

6

YOUNG WOMEN: ISSUES AND OUTREACH

The young women in this workshop spent time sharing and exploring their experiences as young women workers and identifying the common challenges faced in the current and future economy of Canada and in the union movement. They concluded that their diversity and participation in community activism were strengths that they could bring to the labour movement.

As well as identifying barriers for young women in organizing and getting involved in the union, plans were discussed for action in a number of areas: organizing in the sectors where young women work; outreach and involvement internally in unions where women are active to ensure participation and action by young women workers; developing recommendations for the CLC and union leaders on the issues facing youth.

This course proved to be very much in need within our labour movement. All young women participated fully with some great ideas.

We managed to condense some of these into six issues which we hope will be appreciated and useful.

- ① Clarification of the workshop title;
- ② Included after the workshop title - "targeting women 30 and under";
- ③ Commitment from the CLC to sponsor one young woman participant from each union to attend the young women's workshop and the Women's Conference;
- ④ Commitment from the CLC to provide additional training for young women workers specifically in the areas

of organization and education of other young workers;

- ⑤ Commitment from the CLC to utilize its resources to educate its affiliates on the barriers that exist specifically for young women which blocks them from union activism; and
- ⑥ Youth caucus.

7

BUILDING INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Activists attending this workshop looked at how globalization works and learned about and helped develop women's strategies for dealing with globalization.

During the workshop, they looked at how women fit into production, marketing and consumption on a world wide scale. As one participant put it - after this workshop I may not be able to go shopping again! They also spent time highlighting areas of women's resistance and looked



at some of the creative ways women are organizing. They drew many links between different women's struggles and actions. Participants were also careful to examine the differences between charity and solidarity and talked about the various ways that "good intentions" can backfire.

The recommendations from this workshop were summarized by the word "**REVOLUTION**" as follows:

R resist!
E educate!
V vocalize!
O organize!
L listen to others
to understand
their struggles!
U unite with sisters
and brothers
internationally!
T tell my family
and friends I
love them!
I ignite the fire in
the hearts of
others
O occupy
politicians
offices and
corporate board
rooms!
N never give up!!!!

8

BARGAINING FOR EQUALITY

This workshop began with an examination of the current context for collective bargaining in Canada - issues such as: the debt and deficit hysteria, massive lay-offs, the impact of free trade, privatization and contracting-out all have had a major impact on bargaining in general, and on bargaining for equality. In this context, participants assessed the progress made to date at the bargaining table on women's and other equality issues.

A list was developed of the most important bargaining achievements for women, visible minorities, workers with disabilities, and gay and lesbian workers that members have witnessed within their unions. The list is impressive and gives us an idea about what can be won at the bargaining table to move us closer to equality.

Same sex benefits; self-funded deferred leaves; employment equity contract language; job security; benefits for part time workers; gender neutral job evaluation; paid education leave; right to refuse unsafe work; modified work and the duty to accommodate; pay equity; job

security in the contract; equal pay for all; 36 hour work week, with no pay loss; paid meal breaks; training for people on long term disability; the option of time off for overtime in lieu of pay; flex hours; four weeks vacation after one year employment

The workshop went on to look at the factors and strategies that have made bargaining achievements possible, as well as the obstacles to achieving breakthroughs. Some time was spent talking about changing bargaining structures to improve the situation.

To expand horizons, participants listed their impossible dreams for bargaining.

IMPOSSIBLE DREAMS:

- fully paid and supported 25 week maternity leave;
- six mental health/casual/personal days per year;
- fully indexed, long term disability programs;
- employer paid, free, on-site day care;
- higher starting salaries;
- equality for all members;
- job sharing agreement;
- anti-racism training;
- stop temporary positions and create full-time jobs;
- benefits for part-time workers;
- same sex benefits in pensions, life insurance, bereavement leave;

- better special leave language for child care, elder care and personal care; and
- no age discrimination

Participants in each of the workshops on Bargaining for Equality were asked to select five key demands for the CLC to consider launching on March 8, International Women's Day. This proved a next-to-impossible task, since there are so many areas in our collective agreements that still need improvement.

Bargaining Demands For Women:

- pay equity and equal pay for women;
- full employment equity programs;
- zero tolerance against sexual harassment, discrimination and violence;
- a shorter work week with a limitation of overtime hours;
- the duty to accommodate should include responsibilities for children and family needs;
- flex time - job sharing;
- job security;
- contracting out protection;
- leaves for child care and personal care, sick leave and mental stress leave;



Plus, all the impossible dreams!



In addition, there was one special request to the CLC to take a stand to support women's representation at all levels in our unions - on the bargaining team, executive boards, councils and in leadership roles in all the locals and all union organizations.

The Inventory of Rage

One workshop came up with a list of issues facing women workers which drove them to rage and fight back.

- sexual harassment;
- intimidation in the workplace;
- old boys club in the workplace;
- isolation of union sisters;
- disregard for the collective agreement;
- denial of employment equity and pay equity;
- arbitrary promotions and dismissals;
- child labour;
- erosion of our rights; and
- do not go quietly! Rage! Rage! Rage!

POLITICAL ACTION

In the Political Action workshop delegates discussed not only how to become politically active, but also why we must be active. They focussed on different areas for political action - including within our unions, our communities as well as at the different levels of government.

The workshop also included discussion of many practical issues, such as:

- how to lobby;
- build a network;
- use the media;
- involve other union sisters and brothers;
- make your issues community issues;
- get to the politicians;
- support one another;
- address family needs while becoming involved; and
- take care of yourself and set your personal action plan.

The workshop reaffirmed the old feminist maxim: The Personal is Political.

They acknowledged that the right wing has mobilized big time and that it is more necessary than ever that we do the same. We need to look at winning at all levels - from library, hospital and school boards on up. There was real joy and satisfaction that the NDP has regained official party status at the federal level. It is understood that the NDP is our party, and we need to be there. There was also dissatisfaction with NDP provincial governments which have strayed from our social justice perspective and agenda.



STRATEGIES FOR ORGANIZING

The workshop began by acknowledging the difficulties facing unions in the 90s. We know that in order to survive, unions must organize. Jurisdictions across Canada are making the task of organizing workers into unions tougher than it has been in the last 50 years. It is important to remember that, when workers first formed

unions, they were illegal. But, that didn't stop them. We need to talk about new strategies for hard-to-organize sectors and renew the old strategies that worked.

In the workshop, participants shared experiences and learned about initiatives already underway.

They addressed two key challenges:

- how to get women involved who will work to make the organization represent their interests; and
- how to ensure that our organizations are committed to organizing more women into the unions.

Participants agreed that our unions have to become ongoing organizing unions. The working definition used by the group is useful. An organizing union is:

"A union which defines as its primary mission mobilizing its current members and organizing new members and which commits the necessary human and material resources to achieve that mission."

