



Published By  
**AMERICAN INCOME LIFE & NATIONAL INCOME LIFE  
LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD**

**APRIL 2010  
Vol. 11 No. 3**

## **NEWS FROM THE CLC, FEDERATIONS & COUNCILS**

### **Labour movement planned major**

activities across nation in observance of Day of Mourning, April 28. Worldwide event will be held in more than 100 countries and pays tribute to workers who died or were killed on the job. "The Day of Mourning is an opportunity for people to honour those workers who have died and to recommit to the fight for improved workplace health and safety to prevent further deaths," said Canadian Labour Congress in a statement. CLC declared Day of Mourning in 1984 which was then passed as a national observance by the Canadian Parliament in 1991.

### **Canadian Labour Congress and**

the Ontario Federation of Labour convened one-day pension summit in Toronto on Saturday, March 27 that called for reforms to guarantee retirement security to all Canadians. Event is part of Canada labour's national campaign launched in 2009 to promote pension reform. Among the featured speakers were CLC head Ken Georgetti and OFL President Sid Ryan. "The obvious solution to retirement security is simple," Georgetti said. "Double the Canada Pension Plan benefits so that all workers, union and non-union, can retire with security." Labour's plan also calls

for an increase in the Guaranteed Income Supplement for low income seniors, and a federal pension insurance plan to protect workers' pension benefits. CLC co-sponsored similar forum March 8 with the Windsor and District Labour Council. Windsor event highlighted workers whose company pension funds have failed them.

### **Canadian labour on March 24**

criticized federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty's decision to include only three meetings open to the public on pension reform consultations. "These are not the broadly-based public consultations that we have been promised on pension reform, and the minister is going to face a backlash from frustrated Canadians," CLC's Georgetti said. He said federal pension consultations are "too restricted". Flaherty said pension reform will be discussed in town hall meetings in Charlottetown, Quebec City and Richmond, B.C. in April and May. He added that there will be policy conferences with "invited participants" in Calgary and Toronto and several other meetings open "only to invited stakeholders." "Well over half of all Canadians will have no access to public forums on the future of their pensions," said Georgetti.

### **"Unemployment in Canada is far**

worse today than it was 16 months ago and the federal government must do more to help laid-off workers," said Canadian

Labour Congress head Ken Georgetti recently in a statement. Recent Statistics Canada study of labour force figures showed joblessness is at 8.2% and 1.52 million Canadians are unemployed. "Rose-hued news reports keep telling us that we're seeing an economic recovery, but we've lost over 250,000 full-time jobs since October 2008 and it's going to take a long time to replace them," Georgetti said. He repeated labour's call to fix the EI system, noting that only half of the unemployed are receiving benefits while many others are running out of EI "because they can't find jobs."

### **B.C. Federation of Labour joined**

dead farmworkers' family members who called upon Agriculture and Labour Ministers for prompt action to protect farmworkers who travel to work. Three farmworkers were killed while travelling to work in an unsafe van. A coroner's inquest later made 18 recommendations following testimony that revealed the farmworkers were in a van that had poor tires, an improperly licensed driver, a fraudulent inspection certificate, no seatbelts and was overloaded. Federation also supported demands for public inquiry into the dropping of 33 criminal charges against the company owners. "These tragedies have gone on long enough and it's time to put a stop to the maiming and killing of farmworkers in unsafe vans," said B.C. Federation President Jim Sinclair.

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## INTERNATIONAL LABOUR NEWS

**British Airways cabin crews,** members of UNITE, launched a three-day strike March 20, forcing airline to cancel more than 1,000 flights, after contract talks collapsed. Strike received widespread support from unions in Canada, United States, Germany and Spain. UNITE joint general secretary Tony Woodley said that BA “does not want to negotiate and ultimately wants to go to war with this union.” Union is resisting company demands for a pay freeze in 2010, a switch to part-time work for 3,000 staff and a reduction in cabin crew sizes from 15 to 14 on long-haul flights from Heathrow Airport, moves which the cash-strapped airline said are critical for its survival. BA tried to keep some flights by chartering planes from rival airlines and drafting volunteer crews.

