

USW District 6 HUMAN RIGHTS ROUNDTABLE
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8th, 2009
submitted by Judy L. Kerr 10/3/31

Wayne Fraser, District 6 Director welcomed all delegates to the District 6 Roundtable. It was uplifting to hear Director Fraser's reconfirmation that change is required. Leadership school acceptance under Fraser's directorship include 12 members from District 6 each year - 4 of those accepted are women and 4 are persons of color. Training for women and those of color is essential in order to take down barriers. Scholarships and opportunities provided by USW create opportunities for advancement. Resources need to be dedicated to areas that need it. Issues facing members need to be prioritized and identified. Barriers need to be taken down and programs determined and action taken. Progress needs to be identified by measure. Working with the workers and the families affected. Statistics indicate unemployment is currently 8.5%. This number is in reality not accurate – Unemployment is actually hitting the 15% bracket. The current Economy is the driving force of the current high unemployment figures. Hope and vision need to be established. Laid off members are still our members. Currently 15,000 members are suffering.

PANEL PRESENTATION

Sharon Simpson (Labour Community Services)

A Project of the Labour Council in Partnership with the United Way

. Annual fundraising campaigns

Mission Statement – To create a deep and lasting social solidarity between labour and community, to achieve a just and equitable society for all.

Objectives

.Organize workers and families in their communities and organizations to improve quality of life through education, advocacy for social justice and provision of needs.

.Establish healthy communities through union solidarity

. Build a bridge to improve the lives of people in communities who are also union members. In doing this we will establish an environment of community unionism

. Work toward a more just and equitable society for workers and their families.

What we do?

Labour Community Services helps your union inform and connect members with community services. We help your union meet member's social, health and community needs. Improving the lives of members builds and strengthens the union, builds and strengthens community. Ongoing programs and customized workshops and courses are

provided for union locals and regional labour bodies in both the public and private sectors. STRONG UNIONS = HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Plan for Solid Action: Building a Steelworker Economy on Human Rights –World Cafe

Labour Community Services 9 week evening course will equip you with the tools you need to get your members the help they need.

Topics include: Unions and Communities Working Together, Your Community Services, Interviewing and Referral Skills, Principles of Communication, Stress, Substance Use and Abuse, Understanding Violence, Union Counseling & Equity, Implementing/Strengthening a U.C. Program.

Above information for Sharon Simpson taken from Web

Sharon is a CUPE Activist

- .Economy as it relates to community sector
- .Those that do not have
- .Labour supports those who cannot support themselves
- .Union counseling program
- .Offers opportunities to become aware of groups that out there
- .Trained to offer assistance and guidance
- .Referral agents
- .Sharon works for Special Projects Program
- .Division between Union and Community
- .Represents both sides as 1
- .Laour perspective
- .USW guidance program
- .Community work – same as Labour (No difference in both lives)
- .E.I. started by Unions – HELP
- .Social, pension, wage gains – all won by unions
- .Working hours and working conditions improved by Union involvement
- .Downturn – What happens when Union members point and blame other groups eg. Welfare recipients.
- .Target on those who make the policies
- . Know and understand the charter of Human Rights
- .Provisions are needed for income, housing and living needs
- .The economic downturn happened and we need to deal with it in a productive manner
- .Workers are being asked for concessions

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Kevin Nadjowon (Public Service Alliance of Canada)

Public Service, Sault Ste Marie, ON

- .Forestry – Saw Mill industry – 60 members
- .1800's Indian Act
- .Policies government implements
- .Protection, Residential, Schools, Infracation
- .Act antiquated – Doesn't work anymore
- .Restrictions in working with Industries
- .Aboriginal rights – Treaties, Inheritances'
- .From Thunder Bay to Manitoulan Island
- .2/3 mass Prov. Of Ontario
- .1870's – Treaty rights on inheritance rights
- .Education – Rights lacking – Didn't receive full service of Education System
- .1/2 funding; \$ allocated – Discrimination
- .Affected success of people
- 3 major issues – Legacy of Residential Schools, Change in Life Style and after effects of Residential Schools.
- .Union perspectives
- .Health and safety concerns
- .Employment issues
- .UI rates
- .Graduate completion rising – More students are completing secondary and post secondary education
- .Hunting, trapping – transitions to factory work.