Participants identified a number of values which mobi-



lize women to join unions, including: treating people fairly and equally, opposing racism and homophobia, solidarity with other workers and collective protection on issues which directly affect women - like flexible working hours, job sharing, on-site affordable child care.

They identified a number of components of a strategy for encouraging women to join up and suggested that the tactics used had to be: fun, meaningful and spirit building. We need to organize with the needs of those who we are representing in mind. Our unions must provide opportunities for women to build skills knowledge and self confidence. And, we need to involve as many people as possible in all our organizing efforts.



BROTHERS IN SOLIDARITY

Following the CLC's practice, the men who attended the Conference worked together in the Brothers in Solidarity workshop. They spent much of their time discussing the ways in which the union movement can provide support for women and for the struggles of all union members for equality.

During the workshop they developed the following list of obstacles and strategies:

OBSTACLES TO ACHIEVING EQUALITY

workshops' summaries and recommendations

Obstacles	Solutions
■ cost of paying more to lower paid women	☐ set time frames, establish mechanisms, upgrade skills to be paid by the employer since they ultimately benefit the employer, educate the employer and members; ☐ need stats and figures to prove the cost effectiveness of improvements e.g. bad morale results in sickness and lower productivity.
■ harassment	☐ joint employer and union statement, plus commitment of outside contractors to abide by the statement; ☐ joint education program to include all leadership and supervisory positions; ☐ education paid by the employer; ☐ joint human rights committee; ☐ establish rules for the investigation of informal and formal complaints; develop a process to be used by the human rights committee; and ☐ acknowledge the right to leave the work site for a safe area, without penalty of any kind.
■ lack of literacy	☐ English as a second language training.
■ peer pressure/resentment	☐ education/debate/recruitment; ☐ coalitions among equity groups and between power and non power groups; and ☐ one on one talking.
■ male dominated groups	☐ educate, encourage and support the involvement of more women; and ☐ education such as leadership and public speaking for women.
■ union meeting times: often problem for women	☐ paid child care and paid time to attend; and union meetings during working hours.



workshops' summaries and recommendations

- informal Old-Boys Network
 - mentor program for women;
 - educate leadership; and
 - local education and encouragement.

- union structures and internal caucus.
How to break in?
 - education.

- legislation or lack of such thereof as:
 - minimum wage below
 - poverty level
 - lack of child care
 - spaces
 - lack of benefits for
 - part time and temps
 - lobbying all levels of government;
 - political action;
 - involvement with political parties building community coalitions; and
 - improve relationship between unions and NDP

- increase in family responsibility such
as care for elders and family health
problems
 - political action against dismantling social safety net.

**WOMEN & WORK
PROJECT:
RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM THE
CONFERENCE &
ACTIONS
TO-DATE**

WOMEN & WORK PROJECT: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CONFERENCE & ACTIONS TO-DATE

On International Women's Day 1997, the Canadian Labour Congress released our study Women's Work: A Report. This Report generated an unprecedented amount of media and public attention. More than 12,000 copies have been distributed making our Report a best seller by Canadian standards!

The "Action Alert" sections of the Report laid out many challenges and a number of possible solutions developed by working women across the country. At the Women's Conference, delegates looked at the Action Alerts as they met in plenary and in the workshops. We talked about what has been done and what remains to be done. During the Conference delegates had more suggestions to make about the kind of work our unions should be doing to meet the challenges of the impact of global restructuring on our jobs and lives. Many ideas were generated for increasing the involvement of women in the labour movement and in our communities.

In this report on the Women's Conference we want to again review and update the recommendations in the **Report**. We will look at:

- what's been done so far; and
- what needs doing & what you can do

CHALLENGES FOR THE COUNTRY: CHALLENGES FOR LABOUR

Women Need Government Action

Action Alert:

The annual Alternative Federal Budget process must incorporate more in-depth gender and equality analyses and focus on job creation proposals for women.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

The 1997 & 1998 Alternative Federal Budget (AFB) moved ahead from previous Budgets on equality issues.

Here are some examples. The AFB is based on a number of commitments including: full

employment, the eradication of poverty, economic equality between men and women, the protection of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and the strengthening of social programs and public services.

On the issue of job creation, it proposes new structures for renewed economies and focuses on maintaining and strengthening employment in the public sector. As our Report points out, the public sector has been a key site of good jobs for women. As well, the AFB proposes steps to reduce the length of the work week which is also recommended in our Report. It also recommends raising the minimum wage in all jurisdictions across Canada - a demand which was raised by the Women's March Against Poverty and is also included in our Report.

The Budget calls for an enhanced child benefit and a national advance maintenance child support system.

The Alternative Federal Budget proposes a national child care fund to be jointly established by the provinces and the federal



government. In the words of the Budget, "a national child care program is essential for social justice, gender equality, poverty eradication, and improving national economic performance."

Increased funding for Aboriginal Peoples is a key component of the Budget, and would be based on implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

A new "Equity Participation Foundation" is another equality measure in the Budget. The Foundation would be established to provide funding for organizations that work to give marginalized Canadians a voice, to provide services and a voice for progressive public policies. The proposed foundation would "fund advocacy and service organizations for women, the disabled, Aboriginal People, people of colour, immigrants, refugees, gays and lesbians, small farmers and unorganized workers."

The Budget also supports the demand of the NAC/CLC Women's March against Poverty for \$50 million to be made available for women and anti-violence services and would provide funding for this and other demands raised in the March.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT YOU CAN DO

First, we have to get the federal government to move towards the kind of economic and taxation policies developed in the AFB. Find out more about the Budget, attend economic training sessions when they are held in your communities or help organize one. Get more information about the Budget from *Cho!ces: A Coalition for Social Justice* in Winnipeg or from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in Ottawa.

The progress made in the 1998 Alternative Federal Budget must be continued in future budgets. Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario also have groups working on provincial alternative budgets. If you are economically orientated, get involved in helping to develop gender analysis of budgetary decisions. Send your ideas along to *Cho!ces* or the Centre.

Action Alert:

The CLC should provide leadership and present concrete workable alternatives that will create long term decent jobs for women. The CLC jobs conference should be seen as a place to develop such alternatives and ensure that the issue of job creation for women is a top priority at the conference.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

The CLC Jobs Conference was held in February 1998 and integrated a number of issues raised in the **Women's Work Report** into the agenda of the Conference. There was a specific section of the Conference set aside to discuss organizing for better work and better jobs. The section dealt with issues specifically of concern to women, to workers of colour and aboriginal workers. It also looked at some of the issues raised in our **Report** about organizing new members, young workers and community based organizing.

In other sessions, the Conference participants talked about new ways to respond to work reorganization and at issues around sharing the

work. The recommendations of this Conference will build upon the **Report** and upon the Women's Conference recommendations.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT YOU CAN DO

Look for a copy of the **Report on the Jobs Conference**. Use it to start a discussion in your union or labour council about job creation strategies for your community which would also focus on creating good jobs for women.

