

REPORT OF THE AFL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION

The AFL Education Committee had a very busy 2005-2007 term. We met 8 times during the past 2 years.

The Committee introduced some new initiatives such as the annual Facilitators' Conferences. We now have members on the CLC Literacy Working Group and the CLC Education Committee. Members also sit on the Aspen Foundation for Labour Education Board representing the public and private sectors.

The Committee continues its participation in and support of life long learning through the annual AFL/CLC Schools, the annual Facilitators Conference and the annual AFL Kids' Camp.

We would like to express our appreciation to the Officers and staff of the Federation of Labour and the Executive Council for its support of our initiatives over the past two years. To the staff, thank you for rising to the challenge and getting the materials ready for Kids' Camp, the Annual Schools of the Federation of Labour/Canadian Labour Congress and the Facilitators' Conferences.

Special thanks to the numerous volunteers at the AFL Kids' Camp who either take vacation or whose unions are prepared to book them off. Your mentoring of the future leaders of our movement will pay dividends in the years to come. Special thanks to Sister Barrett for her dedication and commitment to building the AFL Kids' Camp as its Director and being such a

positive role model for our "kids". Kerry will be sorely missed as the Camp Director and by our youth who know her as "Care Bear".

We would also like to express our appreciation to the numerous unions who fund facilitators for our schools and who send delegates. Without your support and delegate attendance the annual school would cease to exist. We realize that this is an extra financial commitment on your part and hope your delegates are coming back to their local unions fired-up about the labour movement, energized and ready to help bring about change in our society.

We would also like to express our sincere thanks to both Sister Kerry Barrett and Bro. Les Steel for the wonderful job they have done in running the AFL/CLC Schools. This past year, it was Bro. Steel along with support staff – and they all contributed to a smooth running and successful school.

The Committee also expresses its appreciation for the support of the affiliates in supporting your nominees to this committee. You have given us not only your financial support but your morale support as well.

Last, but by means least, a very special thank you to Ron Patterson who has pulled together a pictorial powerpoint presentation for this committee and to Sisters Kennedy and Sustrik for providing the photos.

Labour education is critical to our movement. It changes members to activists

who can articulate a labour perspective on issues. These activists are enthusiastic, energetic and motivated. Our greatest asset and best organizing tool has always been our members.

Knowledge is power. Too few of our members know the rich history of the labour movement in shaping Canadian policy. Too few know of the richness of Alberta's labour history. The struggles of yesteryear are relevant to the struggles of today; we need to learn from past struggles so that they are not repeated. "Educate – agitate – organize" is vital to the ongoing education and development of our members.

2005 CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS

The Committee was tasked with several resolutions following the 2005 convention. We have successfully carried them all out. The one that required the most work was the development of the first Facilitators Conference in 2005 which led to another one in 2006. One that we did not address was the joint preparation for the GLBT workshop – as they successfully carried out the preparation and workshop on their own.

2007 RESOLUTIONS

We hope delegates to this convention will support the Education resolutions. If adopted, these resolutions would allow the Federation through its Education Committee to continue to "grow" its educational offerings in accordance with the Committee's Terms of Reference.

AFL/CLC ANNUAL SCHOOLS

Planning the AFL School is one of the important and enjoyable roles of the Education Committee. In 2007, Sister Beryl Scott, Chair of our Committee visited the

school to audit and assess the needs of participants and to get feedback on course content. As well, some members of the Education Committee facilitated courses as they have done in the past.

We would like to thank Brother Les Steel for his assistance with this year's school and for promoting a positive environment for the participants and the facilitators. The facilitator sessions were led by Brother Steel each day upon adjournment and greatly enhanced the experience for our seasoned facilitators as well as our new facilitators.

2006

This was the first school offered in the January/February time slot. It was held January 17 – 27, 2006 at the Jasper Park Lodge.

During the 2 week period 156 students registered in 9 courses. There were 13 instructors.

