



Labour Reporter

Labour Reporter is published monthly by the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour
220 - 2445 13th Avenue Regina Saskatchewan phone 525-0197 fax 525-8960
web site - www.sfl.sk.ca e-mail - sfl@sasktel.net This issue - June 2005
Printed on union made paper, written and reproduced entirely by union members

Raise Minimum Wage - SFL

The province's labour movement is calling on the Calvert government to announce an immediate and substantial increase in the minimum wage.

The Saskatchewan Federation of Labour says a sizable upward adjustment in the lowest legal rate of pay is very badly needed and long overdue.

The last raise for those workers earning the minimum wage was two and a half years ago, on November 1, 2002.

The Federation of Labour says the present rate of \$6.65 per hour has not been even close to adequate for some time because the cost of living has been going up by more than 3 per cent per year, eroding the purchasing power of low income earners.

The Minimum Wage Board held public hearing last fall, and

has since made a report to the Minister of Labour. It is now time for the provincial government to announce an increase to the minimum wage.

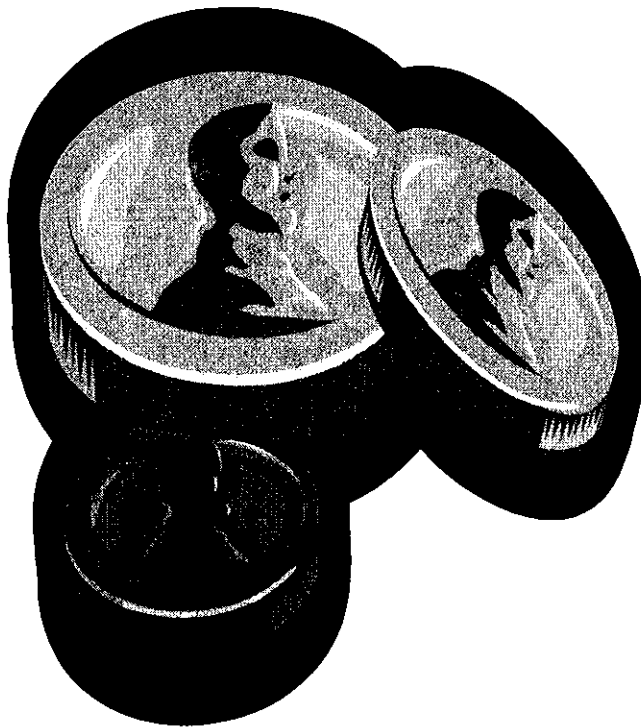
The SFL believes there is ample justification for a sizable increase.

The SFL's brief to the public hearings called for an immediate hike in the minimum wage

to \$8.16 an hour in order to pull the rate up to at least the poverty line.

Eight other provincial or territorial jurisdictions in Canada currently have higher minimum wages than Saskatchewan, with some of them at over eight dollars an hour, and some with announced increases to take effect in the near future.

SFL president Larry Hubich noted that the business press has recently carried stories of corporate CEOs in Canada getting an average of \$5.5 million annually – a 57 per cent increase in one year - with the largest companies paying senior executives more than \$50 million a year. "Maybe its time for minimum wage earners to get a 57 per cent increase," Hubich concluded.