Action Alert:

The labour movement must continue to work in coalitions to fight government attacks on our social programs and to push the debate about what kind of programs we want and need, about what kind of country we want to build.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

The CLC continues to participate in and support a number of coalitions at the national level, such as the Canada Health Coalition, NAPO - the National Anti-



Poverty Organization, the National Employment Equity Network, the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada and NAC - the National Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Many unions and federations of labour do so as well at the national, provincial and local levels. This kind of coalition work has become increasingly important for trade unionists and community activists as we see provincial and federal governments uniting in campaigns to lower wages, eliminate union rights, destroy social programs, attack health care, public education and pensions. We must continue to work in coalition and spend the time and energy learning how to work effectively with people from different communities.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT YOU CAN DO

The CLC will continue to work with and support national coalitions. If your union or federation does not yet participate in supporting NAC or NAPO for example, you might want to start a debate about the value of such work. You might want to get your local involved at home. You could volunteer to be the local representative!

NAC is involved in a major campaign to ensure core funding for women's organizations from the federal government. They are demanding two dollars for every woman and girl child in Canada to be in the women's program allocation. Find out more about this campaign. Encourage your union, labour council and federation of labour to support NAC and lobby the federal government.

Coalitions can be created to fight particular local issues as well. While some coalitions are ongoing, working in coalitions around specific issues for a limited period of time can also be effective. Think about what groups and individuals might be interested in working together, around issues of concern to you and your local. Make a few phone calls - see what you can get started.

Think about organizing a training session about how to go about coalition work.

Women Need a National Child Care Program

Action Alert:

The CLC should continue to work with the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada to develop a national child care campaign. One focus of the campaign would be in the next federal election to expose the Liberal's hypocrisy on this issue and to make a national not-for-profit child care program a federal government priority.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

The CLC along with a number of unions and the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada launched a major campaign to raise the issue of child care during the federal election campaign. We produced a brochure and poster and organized child care activists across the country to pepper candidates about the issue of child care. Child care was a major focus for the CLC campaign for jobs and justice on May 3, 1997.

The Child Care Association has decided on a major

restructuring of its work. It is keen to attract new participants, and in particular union representatives. The issue of child care for working women must become a central political thorn in the side of governments at all levels. New ideas and energy are needed so that the issue does not disappear.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT YOU CAN DO

We need to keep up the pressure and make the federal government take the lead in the creation of a national child care program. Unions which do not participate in the CCAAC should be encouraged to do so. Union activists can help raise the issue of child care at federal, provincial and municipal election time and lobby elected representatives. In fact, continuous lobbying around this issue - before, during, and after elections is what's required to get us the quality child care spaces we need.

Does your local support the national or a provincial child care advocacy organization? Has your local tried



to negotiate financial support from the employer for child care expenses? Is there any chance you could negotiate workplace child care? Would your members be interested? Does your local provide child care for meetings to enable women to attend and get involved? Are the child care workers in your community unionized?

Women Need Employment Equity

Action Alert:

Governments at all levels must renew their commitment to equality in Canadian society. The labour movement must continue to pressure governments to introduce employment equity legislation and to counter the myths about employment equity perpetrated by the right. The CLC should convene a gathering of employment equity activists at the national level to analyze how the right has captured the offensive on this issue and to develop strategies to counter this offensive and move forward.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

The CLC has been lobbying along with other employment equity groups involved in the National Employment Equity Network for strong regulations at the federal level. In March 1997, the Congress made a proposal to the federal government calling for a strong role for unions under the federal Employment Equity Act. As well, the CLC recently published a guide to the federal Employment Equity Act and Regulations to help unions get the most out of the legislation.

Employment equity activists continue to discuss how we can recapture the initiative on employment equity. Activists acknowledge that the right has been able to use employment equity as a target, in part because our allies have not been strong enough. We need to develop a political and educational plan to make sure the issue is thoroughly understood. We also need to move the issue of employment equity beyond the workplace and into the education, judicial

and social service sectors. Activists grappled with the problem of lack of government support and media distortions of the issue. Further meetings at both the national and regional levels will be critical to continue to deepen our analysis of what's happened and to figure out strategically how to regain the initiative.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT YOU CAN DO

Even though there is only proactive employment equity legislation at the federal level - and that is fairly weak - unions can still propose employment equity measures at the bargaining table. Issues such as open access to training and fair and open job posting procedures can begin the process. Pushing for full employment equity programs can highlight discriminatory employment practices.

Education of local union members is a critical priority. Find out more about what employment equity is and is not. Ask your union for information, or contact the CLC. Write about the issue in your local union newsletter. Invite employment equity activists

from your community to speak at a local meeting or call a special meeting about the issue. Write your local newspaper about employers in your community who discriminate. Start the discussion and heat it up.

The CLC will investigate the possibility of convening a national meeting of employment equity activists in 1998 to discuss ways to move forward on the employment equity front.

Women Need Government Jobs

Action Alert:

As part of its campaign for jobs, the labour movement must fight against further cuts to public sector services and for an expansion of such services. This campaign should highlight the role of the public sector in providing good jobs for women and good services to the public.



WHAT'S BEEN DONE

The focus of the CLC Day of Protest on May 3, under the slogan "We're Out for Justice" was jobs, child care, pensions and health care. The material produced by the CLC and distributed in the hundreds of thousands focussed on the Liberal's record of destroying jobs and in particular on the elimination of public sector jobs. The impact on women workers was repeatedly highlighted.

As well, jobs - and jobs for women in the public sector - was a key focus of labour's intervention during the federal election campaign. Provincially, federations of labour continue to struggle to preserve education, health care and social services and work with affiliated unions and women's groups in the communities to try to preserve women's jobs. And the role of the public sector in creating jobs for women was a key component of the CLC jobs conference.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT YOU CAN DO

The fight for job creation in the public sector is an uphill battle, as governments

continue on their path of destroying our social safety nets and the jobs which are required to maintain them. Women must continue to participate in campaigns to try to regain access to socially useful and secure employment.

Keep on top of public sector job cuts in your community. How many jobs have been lost? What is the impact on local retail stores and services? Call your member of Parliament and of your provincial legislature - it doesn't matter what party, they are elected to represent us and listen to our concerns. Write your community paper. Participate in talk shows. Jobs ensure that communities don't die.

Women Need Pay Equity

Action Alert:

The federal government should move immediately to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to provide for pro-active pay equity in the federal jurisdiction. The procedures for

resolving disputes at the federal level should be reviewed to eliminate costly and time consuming legal challenges. The CLC should mount a campaign to pressure the federal government to introduce these changes.

