

REPORT OF THE AFL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

The Alberta Federation of Labour has been front and centre in the struggle for workers' rights in Alberta over the past two years. We have dealt with major job actions by our affiliates. We have launched campaigns to protect and enhance workers rights. We have made submissions to governments and maintained a highly visible and effective public profile for organized labour in the Province. At the same time, we have gotten our fiscal affairs in order and continued to perform all of our core functions well.

The Executive Council of the Alberta Federation of Labour met nine times since the last Convention, including two Executive Council retreats. At its first meeting, the Council laid out an action-oriented program for the Federation based upon our Convention mandate. Since then, the Federation has acted effectively in all relevant areas of the program.

CAMPAIGNS

The Federation has conducted several effective campaigns over the past two years.

1. End the Drought: Legal Protection for Farmworkers Now!

Farmworkers in Alberta go without the most basic of employment protections. They are exempt from the Health and Safety Act and most provisions of the Employment Standards Code. They are not allowed to join a union. They can't even get WCB. Alberta, not surprisingly, ranks last in Canada for protecting farmworkers.

In August, 2005, the AFL launched a campaign to pressure the government to provide the basic workplace protections to farmworkers. We proclaimed August 20 as Farmworker Day (in memory of a farmworker killed by his employer in 1999). On that day we launched our campaign, which included a leaflet, poster, and lobby kit.

We have continued to push for farmworkers' rights whenever an opportunity has presented itself.

2. Will You Be Covered? Stopping the Third Way

Ralph Klein embarked on his latest attempt to privatize the health care system in the last year – this time calling it his "Third Way". The Third Way would have meant higher private insurance costs and longer waiting times for most Albertans while rich people buy their way to the front of the line.

The AFL was a leader in building the Friends of Medicare campaign against the Third Way. The campaign was highly successful, mobilizing tens of thousands of Albertans to contact their MLA. AFL affiliated unions and activists marshaled a great deal of energy and resources to stop the privatization of Medicare.

3. First Contract Arbitration

The bitter Lakeside strike made it obvious that Alberta needs First

Contract Arbitration in our labour laws. If Alberta had provisions for binding arbitration in cases when an employer and union cannot come to agreement for a first contract, the Lakeside strike would never have happened. The AFL launched a campaign for First Contract Arbitration, which includes a leaflet, a lobby kit for MLAs, and a presentation to the Standing Policy Committee.

4. Accountability at the Alberta Labour Relations Board

The Federation and some key affiliates have successfully changed the way the Labour Relations Board conducts itself in relation to the government and government legislation.

Rather than go to court over Board actions in the drafting and implementation of Bill 27, the LRB agreed to implement the protocol "Guidelines for Consultation on Legislation".

The new protocol follows years of work by the AFL, UNA and CEP in a concerted effort to force the Board to be more accountable, transparent and neutral on labour relations legislation. It fundamentally follows the recommendations of the AFL commissioned study by U of T expert Dr. Lorne Sossin.

The protocol guarantees that LRB officials will not participate in the drafting of legislation, and that any technical assistance provided to the government will be fully disclosed. Any LRB official who participates in briefing the government will recuse themselves from any hearing related to the matter. In addition, the LRB will institute new, tougher rules governing outside counsel.

5. Shipping Jobs Down the Pipeline: Our Oil. Our Choice

Alberta is booming, but more and more of the jobs related to oil sands development are being sent out of the country. Construction companies are relying more and more on temporary foreign workers and foreign contractors to do the job of building the projects.

Once the plants are built, the energy companies are planning to ship the raw bitumen south to the U.S. for upgrading and refining.

The Alberta Federation of Labour has launched an effort to pressure the Alberta government to take steps to protect Alberta jobs. We are asking the Stelmach government to do five things:

- Block construction of pipelines used to funnel unrefined bitumen to the U.S.
- Guarantee a fair rate of return to Albertans through higher royalties on our oil resources.
- Introduce conditional leases on oil sands properties.
- Tighten up rules for temporary foreign workers.
- Regulate the pace of oil sands development.

STRIKE SUPPORT

The AFL has been heavily involved in major disputes by affiliates over the past two years. The Telecommunications Workers Union (TWU) was locked out by Telus. The United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 401 struck Lakeside Packers, owned by international agribusiness giant Tyson Foods, in Brooks. The International Association of Machinists Local Lodge 99 struck Finning in Alberta and the Northwest Territories. The CBC locked out 5,500 members of the Canadian Media Guild. The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 4655 struck Casino Calgary.