The Monopoly Economy – Exercise to be completed at Local

Our current economy is like a monopoly game. The object of this game is to build up personal wealth. The winner is determined by who builds up the greatest personal wealth. The one who gains the ownership of the majority of properties increase their wealth by the bad luck of others who land on these properties. Life is very much like a Monopoly game.

. If Monopoly represents our economic system, which individuals or groups in society CANNOT win because some individuals or groups CAN win?

- . As the game of monopoly goes on, you will observe this pattern:
 FEWER and FEWER players will acquire MORE and MORE power.
 While MORE and MORE players will share LESS and LESS power.

As you observe this pattern ask yourself “If Monopoly represents an economic system, what do I think about fairness in society?”

..In Monopoly, depending on the roll of the dice, anyone could “Go to Prison.” As the game processes, some people suffer fewer consequences for this than others. Why do some people in “Prison” suffer fewer consequences than others, particularly near the end of the game?

..Does Monopoly represent the current economic system, or is it just a game?

..During this recent and ongoing recession, are there any personal examples you can share that reflect Monopoly?

Think about the above questions. Come up with your own thoughts and share with friends. A worthwhile exercise.

Plan for Solid Action: Building a Steelworker Economy on Human Rights – World Café

Roundtable discussion.. Organizers of Roundtable to put information received together for distribution

Practical suggestions and priorities to follow when data is compiled by the Human Rights Committee.

. As individual locals and members we should make it a priority to determine what we can do to help support Human Rights in District 6, Canada, USA and globally

. Determine what we can do in our Workplaces to plan for Human Rights Solidarity.

. What can we do as individuals to help in our individual workplaces. We as Union workers need to work with Management to facilitate Human Rights advancement.

. Community, Local, Global – What Can We Do to Build and Promote Human Rights issues

Evening

Reception – 6.30 – 8.30 - Excellent networking opportunity

Canadian National Human Rights Roundtable Wednesday, December 9th, 2009

Opening, Canadian National Director's Welcome – Ken Delaney gave the opening address

Tabby Johnson (ACTRA)

How do we affect change?

Pick your battles

Choose your battles

Choose joy
Put a face to who you're speaking to and for
Model behavior you would like to see
Write a film for your children
Set bar high

Excellent motivational speaker.

ACTRA members; Spirit Synott and Aaron Water wowed all delegates with theatrical dance. Spirit was born with Spinal Bona fida and dances from a wheel chair. Spirit and her partner danced together as one. It was truly an amazing and inspiration performance. One I will remember.

Workshops – 1 hour each

The Duty to Accommodate – National Office lawyer gave presentation – Much too short time frame to intake information and ask questions

Dealing w. Cultural Diversity – U of T staff gave presentation – Much too short time frame to intake information, participate in discussion and ask questions

Exploring Solidarity with First Nations – Information Session re Living, working and education – Chief Arthur Moore went over what life is like both on and off the Reservation. Very informative. See above for outline from Day 1 of the Roundtable.

This conference/roundtable should have been at least 3 days. Several sections of the agenda had to be skipped due to time constraints. Received hands on information from the actual participants in the conference. The passion shown by individuals who were treated unjustly really opens your eyes to the reality of unfair practices in our world and makes you realize change is necessary. Due to the current economy the numbers were low at this conference. Just over 30 members attended. It was well worth attending and I intend on keeping involved. One thing of interest I realized from interacting with the other delegates at the conference is it's not always what I say or do that is remembered, it is what I don't say or do. If and I when I see injustices I need to stand up and speak up. There is no right side of wrong. By taking positive action change can happen. We have to make the message clear. In order to plan for Solid Action and Building a Steelworker Economy on Human rights we must work together and have our voices heard.

Judy L. Kerr
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