Action Alert:

The labour movement should continue to support equal pay coalitions where they exist to pressure provincial governments to introduce or strengthen pay equity laws and to monitor the implementation of such laws. The labour movement should encourage the creation of equal pay coalitions in provinces where they do not yet exist.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

The CLC Pay Equity Working Group has been pressuring the federal government to meet to discuss the need for pro-active pay equity legislation since the fall of 1996. Government officials indicated that amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act in the area of pay equity would only be forthcoming after the election. Through

letters and briefs the CLC and the unions representing women in federal jurisdiction have demanded that procedures to resolve pay equity disputes be simplified so that they can be resolved in a timely fashion. The PSAC also conducted a protracted and public fight to force the government to acknowledge the results of the tribunal ruling and pay out the pay equity adjustments owing to thousands of public service workers.

At the 1997 NAC Annual General Meeting, the CLC launched a campaign for economic justice, for just wages and pay equity for working women in Canada. The occasion was a breakfast sponsored by the PSAC to highlight their continuing fight to make the federal government pay. The NAC AGM formally endorsed and supported the CLC campaign and the PSAC struggle.

The CLC Women's Committee took the campaign to the national meeting of the provincial, territorial and federal Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women held in Halifax in October. In fact, we took the campaign to the streets where the Committee was



joined by local pay equity activists, by delegates to the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour Convention and by members of the Public Service Alliance. Hundreds of people demanded that the Ministers take responsibility for women's economic well being.

This campaign has also included demonstration in Ottawa against Bell Canada because of their stalling tactics and their refusal to give the Bell operators the pay equity adjustments they are owed. The CLC is supporting the Bell workers at the Federal Court of Appeal. The CLC also placed ads in progressive journals across the country on International Women's Day outlining the demands of this campaign, advertized the campaign in *Outfront*, the *Fax Press* and through the CLC general mailings.

The CLC wants this campaign to be broad-based and to include and encourage action to end women's economic inequality everywhere. Lobbying, bargaining and public education will all be components of the campaign.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT YOU CAN DO

Watch out for materials produced by the CLC demand-

ing "Economic Justice!" Let us know about pay equity struggles or fights for better wages for women in your area.

Pay equity coalitions continue to fight to protect or establish pay equity laws. We need to be involved in these coalitions. You can make sure your local or union belongs or at least helps financially. If there is a coalition in your province, find out what the current campaign is and help get the word out. If there isn't a coalition, why not discuss the issue at your next provincial women's conference or labour school? Would a coalition help raise the issue of unequal pay? Should you be lobbying for proactive legislation? What other options are there for narrowing the wage gap?

Watch for the promised review of the Canadian Human Rights Act. There will be information from the CLC about pay equity lobbying at the federal level.

Even without pay equity legislation, you can bargain measures to narrow the wage gap in your workplace or to prevent it from widening; same dollar increases for everyone, for example. Have a look at the wage distribution in your

workplace: are women or visible minority workers grouped in lower paid job classifications? If so Houston, you've got a problem. Raise it with your union, with your employer. If your employer won't move at the bargaining table, go public. Embarrass them. You can do something about it.

Women Need a Shorter Work Week and an Equitable Distribution of Work

Action Alert:

The CLC should incorporate the excessive overtime issue in its jobs conference.

Action Alert:

The CLC should initiate strategy discussions to develop an action plan for the more equitable redistribution of work time with living wages for working women.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

The CLC participated in a major study called "Working Time and the Distribution of Work" which was presented to the government at the end of

1994. The report examined the patterns of working time developing in Canada in the 1990s and concluded that reducing working time would lead to job creation. Some of the recommendations in the report were: a standard work week of no more than 40 hours in any Canadian jurisdiction; the right to refuse overtime; compensation for a maximum of 100 hours overtime annually - additional overtime to be taken as time in lieu; extended parental and family leave provisions. These are all still critical issues.

As well, during the recent federal government consultations on workplace issues - the so-called "Collective Reflections" union activists emphasized the importance of these issues and of raising labour standards generally. The Advisory Group on the Changing Workplace presented a report in the spring of 1997 on "Worker Representation and Protection in the New Economy" which includes many critical recommendations for unionists.

The Congress continues to lobby to have the recommendations of these reports



adopted by federal and provincial governments. The issue was also central in the CLC jobs conference, where strategy options were discussed.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT YOU CAN DO

Limits on overtime and the redistribution of work continue to be controversial issues within our unions. This is in part the case because real wages have not kept pace with the cost of living, so many workers have actually come to see working overtime as a normal component of their wage.

We need to initiate and expand discussions about this issue at all opportunities within the labour movement. The limitation of working hours and the redistribution of work are important parts of the solution to the issue of unemployment. They are also key to issues of work and family life. Discussions about this issue in our local unions and at union schools and labour council meetings can help educate all of us about the ramifications of the issue.

What is the situation in your workplace? Is there lots of overtime? Too much? Do you have the right to refuse overtime? Are women who

want full-time work stuck in part-time jobs? Maybe it would be a good idea to have a discussion in your local about the relationship between overtime and job creation.

What about the leave provisions in your collective agreement. Do you have leave for parental and family obligations? for educational leave? to attend union functions? There may be some openings to win increased leaves these days, especially when employers pay lip service to the need for all workers to spend time with their families. We can call them on it. It's worth looking at.

Counting Women's Unpaid Work

Action Alert:

The CLC Women's Committee should take up the challenge of formulating a progressive position on counting women's unpaid work and its increasing load. A round table discussion involving feminist activists sympathetic to labour could help to develop some policy options.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

The Women's and Human Rights Department has begun to develop a dossier on this issue, including the statistics released on the amount of unpaid work women perform. Still, by far, the vast majority of unpaid work in the home is done by women. We have been in touch with several progressive academics who are interested in working with us to help develop some ideas about what labour's position on counting women's unpaid work should be. The CLC Women's Committee will discuss the issue at its meeting in the fall of 1998 and will decide how to proceed from there.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT YOU CAN DO

Send your ideas and information to the CLC Women's Department. Keep your eyes open for information and articles on the topic.

At home, think about how much unpaid work you are doing as a result of the cuts to health care or child care or other government services. Write to your newspaper about what the cuts mean for women in the home and after work.

Organize a meeting with others who have taken on the work that used to provide jobs in your community.

Women want and need unions

UNIONS: KEEPING THE EQUALITY AGENDA ALIVE

Collective Bargaining

There is a shared sentiment that in this critical juncture, when equality legislation across the country is being slashed, watered down, and undermined, collective bargaining remains the key strategy to keep women's equality issues on the front burner for working women.

Many unions continue to fight to improve conditions on the job for women and members of equality seeking groups. Many examples can be found. All unionists need to celebrate the successes any union makes. Unionists need to share experiences and strategies to keep the equality agenda alive at the bargaining table.



