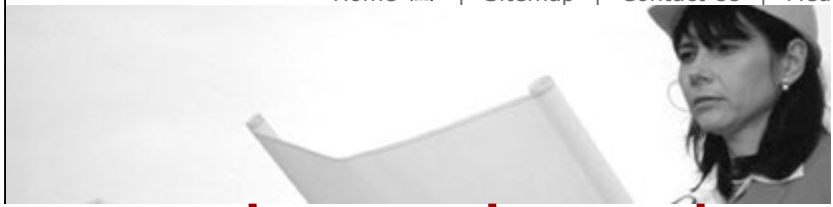




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Report of the Executive Council

Since the last biennial convention in 2001, the Alberta Federation of Labour has been busy working with affiliates, the Canadian Labour Congress, district councils and community groups to uphold and protect the interests of people around the province. This report is intended to provide a summary of activities over the past two years - and take a quick look at upcoming actions.

MEETING CHALLENGES

The past two years have been both difficult and rewarding for the Alberta Federation of Labour. At our last Convention in 2001, membership had dropped from 115,000 to 75,000 as AUPE was suspended from its national organization, NUPGE. As a result of this suspension, AUPE was no longer eligible for membership in either the AFL or the CLC. This produced a financially affected Federation staffing, finances and programs.

We had to lay off two staff members - one from the senior staff and one support staff. We made the Secretary-Treasurer a half-time office, and reduced News from 10 issues a year to a cost-recovery publication. Even then, the convention had to pass a per capita increase to prevent deeper cuts to staffing and programs.

The next six months were difficult for the Federation. The remaining six months were very hard to try to maintain the excellent programs that the AFL has been known for. Executive Council and Executive Committee members did what they could. The Federation began a long-term organizing campaign to encourage unions to join the AFL.

Our affiliates came through in the crunch, backstopping us in our final year. UFCW 401 and the CEP national board, for example, both provided the interest-free loans to help us through our cash crisis. UFCW also paid salary and expenses for our Secretary-Treasurer for ten days a month.

In general, leaders and activists from all our affiliates supported the Federation whenever and wherever we needed help. As many members of the Executive Council observed at the time, the fact that so many people rallied around in its time of need proved that the labour movement recognizes and values the work done by the AFL.

THE ORGANIZING DRIVE

In response to the financial crunch, the AFL went on a major organizing drive in 2001 and 2002 aimed at finding new affiliates. As part of this effort, we developed a new affiliation/membership fact kit which was distributed to non-affiliated groups and unions. The officers and council members then traveled the province extensively, speaking to interested groups.

Today, the AFL has nearly been restored to its previous membership level. It has affiliated 10 CAW locals, 3 CUPE locals, and one each from IBEW, the The Postmasters union also affiliated.

The biggest boost to AFL membership came in January 2002, when the members of the United Nurses of Alberta voted to affiliate. With this a

nurses have not only brought new resources to the table - they have brought new energy, new ideas and a proven track record of success and profi

As a result of our successful organizing efforts, in March of 2002 the AFL brought back our support staff member who had been laid off, and we filled the Secretary-Treasurer position to full-time. We were also able to fill the staff position.

Today, as the AFL prepares for its 2003 Convention there is good reason to believe that our membership will continue to grow. One of the brightest prospects is the Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA), representing more than 10,000 professional and technical health care workers around the province. They are currently voting on a motion to affiliate to the Federation later in May.

KEEPING UP WITH OUR MANDATE

During 2001 and 2002, the AFL worked hard - and successfully - to live up to our mandate with reduced resources. It was hard work, and took a lot of time and effort from everyone - from our affiliates, our Executive, our elected officers and staff. We did it.

For example, despite the financial crunch, we managed to hold our Kiwanis our annual fall school. We continued to publish Labour News and to issue press releases and commentaries on subjects of concern to working people. We continued to meet requests from our affiliates, and to work with labour groups like the Coalition on Pensions and the Workers' Coalition on the WCB. We continued our political action work and our broad social coalition work with groups like Friends of Medicare, the Aspen Foundation for Labour Education and the Labour History Institute.

