Public Service Alliance of Canada

HEALTH AND SAFETY CONFERENCE

OTTAWA, ONTARIO

January 19 to 21, 2007

Report by: Donald Lafleur, 4th National Vice-President
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I was invited to participate in the Public Service Alliance of Canada’s Health and Safety Conference, which was held in Ottawa, Ontario from January 19 to 21, 2007. The environment was on the agenda Saturday morning and Mr. Hugo Séguin and I were the guest speakers for that segment of the conference.

I will first report on the conference overall. I did not participate throughout the conference but I was there for the President’s report and the reports of the workshops. There were 341 participants at this conference.

AGENDA

Reproduced below is the agenda for the conference:

• Opening by Co-Chairs
  o Greetings by an Aboriginal Representative
  o Introductions: Conference Steering and Resolutions Committee
• Panel Discussion on Prevention
• Focus Groups
• Orientation Session for New Delegates (Resolutions Process)
• Key Note Speakers on Environmental Issues: Their Importance for Unions
• Address by the PSAC National President, John Gordon
• Focus Groups Report in Plenary
• Resolutions Debate
• Facilitated Regional Sessions
• Regional Sessions Report in Plenary

WORKSHOPS

There were 3 workshops covering the following topics:

1. Deregulation;
2. Behaviour Based Safety and Wellness Programs; and
3. Enforcement.
Reproduced below is the mandate of the workshop participants’ mandate and final reports.

1. Deregulation of Health and Safety Protections and the trend towards Employer Self-Regulation

   **Mandate**

   This focus group will look at and discuss present government plans to deregulate and weaken current health, safety and environmental protections established in legislation, and the trend being promoted to have employers self regulate on health and safety issues in the workplace, and on environmental issues both in the workplace and in the broader community, through such concepts as voluntary adoption of performance standards, establishment of health and safety management systems and adherence to codes of practice.

   Focus group participants will discuss and debate these ongoing trends and propose a union agenda to defend our current rights and fight to improve present health, safety and environmental protections.

   **Report**

   See attached report “Deregulation – Focus Group Report”.

2. Behaviour Based Safety Programs and the links to Workplace Wellness Programs

   **Mandate**

   This focus group will look at and discuss the recent restoration of the *Myth of the Careless Worker* through the promotion and establishment by employers of Behaviour Based Safety Programs, and the link between these Programs and Workplace Wellness Programs.

   Focus group participants will discuss and debate these ongoing trends and will explore different strategies to counter the concept of Behaviour Based Safety Programs in order to ensure that the true causes of workplace accidents and injuries are exposed and corrected.

   **Report**

   See attached report “Behaviour Based Safety and Wellness Programs – Focus Group Report”.


**Mandate**

This focus group will look at and discuss the current lack of strict enforcement by government when dealing with health, safety and environmental legislation and the lack of compliance by employers.

Focus group participants will discuss and debate current government strategies for voluntary compliance by employers in respect to current legislated protections, and will have an opportunity to develop a strategic plan to force governments to properly enforce legislated health, safety and environmental protections.

**Report**

See attached report “Recommendations from the Enforcement Focus Group”.

**RESOLUTIONS**

The titles of the resolutions debated on the last day of the conference are reproduced below.

1. Return to Work Guidelines
2. National Network of Workplace Health and Safety Representatives
3. Education Kit on Prevention of Violence in the Workplace
4. Negotiation of Health and Safety and Environmental Issues
5. In-Residence PSAC Health and Safety Training
6. Develop PSAC Booklet on Bullying
7. Gender/Diversity Lens/Analysis
8. Constitutional Recognition of Regional Health and Safety Committees
9. Regional Health and Safety Committees
10. Funding of Regional Health and Safety Committees
11. Constitutional Recognition of Regional Health and Safety Committees
12. Resolutions to the PSAC National Health and Safety Conference
13. Policy on Smoke-Free Environment
PSAC Policy on Recycling

Reproduced below is page 8 of the participant’s kit.

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PSAC Recycling Policy

Please make use of the recycling containers provided by the hotel.

This kit has been made with recycled paper.

Thank you for your cooperation.

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CUPW should also include this type of message in its material at area councils, conferences and education seminars.
ENVIRONMENT

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS - BIOGRAPHIES

As I mentioned in the opening paragraph of this report there were 2 keynote speakers for this segment of the conference. Below is a short biography of Mr. Hugo Séguin and myself that was included in the participant’s kits.