CLC Bargaining Campaign on Jobs and Equality

Action Alert:

On every March 8th, International Women's Day, the CLC Women's Committee will release a set of key demands on women and work issues with background research and sample language. Affiliates across the country will be urged to incorporate them as part of their bargaining proposals.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

The CLC Women's Committee has held several discussions on the issue of selecting five bargaining demands to be released on March 8th. There are many burning issues for working women and it was next to impossible to narrow down our concerns to five. For 1998 we want to focus on our Economic Justice campaign, which looks at the following issues:

- equal pay for work of equal value;
- employment equity measures;
- protection against harassment;

- paid educational leaves;
- child care and family care leave; and
- pay, benefits and guaranteed hours for part-time workers.

These are also potential bargaining demands at the local level.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT YOU CAN DO

For this campaign to succeed and for our unions to really step up our bargaining for equality, the women gathered at the Conference came up with many strong ideas for an equality bargaining agenda.

Start the discussion on bargaining for equality when you get back to your local union. See if you can get agreement to incorporate one or more of the women's central demands in your next round of bargaining.

Make sure your local's women's committee knows about the campaign and if your local doesn't have a women's committee - why not start one around your demands?

Strengthening Alliances with Equality Seeking Groups

Action Alert:

Labour should initiate a public forum/solidarity conference with equality seeking groups and other coalition partners on job creation and the equality agenda. Open, thoughtful discussion can take place to address potentially contentious issues, such as the tension between seniority and employment equity and to come up with creative models and strategies.

Action Alert:

Labour should join equality seeking and anti-poverty groups to put pressure on governments to conduct analyses on the impact of restructuring and the cutbacks on women, aboriginal people, people of colour, gay men, lesbians and people with disabilities.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

Through the employment equity work, discussions with other equality seeking groups

on the issue of seniority and employment equity have begun. In our work with NAC and other national women's organizations, equality issues in relation to work and changing work realities have been central.

The release of the Anti-Racism Task Force Report in the Fall of 1997 and the regional forums on the Report have brought the CLC into contact with equality seeking groups across the country. As well the creation at the level of the CLC of an Anti-Racism and Human Rights Department should help ensure that contact with these organizations continues and broadens to include these discussions.

The CLC Solidarity and Pride Conference in October 1997 brought together lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered union activists from across the country. Following the conference, the CLC has worked with the Alberta Federation of Labour and the Coalition on Human Rights in Alberta to pressure the Klein government to "do the right thing" and guarantee protection



against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. CLC Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Working Group is working on a regional basis with unionists and community groups across the country to strengthen alliances and make links at the local level. In Toronto for example, a gay and lesbian coalition, formed a result of the Solidarity and Pride Conference, is pressuring the Pride Day organizers to adopt a "corporate code of conduct" which demands that only corporate sponsors who provide decent jobs and nondiscriminatory benefits are accepted.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT CAN YOU DO

The CLC Women's Committee will discuss the possibility of initiating a forum or solidarity conference on the issues raised in these Action Alerts. The CLC jobs conference provided a good start on clarifying the relationship between job creation and the equality agenda.

Discussion needs to happen at all levels. Can you get your local to invite representatives of the local anti-racist or lesbian and gay group to talk to your meeting? Can your local or labour council

organize a forum with the community's organization of people with disabilities? Does your local financially support equality seeking groups in your community? Check it out. Solidarity starts at home.

Sectoral Bargaining

Action Alert:

The union movement should advocate for legislative changes which would allow for sectoral bargaining. The CLC should facilitate more inter-union discussion on broader based bargaining - incorporate broader based and sectoral bargaining as priority issues, in its upcoming conference on jobs.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

The CLC Executive Council has begun discussions on the way forward towards organizing the unorganized, and has received a presentation from one of the leaders of the AFL/CIO Organizing Institute. The CLC convention adopted a policy calling on the labour movement to take up this challenge.

"Current labour legislation is often ill suited to the task of organizing and representing workers who work in unstable jobs, in small workplaces, in highly competitive and labour intensive sectors. Consideration must be given to labour laws which would allow for multi-employer certifications, sectoral bargaining, and/or the extension by legal decree of collective agreements to unorganized workers (as in the Quebec decree system). The CLC will organize a major national conference to discuss these issues."

The Jobs Conference did include many discussion on these issues.

These discussions will continue and will be furthered by the existence and experience of the BC Organizing Institute and the BC Federation of Labour's campaign for amendments to the labour code in that province to allow for sectoral certifications so that service and retail workers can better exercise their rights to organize unions.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT CAN YOU DO

Research into the different sectoral bargaining models which exist should be collected and distributed through our unions' and the CLC women's committees. Discussion on the issue needs to broaden and be included in bargaining conferences and schools. We need to develop some consensus within the union movement about what sectoral bargaining in Canada would look like, what forms will be most useful, and whether different models might work in different sectors.

Get a copy of the Report on the Jobs Conference and use it as a beginning for the discussion.

You can raise the issue in your union, organize some educationals on the topic, find out what your union's position on the question is. Raise the question at the labour council or at federation of labour functions. Maybe you can start something. We need to have a serious and wide-ranging discussion on this proposal.



Employment Standards Legislation

Action Alert:

Labour should continue its visible participation in public campaigns to improve the Canada Labour Code and provincial employment standards legislation, such as the campaign of the Employment Standards Work Group in Ontario.

Action Alert:

Labour should investigate the possibilities for a cross-country campaign to raise the minimum wage as a key priority of the Action Plan. Such a campaign would be a concrete follow up to the Women's March Against Poverty which called for an increase in the minimum wage to \$7.85 per hour in federal and provincial labour standards.

Action Alert:

The CLC should highlight the precarious nature of the new forms of work and push for the inclusion of part-time workers and temporary workers in bargaining units along with full-time employees, regardless of the number of hours worked. Federal and

provincial labour relations acts should reflect this imperative.

Action Alert:

The CLC should review the Bankruptcy Act and lobby for amendments in light of the increasing number of closures where employers have shredded their financial responsibilities. The order of creditors should be reversed so that compensation is paid first to workers who are owed back wages.

Action Alert:

Labour should advocate for legislative change to include workplace harassment based on gender, race, sexual orientation, disability and other forms of discrimination as occupational health and safety hazards; provincial occupational health and safety acts should also be amended to reflect such inclusion. Legislative change in this area must be sensitive to the particular nature of the impact of harassment on individual workers and provide appropriate protective measures.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

The labour movement has been involved in campaigns to improve employment standards and labour relations legislation in all provinces over the last years. In some cases - Manitoba, Ontario, Alberta - the fight is to maintain the minimum protections workers have won. We must be vigilant for example, to defend maternity and parental leave provisions since there is pressure from employers across the country to reduce benefits and eliminate these rights.

The CLC has entered discussions with the federal government and employers under federal jurisdiction on a complete review of Part III of the Canada Labour Code, which is the employment standards section.