We also worked closely with UFCW during their dispute with Superstore. We supported them in their successful efforts to get a first contract for work at the Shaw Conference Centre in Edmonton. And we worked closely with the Teachers Association during their recent dispute with the Alberta government. We are staying in regular contact with the ATA.

Obviously, the loss of AUPE was significant. But it is now safe to say that the Alberta Federation of Labour is as strong - or stronger - as it has ever been. We remain one of the most active and progressive labour centrals in C

MEMBERSHIP FORUM

On May 3rd and 4th of 2002 the Federation held its biennial members' Forum in Edmonton. The Forum is held in the spring of every year in which no convention is held. The function of the forum is two-fold: to engage our members and activists in an open dialogue about Federation activities and priorities, and to present a series of workshops on a topic relevant to unions and union

In 2002, the focus of the Forum was on organizing, and delegates heard from guest speakers: Charlotte Yates of McMaster University and community organizer Walter Davis. 150 union leaders and activists participated in

MOBILIZING AGAINST THE G8 SUMMIT

During the month of June 2002, the Alberta labour movement - including the CDLC and various affiliates - joined youth and social groups in protest against the G8 Summit held in Kananaskis. The labour movement was a leading component of the protests - which were peaceful and educational despite the incredible amount of mongering done by politicians and media prior to the event.

Thousands of unionists joined with students, church groups, social justice groups and environmentalists to demonstrate public opposition to the continued presence of international corporate influence in our daily lives, the decline of public services and programs and the undermining of our democratic institutions.

The Federation is working to maintain and expand the alliances created during the G8 protests.

THE AFL AND THE CAMPAIGN TO DEFEND MEDICARE

For the past six or seven years, Alberta has been "ground zero" for the future of Medicare in Canada. Our province was the first to impose health care staff in the mid 90s. The Klein government was also the first government to contract out support services and engage in other dangerous experiments with private health care.

Throughout these turbulent times - from the laundry workers strike in more recent battles over Bill 11 and the Mazankowski report - the Alberta Federation of Labour has been at the forefront of the fight to preserve public health care. During the Bill 11 debate, for example, AFL senior staffer Gil McLeod worked closely with affiliates and other groups involved with Friends of Medicare to coordinate the fight back.

Over the past year, the AFL has continued to play a leading role in the province-wide campaign to stop the spread of private health care. Starting in the fall of 2001 and continuing through January 2003, the AFL has worked closely with Friends of Medicare to organize the following high-profile events and campaigns:

Response to the Mazankowski Report: In January 2002, the AFL helped produce a 20-page critique of the controversial Mazankowski report. The AFL also helped organize a special media tour to the Premier's Conference in Vancouver. Friends of Medicare warned other Premiers not to follow the Klein government's lead on health care.

Mobilizing Against Mazankowski: In the spring of 2002, the AFL, various health care unions and the Friends of Medicare worked together to organize a province-wide campaign against the Klein government's latest plans for health care privatization. The campaign included the creation of a new Friends of Medicare website; "teach-ins" in Edmonton and Calgary dealing with the real implications of the Mazankowski plan; distribution of leaflets to hundreds of thousands of people in Edmonton and Calgary; and a province-wide TV and radio ad campaign.

Rallying for Romanow: Also in the spring of 2002, the AFL helped mobilize and union members to participate in Roy Romanow's traveling committee hearings on the future of health care. The AFL also helped organize rallies outside the hearings in both Edmonton and Calgary. The goal was to pressure Romanow into producing a report that would actually defend public health care - and in that regard, we were successful.

Building a "Canopy of Care": More recently, the AFL has been instrumental in designing and launching the latest Friends of Medicare activity - the M Campaign. Albertans are being asked to sign their names on copper leaves that they care about public health care. The leaves will then be mounted on a canopy to act as a reminder that most Albertans don't support the privatization of Medicare.