## NATIONAL & POLITICAL EVENTS

**Canadian Federation of Students-** Ontario on March 22 released Final Report of the Task Force on Campus Racism, one day after the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Task Force investigated racism on college and university campuses across Ontario and recommended strategies to combat racism within the post-secondary education sector. According to the statement, Task Force members identified four major themes within the report: individual and systemic racism in campus life, institutional racism in hiring and curriculum, institutional racism in university policy and governance and systemic racism in the broader society.

## NEWS FROM CANADA'S UNIONS

**Teamsters Canada Rail** Conference on March 20 negotiated new three-year collective agreement with Canadian National Railway Co. (CN) on behalf of 1,700 engineers that will provide nearly 7% in retroactive and future wage

increases, as well as improvements in the dental plan. Deal was reached under federal arbitration. Engineers had walked off their job for a week in November before returning to work and resuming negotiations under the threat of back-to-work legislation being passed in Parliament. Both sides agreed to submit their outstanding issues to binding arbitration in December. CN had tried to unilaterally impose work rule and other changes.

**Two major unions in the forestry** industry called for support and training for laid off workers in response to the industry's sustained downturn. “The impact of the crisis on Canadian forest products workers and the communities they live in has been devastating,” said Kim Ginter, administrative vice president of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union. United Steel Workers National Director Ken Neumann called for “real, determined action and funding now, as well as much improved coordination, so that we can make a difference for thousands of forest workers who still need help.” Canada's forestry industry lost 100,000 jobs in five years, according to new report from the Forest Products Sector Council. Dropping demand for pulp and paper products, global recession and increased competition were among the reasons cited by the report issued March 22. Study noted that about 40,000 forestry workers remain unemployed and “need help to retrain and find other jobs.”

**Canadian National Institute for the** Blind workers in Manitoba returned to their jobs after approving a new three-year deal. Settlement ended nine-day lockout of 19 workers. According to a union statement, the agreement includes one-year wage freeze, 2.5% wage increase in the second year and 2% pay hike in the third. Workers also will receive up to four weeks fully paid sick leave and 15 additional weeks of sick leave at 95% pay. They successfully resisted management's proposed cuts to sick leave which were a major obstacle in the dispute.

**In one of the largest labour** demonstrations in the city's history, thousands attended Sudbury, Ont., rally March 22 in support of 3,000 Vale Inco

workers who have been on strike for eight months. Traffic in downtown Sudbury ground to a halt for hours and roads were closed as thousands marched from the United Steel Workers union hall to the Sudbury Arena. Billed as the “Bridging the Gap” rally, demonstration attracted participants from as far away as Brazil and Australia. Among the speakers was NDP Leader Jack Layton who said New Democrats will be renewing their efforts to make public the deal that allowed Brazilian mining giant Vale to buy Canadian company Inco. Last July 13 some 3,000 miners represented by USW at Vale Inco, walked off their jobs in a contract dispute over pension contributions, seniority and the nickel bonus.

**Canadian Auto Workers and the** Canadian Union of Postal Workers expressed disappointment over Canada Post's decision to buy up to 4,800 delivery vehicles made in Turkey. Both unions had lobbied intensively for Canada Post to adopt a “buy Canadian” policy and to select the Chrysler minivan. The Crown corporation will buy this year 1,175 of the urban light delivery vehicles made by Ford Transit Connects in Turkey with the remainder purchased over the next several years. “I can appreciate they're buying from Ford, but they know full well these vehicles are built in Turkey,” said CAW Local 444 president Rick Laporte. “The minivan could very well have been what they were looking for. It's mind-boggling to me that they would spend money on foreign manufactured goods when this country is struggling with its economy, and we're losing manufacturing jobs at an alarming rate.”

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