The issue of minimum standards at work, in the sense of a fight for decent jobs and decent wages, was central to labour's day of protest on May 1997. The report of the Advisory Group on the Changing Workplace contains a number of very important recommendations for improving both employment stan-

dards and labour relations laws in the context of changes dictated by the "new economy". This struggle continues to be key.

Several of the workshops at this conference, such as Community Unionism, Working in Coalition with Community and Women's Groups and Political Action: Getting Involved Politically, developed ideas to help us move these campaigns forward.

On the question of the Bankruptcy Act, the Social and Economic Policy Department of the CLC has been asked to look at the operation of the Act in relation to the needs of workers faced with bankrupt employers.

The issue of harassment at the workplace has been a concern of women's and human rights activists throughout the union movement. Increasingly people have been agitating to have harassment recognized as a workplace hazard and a health and safety matter. The CLC Women's and Human Rights Department along with the

Health, Safety and the Environment Department, has initiated a process to look at the implications of including harassment - sexual, racial and personal - in the health and safety basket. There are concerns around the privacy of the person subjected to harassment, clear definitions of health, training of health and safety committee members, and co-worker harassment: these issues are different from other workplace health and safety matters. A subcommittee of the CLC Women's Committee has been struck to tackle this issue.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT YOU CAN DO

We need stronger employment standards - not weaker ones.

Here are a dozen very modest and reasonable suggestions that will improve and update the Employment Standards Act (ESA) for workers:



THE DESIRABLE DOZEN

12 Ways to Update the Employment Standards Act for the 21st Century Workplace

1 Better, stronger enforcement of minimum standards ■ No law works unless it is enforced. The first change needed is protecting people who make employment standards claims, from being fired. The ESA should guarantee that anyone fired for making a claim gets their jobs back for at least six months. Second, the Ministry of Labour has to do more inspections and spot-checks of employer's records. Third, the Ministry needs enough staff to do the job.

2 No exemptions from minimum standards ■ The Employment Standards Act has long, long lists of people who are not covered by some or all sections of the Act - from babysitters, to cab drivers, to farm workers, to hotel workers, to camp counsellors, to group homeworkers, and so on. The ESA should be simplified. Make one law to apply to everyone.

3 \$1.00 per hour increase in minimum wage ■ The current general minimum wage is \$6.85 per hour (and has been frozen by the government). At that rate, working a 35 hour week for the whole year, a person earns \$12,467; for a 40 hour week, \$14,248 - not enough to live on. With a \$1.00 per hour increase, those annual wages would be \$14,287 and \$16,328. It's not much to ask.

4 The eight hour day and 40 hour week ■ The law says you must be paid 1 ½ times your regular rate of pay after working 44 hours in one week. The maximum work week in the law is 48 hours. General Motors wants that increased to 56 hours. The government's "Red Tape Commission" suggested 50 hours. IBM wants to average working hours over a month, or six months, or even a year, before they have to pay any overtime rates. With so many people unemployed, we need a shorter work week, not a longer one. Like seven other provinces, the Northwest Territories and federally regulated employees, we need overtime pay after eight hours in a day and 40 hours in a week. And we need the right to refuse overtime.

5 Three weeks vacation after five years ■ The ESA gives two weeks vacation after one year - and it never changes no matter how many years you work for the same employer. Vacations should increase after five years. Vacation increases with length of service, in six other provinces.

6 Breaks ■ Most people think we have the right to "coffee" breaks. But they are not in the law. Let's put them in the ESA - two 15 minute paid breaks in each seven or eight hour day.

Equal pay, benefits and rights for part-time workers

■ The Employers are replacing full-time jobs with part-time ones with lower pay, no benefits, erratic scheduling. In Quebec, part-timers must be paid the same wages as full-timers until their wages are twice as much as the minimum wage. In Saskatchewan there is a requirement for pro-rated benefits for part-timers. If part-time work is the way of the future, then the ESA of the future has to offer part-time workers full recognition and protection.

8 Sick leave, family leave, and bereavement leave ■ One of the ways to bring the ESA into the 21st century is to insure that employees have job protection if they are sick, or have to care for a family member, or are bereaved.

9 Full protection for homeworkers and teleworkers ■ A critical issue for the ESA in the 21st century is ensuring that people working from home are recognized as employees and fully protected, whether they work on a computer or on the telephone or stuff envelopes or assemble jewellery or make auto parts.

10 Protection from unjust dismissal ■ We need to have protection from unjust firing as in the Canada Labour Code, in Quebec and in Nova Scotia. Now, an employer can dismiss anyone anytime for any or no reason at all -- and hire someone to replace them the same day. All they have to do is give the employee notice or pay instead of notice. In order to fight an unjust dismissal, you have to be able to hire a lawyer and sue your employer. Only people with enough money to hire lawyers can do this.

Clear distinctions between employees and independent contractors ■ The employment trend of the 90s is calling people self-employed when they are not. Cleaners come in to work one night and are told "Sign here. You're no longer working for me; you're in business for yourself." The work hasn't changed at all, but the cleaner is no longer protected by the ESA, or health and safety or workers' compensation laws. The same thing is happening to sales people, to hotel workers, to garment homeworkers, to house painters, and even to workers in a factory! The law has to be clear as long as an employee is dependent on an employer, they are employees.



THE DESIRABLE DOZEN

12

Recognition and accumulation of service with different employers ■ More and more people are working more than one part-time job, or several contracts in a year in order to survive. They may work full-time, but not for one employer, or all year but for more than one employer in a sector - retail sales, restaurant work, telemarketing, etc. The ESA should be changed so that they can accumulate their service in a sector in order to qualify for pregnancy and parental leave, public holidays termination and severance.

... and, for a
"baker's dozen"

13

Joint responsibility between employers ■ Contracting-out ■ it's the employers' strategy of the 1990's. Large corporations contract out parts of their production in order to avoid having employees and the responsibility that comes with it. Although the contractors end up with legal responsibility for employment conditions, the large corporation still has control. The two companies should be held jointly responsible for meeting the rules and regulations set out in the ESA.

Adapted from the Ontario Employment Standards Work Group

Although employment standards and Although employment standards and labour relations laws and regulations are provincial matters, the general struggle is the same. Governments at all levels are determined to lower wages and break the strength of the union movement. We need to find ways of coordinating our responses across the country. Through the CLC, the union movement can play an important role in making sure that activists in each province are aware of struggles and any victories. The question of national minimum employment standards campaigns, needs to be raised in, the coalitions we participate in like NAC and the AFB.

Groups like the Employment Standards Work Group in Ontario play a really important role in raising awareness that improvements are needed in the law. The Bad Boss Stories and other - local community forums, where workers are invited to come and talk about their working conditions and employers, have generated a lot of media attention to the failings of the law. The campaign in Ontario is taking place in a context where the government plans to introduce amendments to weaken the law even more. The hope is that creating a climate where workers are demanding better

protections will hamper the government from being really draconian.