Romanow Now! Campaign: In January and February 2003, the AFL actively supported the Friends of Medicare's Romanow Now! campaign. Launched on January 14, 2003 this six-week election-style campaign was conducted in Edmonton-West, the riding of Federal Health Minister Anne McLellan. The goal of the campaign was to pressure McLellan into implementing the best recommendations formulated by the Romanow commission (as opposed to listening to the Klein government's call to scrap or water-down the report). During the course of the campaign, leaflets were distributed to every household in the riding; more than 20,000 people were canvassed by phone; and more than 5,000 lawn signs were erected. As a result of our efforts, more than 5,000 cards calling on McLellan to defend public health care - and hundreds of letters to her from the Friends of Medicare website (www.keepmedicarepublic.org)

BILL 27 AND THE ATTACK ON UNIONS

The Alberta government recently rammed through a new piece of legislation that makes sweeping changes to labour relations in the provincial health care sector. Government spokespeople say Bill 27 is simply an attempt to streamline the health care administration as the province moves to fewer regional health authorities. There's much more to this new law than that.

- Bill 27 strips the right-to-strike from thousands of community health workers
- It attacks the right of all health workers to choose their own union

- It denies many health care workers access to severance pay-
lose their jobs
- It transforms the supposedly impartial Alberta Labour Relation
one-sided tool for imposing inferior agreements on health care

The AFL believes that Bill 27 is the first shot in what may turn into a v
workers and the unions that represent them in the health care sector.
believe it is aimed at opening the door to the same kind of union-bust
contract stripping that is currently being done by the provincial govern

Since Bill 27 was introduced, the AFL has been working closely with h
unions and labour councils to coordinate the fight back. As part of this
we have already launched an international challenge of Bill 27 under t
side agreement on labour. We are also considering legal action in the
in Alberta. And we're working on a protocol that will see all of our uni
together in fighting this backward piece of legislation.

FIGHTING THE P-3 ATTACK

The Alberta government says it will push ahead with plans to let the p
finance, build and operate new roads, hospitals and schools - despite
similar schemes have failed miserably in other provinces and countrie

In an interview with the Calgary Herald just before Christmas, Premie
said that so-called public-private partnerships - or P3s for short - may
government's preferred method for getting major infrastructure proje
ground.

"You name it, anything that involves public infrastructure basically is
the three-P scenario," he said.

Government sources say that as much as \$500 million of the province
\$1.4 billion surplus will be spent on infrastructure projects over the ne
significant amounts of that money will be funneled to P3s.

Two major projects in particular - the construction of a new hospital in
Calgary and the development of a new heart institute at the U of A ho
Edmonton - are expected to built by investors and leased back to the

In response to the government's latest push for privatization, the AFL
committed itself to a campaign aimed at educating and mobilizing Alb
against P-3s. As part of this effort, we've published several stories in
and we've developed a four-page flier designed to expose the truth at

The AFL will monitor the situation and join with affiliates and social pa
it becomes clear which new infra-structure projects have been design.
development under the P-3 model.

ISSUES CAMPAIGN

In March 2003, the AFL convened a special meeting of affiliates to dis
possibility of launching a union-sponsored "issues campaign" here in /

Modeled on a campaign that is currently underway in Saskatchewan, i
campaign would involve polling union members to find out which issu
most to them - and using that information to re-focus our efforts in a
lobbying and political action.

The Saskatchewan labour issues campaign was launched a year and a
will culminate during that province's upcoming provincial election with
partisan parallel campaign - featuring leaflets, educational events and
television ads.

Here in Alberta, an issues campaign could follow a similar course - or
something entirely different. The idea is to find ways to engage memt
them more involved in the political process.

