

UNION CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARY

The Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada celebrated its first decade as a national union with its fifth national convention, September 29 - October 3, 2002 in Toronto.



by Glen Dawkins

More than 1,300 delegates representing over 400 locals were in attendance, including representatives from Local 191: President Paul McKie (Winnipeg Free Press), First Vice-President Glen Dawkins (Winnipeg Sun), Second Vice-President Rick Palmer (Brandon Sun), executive board members Kelly Mazur (Winnipeg Free Press), Jamey Rosdobutko (Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal) and Al Sansom (Winnipeg Free Press) and local representative Adolph Setek.

"Your union works for you," said CEP President Brian Payne in his opening remarks to the delegates. "And your support for your union is also working for you and your families."

Delegates voted on a number of motions. Among the key motions, delegates voted to create a National Youth Committee, to increase strike assistance payments and to adopt a comprehensive energy policy including support for ratification of the Kyoto protocol. Strike assistance was increased to 200 dollars after 15 days and to 250 dollars every week after that.

Delegates also passed motions calling for the development of a policy for a democratic Canadian media and for the CEP to urge the federal government to prohibit cross-ownership of newspapers and TV stations and the establishment of media advisory committees at all newspapers and TV stations "of significant size" made up of representatives from management, union and the general public.

Delegates defeated a resolution to hold national conventions every three years instead of every two, although a committee was struck to study the pros and cons of the matter and report back at the 2004 convention.

Local 191 presented two motions for consideration. Delegates passed a motion drafted by Sister Mazur to streamline the procedure for handling disciplinary matters in a timely and effective manner. However, delegates defeated a motion requiring National Board rank-and-file members to provide quarterly written reports to each Local in their region. It was felt that this is information that could be obtained through the minutes of National Executive Board meetings.

Several guest speakers addressed the convention. Among them was Shirley Douglas, actress and national spokesperson for the Canadian Health Coalition, who spoke against privatization of the health care system. "The very same health companies and insurance companies that were fighting in Saskatchewan from 1944 to 1962 are the same companies that are trying to take health care away in this country," said Douglas, daughter of the late Tommy Douglas (the former NDP leader who introduced Medicare as premier of Saskatchewan).

Further information on the CEP energy policy can be obtained on the CEP Web site at www.cep.ca.