

"BUILDING SKILLS DEVELOPING LEADERS - NOW!"

April 8 - 10, 2002 - Kempenfelt Centre in Barrie, Ontario

by Brenda Hansen



 4th Biennial Ontario Region Women's Conference
April 8-10, 2002
Kempenfelt Centre, Barrie

This was the first time that I was chosen to attend a conference for CEP and was happy to be one of two delegates from our local to attend. When you think of "building skills and developing leaders" it was something that I wanted to learn more about and I did become more informed on what is available for us within our local and for myself personally. More importantly, to listen to other delegates discuss what has been going on within their locals I found particularly interesting as to how situations are handled and resolved.



The conference opened with opening remarks from Cec Makowski, our Ontario VP and an informative talk from the guest speaker, Maureen Doyle (from Ryder Wright Blair & Doyle) on issues that relate particularly to women in the workplace and their rights as a unionized employee. Maureen went through a couple of scenario situations with us that could happen within a workplace and how we could handle or resolve the issues faced in these particular scenarios and the impact it would have on the employee as well as the employer. After the Guest Speaker was finished we went into our first of three workshops during the course of this conference.



The first workshop that I attended was called "Personal Financial Planning". This workshop gave us a brief overview of financial issues that women have to look at in their personal lives. The speakers covered areas such as personal budgeting along with a worksheet for us to make up a personal budget for ourselves, how to save up for our retirement through RRSPs, pensions, etc how to understand the verbal

jargon and not be confused by it and how to select a financial planner if you so desired. I found this workshop to be informative and was given some useful tools that I could use to build my own personal budget or if I needed more help, where to go to seek this advice.

The other two workshops that I attended during this conference were "Mentoring" and "Bricks and Mortar".



In the "Mentoring" workshop it was discussed how mentoring is very important within the Union. If you can learn from others and share with others your involvement within the local, how situations can be resolved, and to share knowledge and learn from others is very important. I found this workshop to be very uplifting by listening to others and how active they have been in their local to get situations/problems resolved, and how they helped the newer members of their particular locals become more active within their unions. One of the speakers in this workshop, Mary Roberts, made a statement that really had an impact on me. "Stand strong, you are standing on the shoulders of your ancestors." For me, whether it is your ancestors, other union members that are active within your local, or friends, you can learn from their mistakes, stand strong and carry on. Through mentoring and sharing from the more experienced activists I did learn a lot during this workshop.



A significant activity that we participated in during this conference was going and showing our support for the striking OPSEU workers by joined in with them on one of their picket lines. The energy that was generated during the demonstration, to be able to show our strength in numbers and to walk with them in solidarity to show them that we support them and believe in the issues that they are standing up for.

The "Bricks and Mortar" workshop included how to become a union activist, and the skills needed to make a stand for your rights in your workplace and within the Union. We also went into some of the more significant moments in history for the labour movement and how that impacts on us now. To bring about change you have to become active, and this workshop gave us some tools and the confidence to try to bring about some change in areas which you are involved in. We also broke up into groups during this workshop and came up with a general idea of an event that you could plan and get others involved in within your community.

This portion of the workshop gave us insight into how to plan events and carry them through to fruition.

This conference wrapped up with the closing speaker, Carol Wall (CEP Human Rights Director), the elections and swearing in of the new board members of ORWC and a cheque presentation to a local womans' shelter of monies raised through raffle ticket sales during the conference. It was a great conference and I urge all union members to get involved within your local, be informed of the issues, listen to your mentors as they share their experiences and seek change for the better!

In solidarity, Brenda Hansen Local 191