At the special meeting, leaders from several different unions expresse
exploring the Saskatchewan "issues campaign" model. A steering corr
now been struck to discuss how a similar campaign could be designed

launched here in Alberta. The idea of building an issues campaign in A also be brought to the floor for debate during this year's AFL Conventi

LABOUR LAW CAMPAIGN

The Alberta Labour Relations Code was reviewed by an MLA Committe summer as a result of a strenuous province-wide lobbying campaign b group of anti-union employers. The MLA Committee will be making recommendations about amending the Code to Clint Dunford, the Min Human Resources and Employment - who will then decide upon either review or particular changes to labour laws.

Given the attitude toward working people by the current government, process is extremely dangerous for unions. The AFL chose to create a campaign to try to diffuse the threat.

First, the Federation organized a province-wide lobbying campaign air getting labour's side of the issue across to all the MLA's who had beer the anti-union employer group. The AFL held lobbying workshops in s locations to educate union members and activists about how to lobby forward a uniform labour message about Alberta labour laws. Since th have lobbied MLA's across the province and reported back their respo AFL.

The Federation also prepared briefing notes for affiliated unions to hel prepare their own submissions to the Minister's Committee. The AFL a and submitted its own comprehensive brief to the Committee.

Now, we are waiting for the Minster's response to the Committee recommendations. Depending upon that response, the AFL may have third, more militant and public phase of the labour law campaign. At t are still not entirely sure when the report will be released - but there indications that it may be out shortly before the AFL convention in Cal

LOCAL AUTHORITIES PENSION PLAN

The AFL ad hoc Labour Coalition on Pensions has been working with a unions with members in the Local Authorities Pension Plan (LAPP) in a complete the long-promised move to independent governance for the

Despite negotiating a memorandum of agreement on governance with employers, the labour coalition has found itself blocked again by Provi government refusal to release control of the LAPP.

The AFL will continue its efforts to secure independence for the LAPP a toward a pension plan that will meet the needs of workers in the heall education and local government sectors. Most recently, the AFL prepa submission presented by the Coalition to the Standing Policy Committ Economic Development and Finance.

LABOUR DISPUTES

The Alberta Federation of Labour has been active in its support for wo engaged in labour disputes. For example, in the spring of 2002, the A very closely with the Alberta Teachers' Association during the provinc teachers' strike. We also worked with paramedics in the city of Edmor 3197) when they went on strike in the summer of 2001. And, of cours worked closely with UFCW to support the efforts of striking workers at Convention Centre in Edmonton.

The good news is that, after seven long months on the picket line, the finally won a first collective agreement. The cancellation of many bool labour organizations and labour sympathizers (e.g. several teachers' c helped put pressure on the City. But the thing that really turned the ti of the strikers was the commitment by unions to stage a massive prof the Conference Centre during Grey Cup weekend.

Thanks to a strong showing of solidarity by the labour movement - an avoid getting a black eye in front of the national media - Economic De

Edmonton agreed to a deal only minutes before the scheduled start of demonstration. The message that we can take from this is clear: Solic

KIDS' CAMP

The annual Alberta Federation of Labour summer camp for children of members was held at Camp Warwa twice since last convention - in the 2001 and 2002. Every year the camp is enthusiastically attended by union volunteer supervisors. And, as in past years, we have improved and facilities based upon our experiences from previous years.

THE PUBLIC INTEREST NETWORK

In partnership with the Alberta Teachers' Association, the Alberta Federation of Labour sponsored a two-day conference to explore the possibility of forming a Public Interest Network in Alberta.

The conference, held October 18th and 19th 2002 in Edmonton, brought together labour organizations, social activists, church, youth and women's organizations and NGOs.

The initial conference explored the desire of organizations to have a credible voice in the public sector like the C.D. Howe or Fraser Institutes. To create an organization that will actively speak out on behalf of public education, Medicare and public employment, and will promote the advantages of public and public employment.

If the Public Interest Network can provide a credible voice in the ongoing debate about how our society should run, it could become an excellent educational and political force. The idea of throwing the AFL's weight behind the Public Interest Network will be discussed in more detail on the convention floor in Calgary.

SUBMISSION TO ALBERTA'S COMMISSION ON LEARNING

In early December, the AFL made a submission to the Commission on Learning that the Premier set up to deflect criticism of the government's refusal to reduce class size and teacher workload during the teachers' strike.

