

Report Back from Toronto and York Region Labour Council

Meeting date: October 4, 2012 – 7:30pm to 9:30pm

Meeting location: The Ontario Federation of Labour Building, 15 Gervais Dr., Ste. 407, Don Mills, ON M3C 1Y8

The Toronto and York Region Labour Council (referred to hereafter as the Council) is a centralized body providing a venue for the myriad labour unions across Toronto and York region to socialize and inform one another of events, actions, and notices.

The Council meets on the first Thursday of every month. Two member representatives from CUPE 3903 attended the October meeting. The representatives in attendance were Faiz Ahmed and Peter Braun. There were approximately 150 people in attendance in total.

The meeting began with reports from various unions currently striking. This was followed with reports of labour victories in the city. Of note was an uplifting report from Local 75 of Unite Here! Canada who informed the Council of their victory at the Labour Board of Ontario officially recognizing hotel workers at the Novotel Mississauga. News of this victory was followed by a plea for locals in attendance to support the Food and Service Workers at the University of Toronto (Scarborough) as they attempt to become protected workers.

The Council also read out the names of workers and community stalwarts since deceased. Three brief eulogies were delivered. They were for:

1) Charles Roach, a prominent civil-rights lawyer in Toronto, who was best known for being a fierce critic of the Toronto Police Department; co-founding the Black Action Defence Committee with Dudley Laws, Sherona Hall and Lennox Farrell; and founding and institutionalizing the Caribana Festival. Mr. Roach passed on October 2, 2012.

Although Mr. Roach had lived in Canada since 1955, was called to the Ontario Bar Association in 1963 and was a practising lawyer, he refused to pledge allegiance to the British Monarchy and was therefore denied Canadian citizenship.

There will be a memorial service for the late Mr. Charles Roach in the coming weeks, the details of which are still being organized. All locals were encouraged to keep abreast of the event and spread the news of it once details become available.

More on Mr. Roach:

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/veteran-toronto-civil-rights-lawyer-charles-roach-dies-at-79/article4585619/>

2) Peter Pavlovski, a worker at the Toronto Transit Commission who had served the TTC for twenty-years. Mr. Pavlovski was killed on September 14, 2012 while working on the northbound track of the Spadina-University line just south of Downsview station. Representatives were informed that the funeral for Mr. Pavlovski, at Macedonian Orthodox church, had an enormous showing filling the

main room and an overflow room thus requiring outdoor screens on which the service was televised.

More on Mr. Pavlovski:

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/veteran-ttc-employee-killed-after-being-struck-by-service-train/article4544869/>

3) Jayesh Prajapati, a gas station attendant, was killed on September 15, 2012, when he tried to stop a driver from fleeing the station without paying for their petrol. According to Mr. Prajapati's spouse, he intervened in the theft because Mr. Prajapati's employer at the Shell station at Marlee and Roselawn Avenues expected workers to pay for any thefts at the station. In this case, the wages garnished would amount to \$112. Mr. Prajapati was a chemist who earned a master's degree in India, and immigrated, alongside his spouse and son, to Canada in 2006.

More on Mr. Pajapati:

<http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/crime/article/1257845--police-still-looking-for-suspect-in-gas-and-dash-death>

Following the notices was a presentation of an upcoming video-advertisement created by the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) as part of their of their public relations campaign to educate the public about Bill 115. The legislation affects all teachers in Ontario by eliminating their right to strike, freezing their wages, and cutting their benefits. Here's a link to the video.

After the ETFO video was screened, Fred Hahn, President of CUPE Ontario, spoke about the concessionary agreements that the provincial government is attempting to impose upon Ontario teachers. He also spoke about another bill being discussed in the Ontario Legislature which would give the Minister of any particular industry the power to establish the terms for collective bargaining in that industry. He pointed out that, under the terms of this new bill, any collective agreement signed would have to be approved by the government minister for that particular industry, who would also have the power to re-write that agreement in the interest of promoting "financial austerity." Hahn concluded by talking about the need for mass mobilization of Ontario workers in order to defeat this initiative, and protect workers' right to organize.

Following this, the Council watched a video about the 1996 Days of Action and then split-up into small groups to discuss how the lessons learned from 1996 might apply to the current situation, and how we might re-build person-to-person connection within and between unions.

The breakout session was quite instructive as veterans of the labour movement shared their experiences and thoughts with those of us who are new to the broad-based movement.

The meeting concluded with some announcements:

1. The Labour Education Centre is celebrating its 25th Anniversary on Thursday, November 1, 2012. The event will take place from 4:30 to 7PM at the Labour Education Centre (15 Gervais Drive, Suite 100).
2. A representative from the CAW (which represents over 23,000 retail workers in the city) noted that

city council will shortly be voting on a bill that, if passed, will eliminate a number of retail holidays, including Labour Day, Thanksgiving and New Years Day. The member encouraged people to contact their councillor to express their opposition to this proposed bill.

3. Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 113, representing city maintenance and transit workers, has recently come out with a campaign in defence of their workers, who are facing an attempt by the city to contract out most of their work to non-unionized employees. Here is a link to one of their videos.

We are excited to have the opportunity to again represent CUPE 3903 at next month's meeting (November 01, 2012)! Please feel free to contact us with any questions you may have about this report.

In solidarity,

Faiz Ahmed & Peter Braun

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