



REPORT BY KELLY MAZUR

GENERAL CONFERENCE REPORT

Dare to be Powerful: *Respect, Equality and Justice*

I had the opportunity to attend this rewarding conference with Sisters Irene Pohorečka, and Cindy Garofalo, with thanks to the Executive Board and Membership of Local 191.

The conference officially started on Friday, November 2nd with opening remarks by National CEP Officers, (all Brothers). It was nice to see the Brothers stay and participate in the conference, and not leave after their opening. Following their opening remarks, we heard from Sue Slean, Chair of the National Women's Committee who introduced the Women's Committee.

We had the pleasure of hearing from a truly dynamic Keynote Speaker Cecelie Counts from the American Federation of Labor (Labour)- Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), who shared with us the ongoing problems facing the United States of America and its workers.

What was really an eye opener for me was the report she shared with us on the pay of the workers in the USA and that of the CEOs in the USA, and how Corporations reward CEOs with huge bonuses for cutting their staff, the bonuses were unbelievable. Sister Counts said the average worker in the USA makes \$28,000/year and the average CEO is making \$300,000/year. With all the reports and information Sister Counts shared with us it clearly shows that the Corporations are running the show. Sister Counts went on to say that right now the Economic Clout is broken down as follows: Corporations 51% and Countries 49%, this I find to be really alarming. She also informed us of the Global Corporate Agenda and it looks like this: Labour Market Flexibility., Free Trade Agreements., Unregulated Capital., Union Free Environments., Privatization., now this is horrifying. When you have a moment, check out their website at www.aflcio.org This Sister was a hard act to follow but the Equality Panel did it.

We heard from Sisters Kim Beemer, Winnie Ng, Gail Lem, this group of sisters spoke on the process that has been made in areas of women, racism, same sex rights to name a few.

The afternoon agenda had us attend our specific

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS WORKSHOP



The afternoons were spent in the Workshop of your choice, I chose to participate in a workshop entitled **Breaking Down Barriers - Bargaining for Equality.**

This workshop was energizing to say the least. We were presented with the 2001 edition of Bargaining Equality. The contents of this book covered areas of Discrimination, Harassment, Employment Equity, Equal Pay, Rights for Gay, lesbian, bisexuals and transgender workers, persons with Disabilities, Part-time workers, Hours of work and family leave, Child care. So one can clearly see that Bargaining for Equality covers a lot of ground.

After reviewing the contents of this book I realized that this workshop was not going to be a clear cut as I initially thought it would be. At the beginning of the workshop we listed the Importance of Equality Provisions, the list included the following: Seek Fair Treatment, Need Language that is Grievable, Make Management Accountable, Push Equality Issues, Work towards a Harassment Free Workplace, Wages & Benefits and Coalition Building, and to make sure No One Gets left behind.

The next task in our workshop was to review the Power Structure, we were asked simply questions like:

- 1) How do you build support for winning equality language in the collective agreements e.g., same sex benefits.**
- 2) Who makes the decisions formally ? What is the role of key groups in the Union ?**
- 3) Who influences the Bargaining Committee?**
- 4) Where do you fit in the Power Structure ?**
- 5) How can Women influence the process ?**

These 5 simple questions generated a good potluck of responses from the 10 sisters in attendance. After many discussions on the various topics within the Bargaining Equality book, we were split into two groups to take part in role playing.

Group 1 was the membership making a pitch to the

workshops. We were then asked to attend a Regional Caucus Meeting at which time a tentative workshop agenda was shared with us for the upcoming Western Region Women's Conference in Vancouver In March 2002. During this meeting it was also mentioned the fact that brothers were in attendance at this conference and should they be allowed at all, some concern was that Women don't always feel comfortable participating in discussions openly if brothers are in attendance It was suggested that perhaps specific workshops would be set aside to accommodate both brothers & sisters.

A Hospitality Suite had been scheduled for the evening for those who wish to attend.

Saturday, November 3rd, 2001 started off with the Globalization Panel consisting of Maude Barlow from The Council of Canadians, Judy Rebick who is said to be one of Canada's Best known Social Activists, she is also the publisher of rabble.ca a new on-line Interactive magazine. And last but not least Marie-Danielle Lapointe from UFCW . Marie made an interesting remark, that being that Globalization is here to stay. She also defined Globalization " Something available to the world", she also stated that the strength and power of money could wipe out countries entirely. Marie made a good point when she said that Corporations should prepare Social Balance Sheets for us too see, they should contain information on what is the status of their pensions and what is the status of their labour relations. Now would this make things interesting. Judy spoke a great deal on the current situation in the world due to the attack on September 11th, and The effects it has everywhere and on everyone. Judy did make mention of her on-line magazine and asked that we check it out at www.rabble.ca. Maude Barlow spoke about the upcoming WTO meetings taken place in Qatar, and the fact that she was a bit nervous about going due to security, and her safety but that she wasn't going to let that stop her from being there.

Once again this afternoon we went back to our workshops for the last time and following our workshops was caucus meetings for those who wish to attend on the subjects of Youth, disabilities. Tonight we were treated to a evening of Dinner & Entertainment.

Sunday, November 4th, 2001 the last day of the conference started off with the Grassroots Rank & File Panel, we heard from Sisters in each of the regions who spoke on the battles in their specific regions and how they still struggle with many issues in each of their regions on a ongoing basis. But they also made mention of the accomplishments they have received in their regions. This Grassroots Rank & File Panel consisted of the following sisters Sheila Wilmot- Ontario; Odette Gagnon -Quebec; Sue Pearc-Atlantic; Purdy's worker-Western Region was

Bargaining Committee to get Family Leave included in the next collective agreement. For this first round of role playing the two Course Facilitators were the Bargaining Committee.

Group 2 was the Bargaining Committee presenting the Family Leave proposal to Management, in this round of role Playing the two course Facilitators were now Management. This proved to be exciting as role playing usually does. It really makes the situations more real, when you act them out versus just writing them down on flip charts. During this workshop I had the opportunity to hear from other locals and what their Collective Agreement s contain or don't contain, also the real importance of Language in a Collective Agreement, how 2 simple words can make a big difference a good example is Job Enrichment (cross training) as well you should make sure legislation is in your Collective Agreement because if the government should change, you could have a big problem.

In Solidarity
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unable to attend. Our International Speaker from Peru was Ruth Arroyo, this sister had a great deal to share with us, but I had a bit of difficulty trying to concentrate here, the reason being Ruth was speaking Spanish, her translator would translate into French then we would hear thru the translation device in English, this proved to be challenging for me. Therefore I was trying so hard to concentrate that I didn't take many notes from her speech but I did manage to get the fact that since 1990 the organized labour force has gone from 30 percent to 4 percent since Peru went from Public to Private in the mining sector. She also said how grateful they are to the CEP Humanity Fund for their support. She also said that in Peru they have some of the same struggles as we do here in Canada that being the struggle with government. Her closing remark was when one loses a struggle we all lose, when one wins a struggle we all win.

Our last speaker of the conference was Audrey Cormack, lifetime CEP member. This sister has been very involved in the Labour Movement for a longtime and touched on the many obstacles she faced while being in the Labour Movement. She was the first women full time officer elected to the Alberta Federation of Labour, and eventually served as president of the AFL for 6 years. She is very involved in the Women's Movement and actively involved in the Ontario NDP.