The chronic under-funding of education has created intolerable stress for teachers and support staff in the public education system. Since the government has stripped control of education property taxes away from school boards, school boards have been left with no resource outside of provincial funding.

The AFL told the Commission that secure funding of education (like health care) must be set at an adequate level, and then indexed for population growth and inflation. Any other course will result in constant industrial conflict.

ANTI-SWEATSHOP CAMPAIGN

On October 26th 2002, the Alberta Federation of Labour leafleted Bay Street in Calgary & Edmonton to protest the Bay's support for sweat shops.

Ethical Trading Action Group (ETAG), an association of human rights, church groups has charged three factories with which the Bay has contracts for rights violations including verbal and physical abuse; sexual harassment; overtime of up to seventy-five hours per week; emergency exits being locked during working hours, harassment, discrimination against and firing of workers; child labour, and inadequate wages.

ORGANIZING INSTITUTE

The AFL has learned through its involvement with various coalitions that it makes sense to pool our money, our people, and our resources. This was the philosophy behind our work with Friends of Medicare - and it's what lies at the heart of projects such as the Public Interest Network and the Issues Campaign.

Over the past year, we've taken the next logical step and started applying the organizing concept to organizing the unorganized. In partnership with the two other provinces, we're talking about establishing a central Prairie organizing institute. We're even talking about joint organizing drives. So instead of competing against each other when it comes to organizing the unorganized - different ur

working together to make sure that all the workers who need represe actually get it.

So far, the Organizing Institute is still in its conceptual phase. But wit few years, we hope to be offering intensive, multi-union training work we hope to develop other tools that will make us all more effective in organizing new members.

In the end, we believe the Organizing Institute will become one of our important tools for moving the labour movement in Alberta forward. I real meaning to all our talk about cooperation between unions. And it new tools for bringing working people into the House of Labour.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

As usual, the Federation has assisted affiliates wherever staff time an allow. For example, Federation staff has taught workshops for the Boi the United Food and Commercial Workers and the Hotel and Restaura Union. Senior staffers also presented a workshop on labour history at school and a workshop on health care economics to a UNA shop stewa

The Federation continues to publish its newspaper, the Labour News, comment to the media on all issues relevant to working people in Albe also continuing work with the Alberta Labour History Institute and the Foundation for Labour Education - both of which are doing valuable w province.

The AFL has also held workshops and seminars on a wide range of iss past year - from the violence against women seminar last December t seminar on aboriginal workers issues just a few weeks ago.

COMMITTEES

Over the course of the past two years, the AFL's standing and ad hoc have continued to play a pivotal role in the operation of the Federatio Education Committee has continued its work in steering the Fall Schoo Kids Camp. The ad hoc committee on literacy produced a highly regar The Political Action committee has turned our attention to an Issues C an effort to improve and strengthen labour political voice. The Womer has continued its work on issues such as pay equity and violence agai The Health and Safety Committee is producing an updated health and handbook for stewards and activists. Much of the work of the Environi Committee focused on the controversy around the Kyoto Accord and t movements call for a Just Transition to environmentally sustainable jc International Solidarity Committee has organized numerous events to attention to things like sweatshop labour and the implications of globa

UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The next six months will be busy times for the AFL. The Federation wi work with affiliates to fight against union-busting and contract-strippi health care sector. We will also continue our efforts to mobilize memb public against P-3 developments.

In addition to work in these areas, the AFL will continue working with Teachers' Association on the formation of a Public Interest Network;

we will continue our efforts to challenge and improve Alberta's labour continue to refine our approach to political action (i.e. launch an "issu campaign); and we will continue to work closely with Friends of Medic care issues.

In addition to these on-going efforts, the AFL will also pursue several related initiatives including establishing an AFL youth committee and I Solidarity Works for another year. Finally, the next year will also see t cooperating with other prairie labour federations to launch a Prairie O Institute.



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