Hugo Séguin

Over the past twelve years, Hugo has worked in the public and financial sectors in Ottawa, Québec and Montréal. He also served as public affairs coordinator with the Solidarity Fund QFL. As assistant cabinet secretary to the Québec Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, Environment and Water from 2002 to 2003, he managed two major projects: national water policies and climate change. Since his arrival at Équiterre in 2003, Hugo has set up both a communications structure and team. He has also founded the Centre Québécois d’actions sur les changements climatiques and coordinated the Secretariat of Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations at the United Nations Climate Change Conference – COP11 – In November 2005. Hugo is also a member of the board of directors of Greenpeace Canada and Climate Action Network Canada. He studied international relations at the Norman Patterson School of International Affairs in Ottawa and has a bachelor’s degree in political science from the Université de Montréal.

Donald Lafleur

Donald Lafleur is the 4th National Vice-President for the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, a position he was first elected to in 1994. Brother Lafleur has been a union activist since 1979, first as a shop steward here in Ottawa for ten years, then as technical advisor to CUPW in 1989, and then as a National Negotiator for CUPW from 1989-1990. Brother Lafleur was first elected as a National Union Representative for CUPW in 1990, a position he held for four years before being elected as 4th National Vice-President. Brother Lafleur is now in his 5th three-year term in this position.

Brother Lafleur has also been CUPW’s representative on the Canadian Labour Congress’ Environment Committee since 1999 and at the 2005 CLC Convention, Brother Lafleur was presented with the CLC Environment Award.
**PRESENTATIONS**

**Hugo Séguin**

As can be seen from the biography above, Mr. Séguin is very involved as an environmental activist in his professional life as well as in his personal life. I find the fact that he is involved with Greenpeace commendable.

Mr. Séguin’s power point presentation was entirely on the subject of climate change. With graphic examples of what climate change is doing to our planet it became clear that we all have a roll to play in reversing the tide of environmental destruction.

Not only are we facing devastation at both poles of the planet but more and more we are seeing signs of abnormal weather patterns on every continent. Islands are being submerged, the level of the sea is rising, hurricanes, ice storms, earth quakes, and the list goes on. This devastation is destroying the earth’s biodiversity and is threatening all living things.

**Donald Lafleur**

My comments were focused on the role of the labour movement in the environmental struggle as well as the negative impact deregulation and privatization are having on our environment. We often suggest that we exercise pressure on governments to clean up our environment. But more and more as our natural resources and public services are being privatized; governments who are democratically elected are losing control of the environmental agenda.

Multinational Corporations are democratically accountable to no one. They make profits destroying our environment and we must pay for the clean up, not to mention pay with our deteriorating health.

Below is a copy of the presentation I made at the conference.

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Dear Sisters and Brothers:

First of all, I wish to thank the members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), and Brothers Jeff Bennie and Denis St. Jean in particular, for having invited me here today.

**Opening Remarks**

I believe that environmental issues must without a doubt become a priority for each and every one of us, as well as for ours unions, labour councils, labour federations and the Canadian...
Labour Congress. That said, multinational corporations are the major polluters, and if we can’t make them change their destructive ways, our environment will continue to deteriorate.

For example, between 1998 and 2005, the Exxon Corporation gave $16,000,000 to 43 organizations to confuse the public and attack the credibility of the science underpinning climate change. And this is just one example among many.

**Canadian Labour Congress**

I’ve been the National Representative for the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) who sits on the Canadian Labour Congress’ Environment Committee since 1999.

The CLC Environment Committee meets twice a year. We discuss issues like food safety, pesticides, climate change, pollution, the right to know, cancer prevention, animal rights, to name a few.

The CLC gives direction to affiliates, does research, pressures the governments, prepares papers and policies, and encourages participation in environmental conferences or forums. All this on a national and international scale, looking at both the communities and the workplaces.

A few recent examples of conferences we’ve been encouraged to participate in would be:

1. Climate Change International Conference – Winnipeg (2004);
2. Climate Change International Conference – Montréal (December 2005) – follow up to Kyoto and in Nairobi, Africa in 2006 and in Germany from June 6-17, 2007;
4. In the fall of 2002 the CLC organized an international environment conference. The theme was “Green Environment, Green Jobs, Green Community”. We need to organize another conference and it has been suggested that the theme should revolve around the issue of food safety.

Brother St. Jean and I agree that the CLC must maintain and indeed raise the struggle for a healthier environment on its priority list.