The courses that ran were: ***Advanced Steward Training, Conflict Resolution, Facing Management, Pensions, Advanced Collective Bargaining, Basic Arbitration, Duty to Accommodate, Labour Law and Local Union Leadership.***

2007

The school was held January 22 to February 2, 2007. During week one there were 67 students and 9 instructors. Courses that ran were:

Advanced Steward Training, Municipal Elections, Human Rights, Labour Law and Union Counselling.

During week two there were 70 students and 9 instructors. The courses that ran were:

Collective Bargaining, Conflict Resolution, Facilitator Training, Labour History and Facing Management.

There were almost equal numbers of Brothers and Sisters each week. There were more women instructors this year.

AFL KIDS' CAMP

Every year, the Federation sponsors a summer camp open to children of affiliated local unions. For the past two years, the camp has been held at the Goldeye Centre in Nordegg, Alberta. Our youth enjoy sports and recreational activities associated with a summer camp but have the added bonus of getting a basic introduction to the labour movement.

2005

The camp ran from August 8-12, and had 83 campers, 10 leaders and 4 junior counselors.

2006

The camp ran from August 7-11, and had 71 campers and 11 leaders. This was the year the term "junior counselor" ceased to exist. Everyone was a "leader" – a positive change.

The labour curriculum continues to be improved each year thanks to the hard work of Kerry Barrett, Jane Sustrik and Dan Bieker, Jr. from our Committee. The camp has evolved as an extremely popular event from its humble beginnings of 20 campers 12 years ago. The camp regularly attracts between 75-80 campers.

2007

The AFL brochure is being distributed at this convention. Please register delegates and consider donations. Registration is \$350.

NEW EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Sub-Committee on Educational Materials

A sub-committee comprised of Dean Lott, USW; Mark Turner, CAW, Maureen

Werlin, COPE and Les Steel, CLC has met several times over the past 2 years to define its mandate, begin the onerous task of collecting course manuals from unions and start the process of reviewing content and identifying the best 3 courses for those offered on a regular basis at annual AFL/CLC schools. The sub-committee has also identified some topical issues that trade unionists could benefit from educational sessions.

We are doing this because we want to ensure the best quality labour education is being offered; we want to give facilitators the opportunity to become familiar with course content; and we want to ensure that if a union sends a member to a "dynamite" course one year and then sends more members to the same course the following year the course content will be consistent.

The Sub-committee has spent considerable time in discussions, emailing, talking to various unions to get current copies of core educational materials and videos.

To date, we have identified three classifications of courses that are offered at AFL/CLC Schools. These classifications are:

- 1) courses that consistently run every year
- 2) courses that run intermittently (every 2-3 years)
- 3) courses that are outdated or potential courses where no resources currently exist. For outdated courses we need new content and manuals. For new courses we need to explore the funding for course development and who will do it.

As part of the sub-committee's work, we now have a grid showing every course that has run at our Schools over the past 10 years as well as those that failed to secure the minimum number of registrants. We also have a list of the facilitators used over this 10 year period and the courses they have instructed.

The sub-committee will be continuing its work in 2007-2009 and if any affiliates want to assist by sending us course content and videos it would be greatly appreciated.

Labour Facilitator Conferences/Workshops

The Annual Facilitators' Conference was launched by the Education Committee after the 2005 AFL Convention approved a resolution developed by this body. We see these conferences and/or workshops as ways to improve labour education, to share our resources, to network and build energy and enthusiasm and solidarity among labour educators in this province.

We urge all affiliates to support these conferences by sending those members who are labour educators within your structures. This province has only a few full time staff persons dedicated to labour education – but we know there are volunteer instructors and facilitator networks within union structures in Alberta. We hope these conferences will provide an opportunity for facilitators from unions, from labour councils and from the CLC to share their expertise, experience and ideas.

2005

The first Labour Education Facilitators' Conference was held in Edmonton in March 2005 and spanned almost an entire weekend (Friday afternoon, Saturday all day and a half day on Sunday). The theme centred on **Popular Education** and the outline was designed by Bev Burke – materials from the CLC "Popular Education: Instructor Skills Upgrading Course" were also used. The conference was facilitated by Sister Lynn Carlile, National Representative, CLC Education Department in Ottawa and Brother Dave Condon, from CUPW Medicine Hat and a member of the AFL Education Committee. The book "**Educating for Change**" was provided to

each participant as part of the registration fee. (Bev Burke is one of the authors of that educational tool). The evaluations were very positive and included suggestions that were used in the planning of the next conference.