Such grass roots initiatives can be started anywhere. Is there already a campaign in your province to defend and improve the labour relations and employment standards laws? Is your local involved? Can you think of women's groups who might want to help fight this issue in your community?

Ratify the ILO Convention on Homework

Action Alert:

The labour movement should step up pressure on the federal and provincial governments to ratify the ILO convention on homework. The CLC should incorporate the issue of homework into its Jobs Conference; the question of organizing homeworkers into unions should form part of the discussions at the organizing institutes.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

The issue of homework and telework were central in several of the workshops at



the jobs conference and the difficulties presented by this type of employment will be part of the challenge for those who attend organizing schools and conferences.

The CLC has raised the issue of ratification of the ILO Convention on homework in several different meetings with federal government officials, with no success to date in moving the process forward.

The CLC is working as well with INTERCEDE, in support of their organization's work with domestic workers. The CLC, INTERCEDE and NAC have also lobbied the federal government to support the rights of immigrant workers and their families.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT CAN YOU DO

We need to continue to educate ourselves about the development of homework and telework. It will be important to monitor employers' plans to send work and workers home to perform their jobs. We need to continue to push both the federal and provincial governments to adopt legislation to provide basic standards for homeworkers. Ratification of the ILO Convention should be seen as an important first step.

Are people at your work being "encouraged" to work at home? Do employees telework? Has your local tried to negotiate protection for workers in this situation?

Find out more about homework and telework and the kinds of collective agreement language you might want to negotiate. Ask your union what material is available on the subject. Talk with members of your union about what they think about the issue and what can be done.

Unions Becoming Stronger Through Diversity

Building Activism. Creating Space. Sharing Resources

From our consultations, women expressed the urgent need for the labour movement to re-energize the membership from the grassroots level up. Internally, it means building new activism and ultimately, a truly inclusive trade union organization. The need for new, creative strategies that will overcome the fear and the divisiveness among members was repeatedly underscored.

Developing an Integrated Approach to Union Education

Action Alert:

Trade unions should develop new courses and revise existing labour education programs to reflect a stronger integration of gender, race, equality and class perspectives. The CLC Women's and Human Rights Department and the CLC Education Department can take a leadership role in this endeavour.

Action Alert:

Courses on the importance of pay and employment equity, how to deal with harassment in workplaces, on how to balance work, family and union activism are some key areas. The bargaining demands prepared by the CLC Women's Committee should be integrated into the CLC's ongoing courses.

Action Alert:

The CLC should explore the feasibility of developing more innovative cultural projects that will promote the notion of the solidarity roots of unionism and bring out the poignancy of working class history and culture.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

Members of the CLC Women's and Human Rights Department and the Women's Committee attended the union educators conference in April 1997 "Educ-Action: Union Building for the 21st Century" which brought together activists from Canada, Mexico and the United States. The ideas generated at that conference about the relationship between education and activism will help move the recommendations of the Women's Work Report forward. Innovative cultural projects and the development of new courses were part of the presentations and discussions at the Conference.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT YOU CAN DO

Many unions have developed courses on pay and employment equity, work and family issues and harassment in the work place. The CLC Women's and Human Rights Department has collected many of these courses and plans to develop a catalogue of available courses over the



next year. As part of this project ideas for integrating the material from these courses will be developed for inclusion in more general labour education courses.

Does your local sponsor members to attend equality courses? Do women and visible minority workers also get to go to the courses on general union issues - like collective bargaining, stewards training or grievance handling? Does your local hold courses for local members on equality issues? Can you get one started?

If you do attend labour schools and courses make sure that equality courses are offered and that equality issues are included in all of the courses. If they're not, be sure to mention this in your evaluations. Make positive suggestions to your union or labour council about the kind of education content that you would like to see.

Action Alert:

CLC at the regional level can facilitate more joint training among unions to share limited resources and eliminate duplication. Training can be designed to accommodate both generic labour and union-specific contents.

Action Alert:

The education departments of different unions are to look at pooling resources together and develop a model of offering labour education programs for both the organized and the unorganized in an ongoing and systematic fashion.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

These ideas have been passed on to the Regional offices of the CLC and through the Report and discussions at the Women's Committee to affiliated unions. The B.C. Women's Institute and the Prairie School for Union Women are models for using the courses developed by different unions.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT CAN YOU DO

You can check with your labour council or federation of labour to see what kind of joint educational endeavours are available or possible in your area. You can also talk to your union to build support for such ideas.

Sharing the Table, Creating Space: Democratizing Union Structures

Action Alert:

A component on equality issues should be integrated into all union leadership and staff training programs. Different unions can pool resources and develop some collective actions.

Action Alert:

Labour unions, as employers, should develop more proactive staff training programs, employment equity plans and lead by example.

Action Alert:

Labour should recognize separate organizing among communities as an important internal organizing strategy and devise structures and resources to support such initiatives.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

The CLC Executive Council has had an initial discussion on anti-racism training with an expert in the field at a meeting held early in 1997. As

well, the CLC is in the process of negotiating an employment equity program with the staff unions. Anti-racism training for all staff and officers was a key part of the 1997 staff retreat.

The final Report of the Anti-Racism Task Force was launched in November. The Report includes numerous critical recommendations which are designed to help the CLC and the labour movement as a whole move further forward on the equality front. The final Report has been distributed across the country and the Anti-Racism Task Force organized regional follow-up forums to discuss the Report's implementation strategies. The CLC has also established a new Anti-Racism and Human Rights Department to further the implementation of the Report.

The CLC recognizes separate organizing among communities. It structures this organizing at the national level through working groups, organized under the umbrella of the Human Rights Committee. Four constitutionally recognized working groups - representing people with disabilities,



visible minority workers, gay men and lesbians, and aboriginal peoples have been meeting and organizing union members from their communities.

Among other activities, some specific projects are planned.

The Aboriginal Peoples Working Group is planning a round table for the fall. The Gay and Lesbian Working Group will hold the first-ever in Canada, national Solidarity and Pride Conference for lesbian and gay trade unionists in October 1997. The Conference was attended by over 300 activists from all parts of the country and came up with many recommendations for continued action. The Disabled Peoples Working Group is planning a conference in 1998. The Visible Minority Working Group, along with the Aboriginal Peoples Working Group has conducted the Anti-Racism Task Force and will be holding a Workers of Colour Conference in the fall of 1998.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT YOU CAN DO

The Women's Committee will be discussing the Anti-Racism Task Force Report and the implications for our

work on an ongoing basis. Its recommendations will be incorporated into our work.

Get a copy of the CLC Anti-Racism Task Force Report and read it. Find out if there will be a meeting on the recommendations in your area and try to encourage members to participate if there is one. Raise the issues the Report identifies in your union. Find out whether your union provides training programs and whether there is an internal employment equity plan. What about setting up committees or working groups for equality seeking groups in your union or at the labour council?