**Affiliates**

I would like to talk to you about a few examples of labour initiatives that are aimed at improving our environment. Educating our memberships, using the union-management consultation process and bargaining with our employers are excellent ways of promoting environmental issues.

1. **Canadian Auto Workers (CAW)**

   The CAW are attempting to negotiate « extended producer liability » for the products manufactured by corporations.
[Explain the following:]

- “Reverse” assembly lines – dismantling vehicles
- Comprehensive recycling – plastics, metal, cables, windshields, etc.
- Recycling considerations in auto manufacturing
- Job creation
- Already being done in Germany

Let’s look at the implications of this process, which makes manufacturers responsible for their products during the lifetime of these products.

- Household electrical appliances – Maytag (imagine the impact if they took back their products)
- Heavy equipment - tractors
- Chemicals
- Batteries
- 75% of discarded computer equipment in North America is sent to China
- Homes - buildings
- Lawnmowers, etc.

We recycle beverage cans, but we need legislation that would require manufacturers to take back their products when no longer needed by consumers.

Carp

I am involved in an environmental struggle in my community. We want to prevent the expansion of a landfill site located west of Ottawa. I can tell you that over 70% of the waste buried there comes from industry.

2. Canadian Union of Postal Workers

1999 – Why did the Canadian Union of Postal Workers become involved in the environment?

[Explain the following:]

- The Corporation has the largest fleet of vehicles – We want them to use hybrid vehicles.
- Door-to-door delivery versus community mail boxes (CMBs), i.e. “superboxes.”
- Retrofitting building – better for the environment – water consumption, electricity and insulation, as well as solar panels, wind energy, etc.
- Householders – Admail – printing them on recycled paper.
• Shipping costs – more expensive to deliver when not recycled.
• Internal CUPW – National Constitution – policies (nuclear, pollution, water) and renovations to our national office, at 377 Bank Street.

Privatization and Deregulation

We can all agree that deregulation and privatization lead to the deterioration of public services, higher costs for services, the loss of unionized jobs, and the weakening of our fragile democracy.

But privatization negatively impacts our environment as well because as multinational corporations, who are democratically responsible to no one, take control of our public services, including transportation, control our natural resources:

• Water;
• Forests;
• Mines;
• Food chain;
• Oil – natural gas;
• Fish;
• Parks.

Control of:

• Hydro;
• Recycling – water.

Our Ability to Struggle for a Better Environment is Greatly Reduced.

Privatization is an international reality which is becoming more prevalent because of the policies and actions of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, whom are all puppets to Multinational Corporations, just like our governments. The more privatization takes hold of our services and natural resources, the less effective the pressure we put on governments is. When elected governments are directly responsible for providing services and protecting our environment, we can vote them out when we are not satisfied with their performance. CEOs' names are not on election ballots and that is not democratic.

As a postal worker I will use the courier industry as an example, to demonstrate how and why deregulation and privatization are detrimental to our environment. In most countries around the world, we have many private courier companies competing with public post offices. For example: UPS, FedEx, Purolator, DHL, Dicom, and Dynamex, just to name a few. All these companies have vehicles on the road.

The negative environmental impact caused by emissions from all these vehicles, operated by companies independent of each other, results in inefficiencies, like:
• Duplication of travel;
• Vehicles delivering without a full load, and so on.

Now apply this private sector scenario to the air industry, to the transportation industry, to any public service that involves workers who operate vehicles or equipment and we have tonnes of harmful emissions going into our atmosphere that could be greatly reduced if our governments were providing the services. Add to that our ability to democratically force our governments to put hybrid vehicles on the road, for example, and we can all see that privatization is not only a disaster for workers, for the quality and cost of services, for our democracies and we can also see that privatization is detrimental to our environment.

Conclusion

In concluding I must say that if I have learned one thing from being active in the environmental movement, it is that the most committed and long standing environmental activists are our aboriginal sisters and brothers. This is a fact and reality around the world. First Nations people are taking on oil giants, food conglomerates, forestry giants, multinational mining corporations, every day and on every continent on this planet.

Given this reality I will leave you with a quote which is on a poster in CUPW’s Pacific Regional Office. The poster portrays an aboriginal sister standing on a huge rock wearing First Nations traditional clothing, and the quote goes like this:

“Only after the last tree has been cut down
Only after the last river has been poisoned
Only after the last fish has been caught
Only then will you find that money can not be eaten”

- Cree Indian Prophecy

Merci.

Solidarité,

Donald Lafleur
4th National Vice-President

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