

CAW Council Report

December 2002

CAW Council is a meeting of CAW leadership from across the country, with close to 1000 delegates attending. The council begins with an opening address from CAW President Buzz Hargrove (speech copies are available in the office and on the CAW web site) along with several recommendations that are debated through the two-day meeting. There are several microphones set up throughout the room, and you simply get in line when you wish to speak on an issue. You are filmed and shown on two giant screens at the front of the room, which can be a little overwhelming to look at. This was an election year for the seven CAW Council Executive Members, who are also automatic members of the CAW National Executive Board (NEB), the other members coming from elections at the CAW Constitutional Convention every three years, and next scheduled for August. 03. The NEB has 16 members (Buzz of course being the president) and meets regularly through the year to set direction for the union. *(More on the NEB later in my report)*

This Council was our second since we have officially become a local with elected officers. The first council we attended was December 2001. Normally there are three meetings per year, but because there was a CAW Bargaining Convention and Canadian Labour Congress Convention in 02 the others were cancelled. Before Council, various Committees and area specific Councils (such as the Health Care Council) also meet. I attended the Health Care Council Meeting and my report on that section is at the end of this report, but first I will report on some of the recommendations and discussion.

1. Opposition to the war on **Iraq**. Unanimous approval.
2. Opposition to the Canada/US Third party agreement on **refugees**. This agreement would exclude many refugees to Canada, including women facing persecution (ie. Death by stoning for having a child out of wedlock) in their countries because of their gender. Again unanimous approval.
3. Demand the government implement the recommendations in the **Romanow Report**. Again a lot of support for this. I used my opportunity at the microphone to also plug the Health Council's Long Term Care Campaign.
4. Support **Kyoto Accord** and urge the government to ensure we meet targets. Jim Stanford CAW economist did a very interesting presentation on Kyoto and they have also developed a Policy Paper on this issue. It really is quite interesting, and frightening when you realize how disastrous global warming will really become to our planet if nothing is done. Uncontrolled climate change will not produce a world which is pretty much like our current world, just a bit warmer; it will create unparalleled turmoil in our environment, our economy, and our society.

5. Non-Affiliation to the **Ontario Federation of Labour**. This recommendation passed, but not without debate. Because the CAW has been effectively shut out of representation in this organization the NEB recommended that we remain outside, though there was much discussion about how we are unable to fix it from the outside.
6. Conduct an issue-orientated campaign for the **upcoming election**, with the purpose of defeating any Tory candidates. Again this was debated as there are those that would give blanket support to the NDP. Public support for the NDP is on the rise and many people are optimistic the next government will at least be a minority.
7. Support a ban on corporate and union **donations to all political parties**. This would certainly level the playing field for the parties, when you consider how much big business supports the Tories. We know in the LTC industry the more you donated to the Tories, the more beds you were awarded. And I will use this opportunity to remind everyone that giving to the NDP, if you are so inclined is easy and virtually painless; monthly bank withdrawals and a whopping 75% back of donations up to \$200.00. At tax time you are sure happy you gave.
8. Support an **auto campaign** to force government to enact an automotive policy for this industry. CAW recommends a combination of the 'carrot and the stick' approach, with both incentives for companies to invest and penalties if they sell cars that are not made here.
9. Support of area airport demonstrations by **air traffic controllers** to get a fair settlement with NAV Canada.
10. Support for Local unions to complete **survey on diversity** of executive boards, committee's and workplace reps.

CAW invited Dr. Samantha Nutt, the executive director of **War Child Canada** to speak to the delegates about their work. (www.warchild.ca) I have to say that while this young woman spoke, all of the 1000 delegates in the room were completely silent, as our attention was held to the stories of the horrors she has seen across this planet and the children who live here; stories of atrocities in Sierra Leone and other places that will leave you shocked. I do have an email copy of her speech I can pass on to anyone interested. Here is a small excerpt.

"By far the biggest difference that I noticed was among Iraq's youth. They have grown up knowing only war, and while they are welcoming and engaging, they are also angry – angry at an international community that doesn't care about their suffering, angry at growing up without opportunity, angry at what they believe is the indiscriminate targeting of their people. I am not here to debate whether their perceptions are right or wrong, I am merely reporting what they are."

The CAW donated \$15,000 to this worthy cause.

Ontario Health Care Council

The executive met one day prior, and the full council met (with delegates from all the health care locals) for the first time since our elections last December. Plans were supported for the long term care campaign, developing return to work protocol, health and safety issues including body fluid exposure and workload, and pushing the government to implement the recommendations from the Romanow Report. We have developed a Report of Unsafe Workload form for use in health care facilities (let me know if you would like a copy), and are surveying staffing levels in all our long-term care facilities to do comparisons across the province.

On a side note, we had some informal discussions about having a health care worker on the CAW National Executive Board (NEB). The elections that took place at council were all acclamations with all persons running receiving the endorsement of the current NEB. We discussed running someone against the slate, but after receiving some positive support for our position from Brother Ken Lewenza, President of CAW council and Local 444 in Windsor, we supported a motion for a lobbying campaign to have a seat for health care prior to, or at the CAW Constitutional Convention next August and are optimistic that we will be successful. We also met with the Atlantic Canada Health Care Council, and the CAW Presidents of Health Care Locals who supported our position and our lobbying efforts. Sister Nancy McMurphy, President of Local 302 in London, with 6,000 health care members, was acclaimed to a position on the resolutions committee of CAW Council. This position is often considered a stepping-stone to the NEB.

A detailed council report is available at the CAW web site www.caw.ca

Elections will be held in the new year for two vacancies for CAW Council delegates. If you are an activist who is interested in the broader issues in the labour movement, and have a desire to be a part of the process that sets direction for our union then I encourage you to run for a position. Current Council delegates are President Andy Savelle, Recording Secretary Marg Arnone, and myself. Josie Vickruck, Financial Secretary also attended this council.

Submitted in solidarity, Katha Fortier, Vice President Local 229