The Federation supports our affiliates by mobilizing and coordinating support from

our member unions – as and when requested by the unions engaged in the job actions. We have organized rallies and produced pamphlets and media campaigns. We have provided strong news release and communications support. We pressure government into action on behalf of the unions and their members.

The only active labour dispute in Alberta is the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 401 strike at the Palace Casino located in West Edmonton Mall. The Federation has assisted UFCW with media and research during the strike. We have encouraged affiliates to organize solidarity pickets and to demonstrate support in whatever ways they can.

COALITION WORK

The Alberta Federation of labour continues to work with our coalition partners. In the past two years, the AFL worked with the Friends of Medicare on the campaign against Ralph Klein's 'Third Way' reforms.

The Federation also conducted a joint poll and news conference with Public Interest Alberta demonstrating Alberta opposition to the Harper government's child care cutbacks and policies. The AFL is also working with PIA on their ongoing Living Wage campaign. The Federation continues to participate in PIA events and to support PIA's programs.

The AFL worked with the Parkland Institute on the Third Way campaign and an Employment Standards project, and has supported a Parkland research project on economic development in the energy sector which will be reported upon at this Convention. The AFL and the Parkland are co-sponsoring a Conference on Wages that will be held in September, 2007.

The AFL also continues to participate in and support the Alberta Labour History Institute and the Aspen Foundation for labour Education.

CHILD LABOUR IN ALBERTA

In June, 2005, the government secretly changed employment standards rules to allow 12 and 13-year olds to work in restaurants. The AFL discovered the change and publicized it, which led to an outcry from Albertans.

Since then, the Federation has kept a tight watch on child workers in the Province. On four different occasions, the Federation has drawn public attention to the continued relaxation of government regulations on child labour – always done at the insistence of employers and employer associations.

The Federation's whistle-blowing effectively halted the government's plan to allow 12 and 13 year olds to work in bars.

The AFL was also very active in the first review of Employment Standards legislation conducted in Alberta in the past 20 years, putting together a submission for the first phase, and is representing labour on the Steering Committee which oversaw the second phase.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The AFL continues to make advocating for health and safety a priority. The AFL participated in a committee that recommended some small changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Code. The AFL is sitting on a committee reviewing Alberta's occupational exposure limits for dangerous chemicals, which will overhaul the rules for these chemicals in the coming months.

The AFL also promoted International Day of Mourning in both 2006 and 2007, hosting ceremonies at Edmonton City Hall highlighting the awful safety record in Alberta.

PENSIONS

The federation continues to work closely with the Labour Coalition on Pensions. The Federation is pulling together a library of pension resources to allow us to take a much larger role in pension advocacy.

EDUCATION ABOUT CLAC

The AFL has also worked to educate the public about the nature of the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC). The Federation researched the organization and used that research to design both a public website and a leaflet giving an accurate account of CLAC's actions.

WEBSITE

The AFL put more energy this past year into keeping our website up-to-date and adding new content regularly. The work has paid off. In 2006, visits to the site increased by over 65%. After two years, visits are up 100%. Our site has increased the readership of AFL publications. For example, 1,300 copies of our Employment Standards submission were been downloaded. Almost 600 copies of our publication, Beyond Chicken Little, were downloaded within a month of its release.

LABOUR BYTES E-NEWSLETTER

The AFL launched its new e-newsletter in the spring of 2006. It is an electronic summary of key AFL activities and calls to action for labour activists and other Albertans. The e-newsletter is produced at least once-a-month, with special editions when urgent events warrant. We are trying to build the subscription list to include thousands of labour activists in Alberta.

LABOUR ECONOMIC MONITOR

The AFL launched its new economic quarterly, the Labour Economic Monitor in the spring of 2006. It is designed to keep trade unionists up to date with Alberta's

latest economic indicators and trends. The quarterly economic summary has all the latest statistics, and helpful analysis to make sense of it all.

NEWS RELEASES AND MEDIA RELATIONS

The AFL issued 77 news releases in the two years year since Convention. The AFL's media strategy is now to comment on a narrower range of issues, but make sure the content of our media communication is more substantial. The results so far have been very positive, as the AFL's media profile has increased dramatically. The AFL is also regularly producing Guest Columns to daily newspapers to get our message out directly to Albertans.

The Federation has developed a sound, professional working relationship with many of the province's reporters, broadcasters and journalists.