2006

The second Educators Conference was held November 2006 in Calgary. The theme was "**Making the Connection... Labour Education, Learning and Social Change**". The workshop was facilitated by Sisters Karen Kennedy, CUPW Edmonton and Maureen Werlin, COPE 458 (both members of the AFL Education Committee) and lasted one day.

This workshop was extremely well received – the focus was on the needs and experiences of facilitators. We addressed concerns, issues, course content, networking and tips and techniques. Role plays, brainstorming and group sessions were used to maximize the opportunity for all to participate and share their knowledge. We dealt with co-facilitating techniques, tips and techniques for instructors, worst nightmares, etc. Sample course materials were available for review. The overall objective was to bring our facilitators together for networking, to get their ideas on how we can improve labour education content and delivery in Alberta. Sharing experiences, concerns, and ideas coupled with hands-on exercises proved to be a hit with the participants.

The Committee developed a networking form that was completed by everyone – something we can use for building a central database.

The AFL Education Committee did discover that the length of the first conference was too long and the second conference too short. With this in mind the 2007 conference will be one evening and one full day.

2007

The next Facilitators' conference is set for November 1 and 2, 2007 in Edmonton. The book, **"Dancing on Live Embers"** will be included with the registration fee. The facilitators are Cindy Wiggins, CLC – newly appointed National Education Director and Deb Jameson, the CLC representative from Manitoba. The focus of this workshop will be finalized by the incoming Education Committee. We have received a draft outline for comment by the committee. Portions of "Dancing on Live Embers" will be incorporated into the outline. It's fairly safe to say this conference will be looking at inclusiveness, the "isms" that hold us back and a plan of action to move forward. Watch for more details on this exciting conference.

CLC LITERACY WORKING GROUP

Sister Karen Kennedy was elected from the Education Committee to sit on this Literacy Working Group. Meetings were held twice a year – in the spring and the fall. At the time of writing this report, the May 2007 meeting will be the last under the current structure due to the funding cuts by the Harper government in Ottawa for literacy programs and initiatives.

The application by the Canadian Labour Congress for continuation of funding that makes this important work possible has not been approved. The May meeting will have limited participants due to the cuts, and will focus on how to keep this work on-going. This could well be the last chance for us to meet as supporters of union-based literacy.

Through the CLC Literacy Working Group, various national unions and federations of labour have been able to share resources. Union literacy tools have multiplied and there is growing support for clear language in the labour movement.

The majority of the work of the group over the past term centred around the CLC Education Conference and Literacy Forum held in November 2006 in Ottawa. The conference incorporated clear language principles from the registration process through to the evaluations.

The Literacy Forum was an opportunity to reflect on the importance of Clear Language and literacy in our everyday union lives.

LITERACY ALBERTA CONFERENCES

2005

Sisters Maureen Werlin, Beverley Norman and Karen Kennedy attended the Literacy Alberta 2005 Conference, Maureen and Bev as delegates and Karen staffed the AFL Literacy display, which was a big hit with its videos and educational leaflets.

The content of this conference was superb – from the educator sessions, to the workshops, the guest speakers, and in particular the presentation by the individuals whose lives have been changed because they participated in a literacy program and who can now read and write. They express the difference it has made to their lives.

In 2005 there were 70 learning councils throughout Alberta all trying to make ends meet and sustain vital literacy programs. Educators in the literacy field are over-worked and underpaid. The statistics for the high level of illiteracy in a "have" province such as Alberta is staggering.

Then Minister of Advanced Education, Dave Hancock had this to say, "literacy has the power to change lives." It is as important as the trades.

He indicated that literacy was linked to skills, ability and knowledge and was part of the provincial government's strategic plan for the next 20 years. The provincial

government was increasing funding for advanced education in the amounts of 6%, 6% and 6% over the next 3 years and this would include literacy funding.