Strengthen and Publicize the Benefits of Being a Union Member

Action Alert:

CLC should explore the feasibility and financial viability of establishing extended benefit packages on a national level and regionally.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT YOU CAN DO

This idea will be raised in the discussions around organizing institutes so that it can be included in the development of content of the institutes. We should review and publicize any initiatives that are already underway. The labour movement in Australia and in the US have this kind of project for example. We need work through the practical and political implications of proceeding on this issue. Everyone can spend some time reading and thinking about the issue.

Unions: Becoming Stronger Through Organizing

Special Outreach to the
Hard-to-Organize Groups

Get the Message Out to the Schools

Action Alert:

The CLC should involve young people in actively developing organizing strategies for youth and for reaching other youth. The needs of young workers should be addressed in the proposed conferences on jobs and organizing.

Getting The Message Out to the Community.

Action Alert:

Key women union leaders and activists at all levels should take the message to the shopping malls, to the schools and listen to what young people and women have to say about unions. We can also be creative in using street theatre, music and video about basic labour rights and the importance of organizing.

Action Alert:

Encourage personal stories of union members who will speak about their own experiences. Organize more forums, more social events where workers' cultural performance is the norm rather than an oddity.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

The CLC held a national youth forum in January in Toronto. Delegates to the forum called for specific measures to increase the involvement of young workers in the union movement and to increase the number of young people organized. They wanted to see the establishment of a youth working group at the



level of the CLC - which has begun. They were also interested in seeing a specific youth organizing institute. The CLC has created a new National Representative for Youth position to work on this issue.

For International Women's Day this year, the CLC Women's and Human Rights Department designed and distributed thousands and thousands of union pamphlets designed to interest working women in unions. The pamphlets were used by unionists across the country in schools, offices, shopping malls and factories to reach out to women and start the discussion about the benefits of unionism.

The Women's Conference workshops on Young Women: Issues and Outreach and on Strategies for Organizing More Women into Unions proposed a number of creative ideas about how to involve young women in our unions.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT CAN YOU DO

In your community you can organize a distribution of the CLC pamphlet - we still have some left. They were designed to be used over the

year, not just at IWD. Does your labour council have a program of outreach to the high schools and community colleges? Why not volunteer to help out or to start one?

Can you work with local youth groups to set up a forum or debate on job prospects and the role of unions among young workers? Many communities have specific youth groups which may be interested. There are lesbian and gay youth groups for example which might like to hear from a lesbian or gay trade unionist about what the labour movement is doing on their issue. Anti-racist youth groups also exist in many cities and could be contacted.

Recruiting Members, Recruiting Women Organizers

Action Alert:

The CLC should consult with heads of unions and solicit their support for the development of an organizing institute as a pilot project to be implemented in the next year.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

The CLC Executive Council heard from representatives of the AFL/CIO Organizing Institute. One of the key strategies in the United States is to ensure that the organizers who are trained are representative of the diversity of working class, so workers of colour and women are targeted for training. These discussions at the level of the CLC will continue.

The BC Organizing Institute is underway. An organizing conference is planned for the fall, sponsored by the BC Federation of Labour. This will be followed by intensive weekend schools for interested union members. The intention is to reach into unions, community organizations and campuses to find candidates who represent the diversity of BC's population for the schools. After these sessions, apprentices will be selected for three and four week training programs. This will be followed by an internship after which graduates can be hired as union organizers. The BC Institute will provide important lessons for the rest of the country.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT CAN YOU DO

Find out where your union stands on the question of an organizing institute. Does your union emphasize the need to specifically target women, youth, people of colour, lesbian and gay, disabled people or aboriginal people as organizers? If you are interested in being a union organizer, contact your union and find out what training is available. Make sure that others know about courses and training. Encourage people to get involved.

Associate Membership and Community Unionism

Action Alert:

Labour to explore the support for and feasibility of establishing a union-sponsored workers' centre as a pre-organizing strategy in immigrant communities.

The Women's Conference workshop on Community Unionism: From a Woman's Perspective came up with some ideas about the kinds of community



activities unions can and should be involved in. The role of our unions in our communities is an ongoing discussion which we must pursue over the next year.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT CAN YOU DO

Is your union active and visible in the community? What kinds of actions could you see your local participating in? Can you initiate a debate about community unionism?

The issue of union sponsored workers' centres can be raised at local labour councils and federations of labour. Would you be able to persuade your union to help sponsor and financially support this kind of initiative?

Sisterhood and international solidarity

Action Alert:

The CLC's leadership in this area is pivotal. A stronger anti-racist and feminist analysis must be developed and integrated into the international work of the labour movement.

Action Alert:

The CLC should develop a Toy Consumer Awareness Campaign, parallel to the child labour campaign, which recognizes that child poverty stems primarily from the poverty caused by unemployment and the low wages available to women and their families.

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

The CLC Women's Committee has had several discussions about international solidarity and around the issue of toy campaigns. As well, the CLC Women's Committee regularly hears about the activities of women trade unionists around the world. Nancy Riche, CLC Executive Vice-President chairs the Women's Committee of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and works with union sisters around the world to strengthen the international struggle for equality. Trade unionists from Canada participated in the ICFTU Women's Conference and at the UN Women's Conference in Beijing. Through these activities Canadian women learn important organizing

lessons and provide support for women's struggles elsewhere.

The CLC Women's Committee, along with the International Department, invited a number of women union leaders to our meetings and several joined us at the Women's Conference.

The CLC launched a consumer awareness campaign for the 1997 Christmas season - "Break the Sweat" which called on consumers to question retailers about where their products are made and under what conditions.

Women trade unionists participated in the Women's Conference Against APEC in Vancouver this fall helped develop a broad framework for international solidarity in the region.

WHAT NEEDS DOING & WHAT CAN YOU DO

The CLC Women's Committee will schedule a discussion about ways to more effectively integrate an anti-racist and feminist perspective into the solidarity work we're involved with.

The Committee is trying to coordinate the solidarity work along with both the Women's and Human Rights and the International Departments of the CLC.

The CLC Women's and Human Rights Department is also working with NAC and INTERCEDE to pressure the Canadian government to sign the UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families. This campaign includes circulating petitions and direct lobbying with ministers of the federal government.

Find out about consumer awareness projects in your area. Get your union, neighbours and friends involved. Get a copy of the petition in support of migrant workers and circulate it in your community. Are you on the Internet? It can be a great way to find out about international campaigns. Check out international solidarity courses organized by your union or labour council. Encourage other local members to participate.

We know that the process of winning better jobs and working conditions in this climate of change will not be an easy task. We also know that if we all pull together, the struggle will be easier. And as Mary Ann Shadd, black activist, educator, newspaper founder, writer, publisher, anti-slavery fighter, underground railway organizer, lawyer and freedom fighter said in Windsor in the 1850s: **"I'd rather wear out than rust out"**.

Wouldn't you?

opeiu225



Women & work project