AFL QUARTERLY PUBLICATION

The Federation is currently working on designs and content mix for its new quarterly print publication. We hope to have the first issue out before the end of 2007.

BRIEFS AND POLICY PAPERS

The Federation published a study on workforce development policy, Beyond Chicken Little: Understanding the Need for Measured Reforms to Alberta's System for Skills Development.

The research document was submitted to the Alberta government which is engaging in an overall policy analysis and development initiative on workforce development. It exposes the underlying weaknesses of Alberta's occupational training programs and proposes solutions to support better, more available and affordable training and education for working people.

The AFL also developed two major policy statements: the Workplace Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy Statement (October 2006) and a Policy Statement on Temporary Foreign Workers (May 2006).

As well, the AFL submitted briefs to the OH&S Code Pre-Review Process in March 2007, the Government Stakeholder Committee on Future of Oilsands Development in September 2006 and published an Analysis of Two Drug Testing Legal Decisions in July of 2006.

ARBITRATION DATABASE

The AFL is offering a service to its affiliates and other unions in the province to help them navigate the choppy waters of arbitration panels. The AFL maintains an up-to-date, searchable database of all arbitrations decisions in Alberta for union locals preparing for the arbitration process. Here are some of the things you can learn from browsing the database:

- An arbitrator's track record of decisions - favourable to workers or employers.
- A brief summary of decisions.
- Length of time an arbitrator takes to file a decision.
- Which arbitrators are best on particular issues or topics.
- How often a type of case goes in favour of workers.

MEMBERSHIP FORUM

In non-convention years, the Alberta Federation of Labour holds a Membership Forum to update affiliates on the activities and plans of the Federation and to engage unionists in an informal, educational setting where they can discuss issues affecting the labour movement

In 2006, the Forum examined the possibilities for social and workplace progress in Alberta. The keynote speaker

was Ricardo Acuña, the Executive Director of the Parkland Institute.

AFL-CLC ANNUAL SCHOOL

Two years ago, the Alberta Federation of Labour switched the in-residence school it operates in partnership with the Canadian Labour Congress from the fall to the winter. The school continues to be held at the Jasper Park Lodge in Jasper, Alberta. The school is one of the most popular services the Federation offers to affiliates.

In 2006, there were 156 students registered in 9 courses over the two-week period (January 17 – 27) of the school.

In 2007, there were 136 students registered in 9 courses over the two-week period (January 22 – February 2) of the school.

AFL KIDS' CAMP

Every year, the Federation sponsors a summer camp open to children of affiliates unions. For the past two years, the camp has been held at the Goldeye Centre in Nordegg, Alberta. The kids enjoy all the usual sports and recreation of summer camps while getting a basic introduction to the labour movement. Since the last Convention, there have been two camps.

In 2005, the camp ran from August 8-12, and had 83 campers, 10 leaders and 4 junior counselors. In 2006, the camp ran from August 7-11, and had 71 campers and 11 leaders.

OFFICE, COUNCIL, STAFF

Three Executive Committee members were replaced part way through the term: Don Boucher replaced Don MacNeil (CEP), John Carpenter replaced Hope Cummings (TWU) and Brenda Skayman replaced Steve Covell (PSAC). Diane Hollingshead, CAW retired and has not as yet been replaced.

On the Executive Council, Aboriginal Worker representative Linda Smiley's sad and unexpected death left her position to, ultimately, be filled by Angela Adams. Linda Joyce, Worker of Colour representative, was replaced by Beryl Scott. The other Worker of Colour Representative, Keith Dottin, was also replaced mid-term by Hilbert Stephen.

Holly Heffernan replaced Neil McKinnon as the Calgary & District Labour Council representative who in turn has announced that Peg Askin will now sit on the Council representing the CDLC. Betty Connelly replaced Affirmative Action representative Arlene Crozier (private sector). Alex Shevalier filled the vacant GLBT position left when John Carpenter moved to the Executive Committee and when Bill Burton stepped down. Eric Rosendahl replaced Noel Lapierre as the Yellowhead Labour Council representative.

Since the 2005 Convention, two long-serving support staff have left the Federation. Karen Werlin left to work for Public Interest Alberta and Carol Miller retired. The Federation hired Scott Harris into the support staff bargaining unit.

Executive staffer, Tom Fuller, returned to the AFL from UNA after being recalled from his layoff.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Council,

AFL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, 2005 - 2007

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