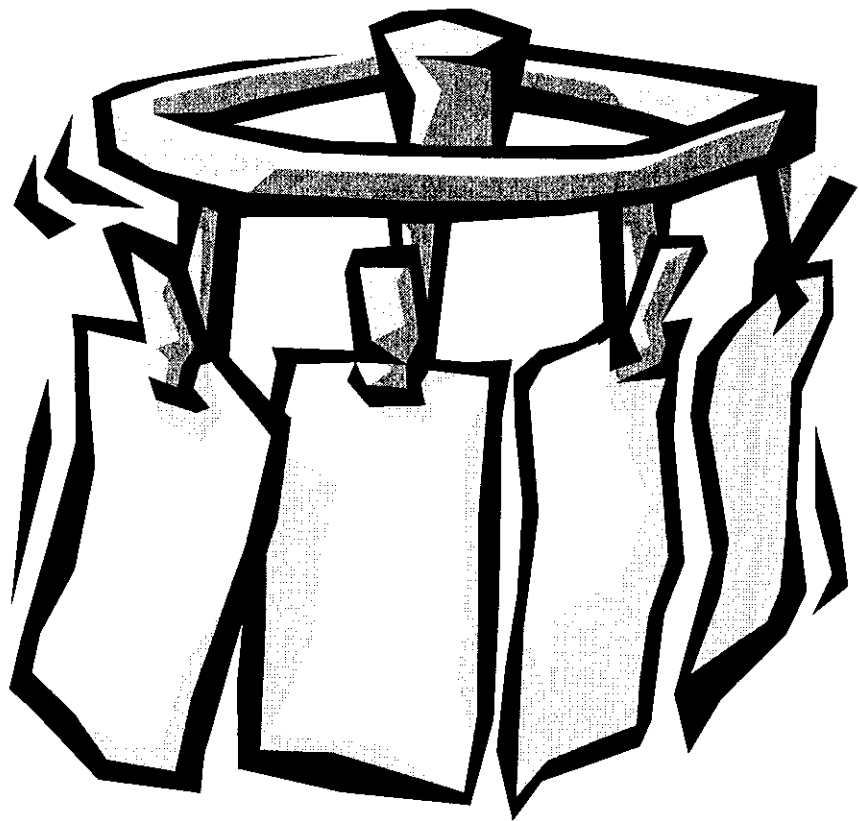
LABOUR COUNCIL SUSPECTS THAT GOVERNMENT COMMISSION WILL IGNORE PART TIME WORKERS

The Regina and District Labour Council, (RDLC) is concerned that the proposed commission to study the issue of part time work may do little to benefit workers who work less than full time.

“With no legislative framework and no direct mandate,” says Labour Council President Terry Zahorski, “the commission may prove to be nothing more than a waste of taxpayers’ dollars.” He went on to say, “If the Government is truly serious about addressing the problems of part-time workers, the Commission must be asked to solicit the input of part-time workers, not just the opinion of business groups.”

Although the government reversed itself on its “Most Available Hours” legislation, Labour Minister Higgins has since been heard to state that the NDP Government will not abandon part time workers.

“Today we are calling on the NDP Government to stand behind their words and in fact not abandon part-time workers by



ensuring open, transparent and accessible avenues for part-time workers to make submissions to the Commission,” says Zahorski.

The Regina and District Labour Council believes that, “The Government’s mishandling of the Most Available Hours file does nothing to instill confidence in the Commission,” said Zahorski. He

added, “Despite the hysterical reaction of business lobbyists and the Opposition every time workers’ issues are about to be dealt with, the government still has the ability and responsibility to help part-time workers. At this point, I have seen no indication that it has the will to do so.”

Labour Minister tangles with business lobby group

The Labour Minister Deb Higgins had some blunt and direct words for the Saskatchewan Business Council on Tuesday May 17 in the legislature.

During question period she called the business lobby group a "Saskatchewan Party front."

Meanwhile the Sask Party opposition has been scolding the labour minister for a letter she sent to the Business Council lambasting the group for what Higgins referred to as a "campaign of disinformation" that added "nothing of value" to the debate involving proposed changes to provincial labour law.

Higgins responded to the Saskies taunts by producing a recent letter from Sask Party leader Brad Wall in which he offers co-operation and assistance to the Business Council to fight the most available hours amendment.

"They've been behind this from the very beginning and they haven't got the nerve to stand up on their own feet and do it, they hide behind the Business Council," she said in the legislature.

Wall then told Higgins she owed an apology to the 51 organizations of the Saskatche-



wan Business Council and their members.

The Labour Reporter would like to say to Deb Higgins - don't apologize, you have nothing to be ashamed of and don't back away from telling the business crowd off when they deserve it ...which is regularly.

The Business Council's distortions about Most Available Hours being a "job killing monster" helped them to get the proposal killed. Now made bold by that success the bosses are campaigning against Bill 87 which makes

the first contract finalization provisions in the Trade Union Act easier to access. The Bill also clarifies and strengthens the powers of the Labour Relations Board, to ask for and get the kind of anti-union material Wal-Mart refused to release to the LRB during a certification application by the United Food and Commercial Workers.

The labour minister is absolutely right, the fear mongering and scare tactics of the bosses have added nothing to the debate.

It is the Business Council that should apologize.

Coal miners die regularly in China

An underground explosion trapped 51 coal miners in northern China on May 19.

This is just the most recent accident to hit the world's deadliest mining industry.

The accident happened in the Nuanerhe colliery in Hebei province, about 200 km north-east of Beijing.