Councillor Linda Sloan said “literacy is fundamental to a healthy society.” 138,000 Edmontonians attended literacy programs in 2004.

Overall it was a great conference, a wonderful learning experience for all.

2006

The 2006 Literacy Alberta conference was attended by Sister Norman and Karen Kennedy. It was held just after the federal government announced its cuts to literacy programs. This was a real setback for literacy programs in Alberta and set a sombre tone to the Conference as delegates knew it might be the last provincial gathering of literacy activists. Alberta has an obligation to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to learn to read and write and become a critical thinker on a pathway of life long learning.

Hot off the Press: Literacy Alberta is hosting a consultation on May 24 with the Provincial government as it appears they have received some new funding from the Province to replace the federal cuts.

CLC EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Sister Beverley Norman was elected by the AFL Education Committee to sit on the CLC Education Advisory Committee that meets semi-annually. This year, she and others from our committee and within the network of facilitators participated in the Education Conference sponsored by the CLC in Quebec. We have found it beneficial to have a member who sits on the CLC Education Advisory Committee as it improves two way communications and allows us to be up-to-date on new educational developments.

ASPEN FOUNDATION FOR LABOUR EDUCATION

Members of this Committee sit on the Board of Directors of the Aspen Foundation for Labour Education (AFLE). Aspen will be making a presentation to this convention and we encourage you and your union to get involved.

WHERE TO NOW?

Facilitators Conference – 2007

Mark your calendars for November 1 and 2 in Edmonton - the 3rd Facilitators Conference. Watch for more details regarding registration costs and conference outline.

Sub-Committee on Labour Education

This sub-committee has vital work that needs to be continued. Our goals may be lofty – but together with the CLC we believe they are feasible. What is still outstanding is the review and consensus on the best 3 course content available. Consistency of course content, familiarization by facilitators and the use of the best tools available will raise the bar for labour education in Alberta.

The sub-committee also wants to identify supplementary exercises and current videos for courses. So there is much work left for the incoming committee.

Networking

The Facilitators conferences have been a great start for instructor networking. But we can do more working in partnership with the Canadian Labour Congress and the Labour Councils to update current information on facilitators, availability, topics and training.

CONCLUSION

The Committee continues to look at different ways for members of the AFL to receive and utilize the vast amount of educational materials that are available. We are committed the concept of clear language.

We hope to have more on the AFL website after the work of the sub-committee has been finalized.

AFL Education Committee members look forward to meeting and sharing ideas with one another. We all come from different unions, with differing approaches to education. Working together, we can build a common approach to education for the Federation of Labour. It has been our experiences as rank and file members that connect us to and keep us looking at the

role of education by the Federation through the perspectives of the grass roots of our movement.

We thank our unions for supporting our involvement in this work and the AFL for respecting our role within the organization.

We look forward to upcoming events, activities and the growth of labour education and activism not only by the Federation of Labour, but by all affiliated labour unions and labour centrals.

Simply put, we enjoy working together and are passionate about labour education.

Once again our sincerest thanks to the AFL Council, AFL Staff and our affiliated local unions for supporting us.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Committee,

AFL EDUCATION COMMITTEE, 2005 – 2007

Beryl Scott, Chair	UNA
Maureen Werlin, Co-Secretary	COPE 458
Theresa Crabtree, Co-Secretary	CUPW-Calg.
Dave Condon	AFL Council Liaison
Dan Bieker, Jr.	CEP 855
Michelle Coe	PSAC 30048
Mike Kalpalka	CEP 777
Karen Kennedy	CUPW-Edm.
Dean Lott	USW 1-207
Lynette McAvoy	HSAA
Ivana Niblett	TWU
Beverley Norman	CUPE
Mark Turner	CAW 1087
Kerry Barrett	AFL
Les Steel	CLC
Melissa Field (alternate)	HSAA
Cathy MacKinnon (alternate)	CUPW-Edm.

Committee Members who served a partial term:

John Carpenter	TWU
Steve Kaytor (alternate)	PSAC 30048