Eighty-five miners were underground at the time of the blast. Only 34 of them had been rescued a day later.

Two coal dust and methane explosions killed 27 miners in this same colliery in January 2002.

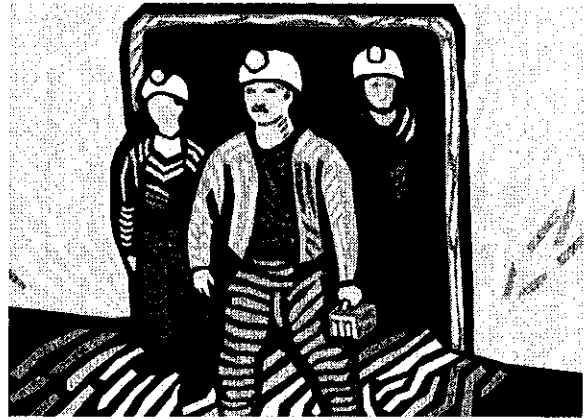
The local mining regulator had ordered the pit to suspend production three times.

Chinese mines are notoriously dangerous, with dozens of fatalities recorded every year.

This is another, and a particularly graphic, example of politicians not giving a damn about the wellbeing of workers.

The Communist Party was started to improve the lot of the proletariat - that is to say

working people. But the politicians seem to find it easy to forget about the interests of wage earners. That is certainly the case in China. But the phenomenon is not limited to Chinese politicians and government officials.



Important Upcoming Events for Trade Unionists

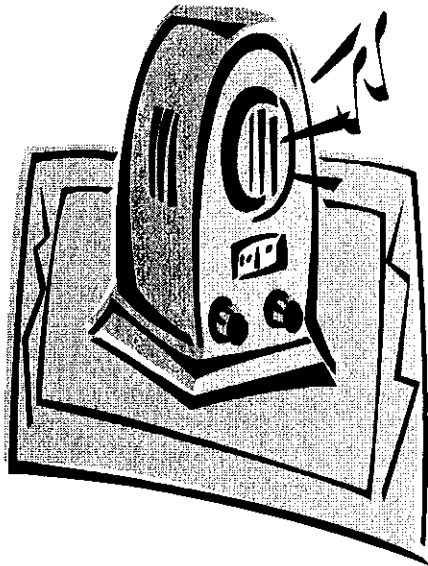
17th Annual SFL Summer Camp – August 7-13 at PCTC in Ft. Qu'Appelle. Young people between the ages of 13-16 who are daughters or sons of union members are eligible to attend. Check it out on the SFL website www.sfl.sk.ca or call Stacey at the Fed office 525-0197.

SFL Annual Occupational Health and Safety Conference – September 8-10 at the Delta Bessborough in Saskatoon. Earlybird deadline is August 8th. The brochure is available on the SFL website at www.sfl.sk.ca

Pensions Conference - February 8,9,10 2006 Ramada Hotel, Regina

Year in Review Conference (labour law, arbitrations, LRB and court decisions) Bessborough Hotel, Saskatoon, March 2, 3 2006

Shift Work Conference — Regina January 18, 19 2006



Tune in to Labourstart

LabourStart, the online news service that serves the international trade union movement, has launched a brand-new radio station on the Internet.

Radio Labourstart broadcasts 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Programming includes a mix of news, views and music.

You'll hear songs that fan the flames of discontent by artists like Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger and Bruce Springsteen. And, there's a daily three-minute labour news report from the Workers Independent News Service.

All you need is an Internet connection, a sound card and speakers. Learn more at <http://radio.laborstart.org/>

Smile teams?

The Hospital Employees' Union in B.C. says a plan by the Vancouver Island Health Authority to send "smile teams" into health care workplaces to distribute treats to demoralized workers is inappropriate.

The health authority announced it would be dispatching smile teams to hospitals and other health care facilities to drum up support for its staff recognition program.

According to a staff notice, available on VIHA's website, the smile teams will spend the next six weeks "travelling the islands with treats, bringing surprise smiles" to workplaces and promises that "If you're smiled on, you'll know it."

HEU's Zorica Bosancic says the initiative shows how out of touch the health authority is with the realities facing front-line health care workers.

HEU members have seen their wages slashed by 15 per cent and hundreds of their co-workers have been fired to make way for privatization. "If health executives want to bring smiles to the faces of our members," says Bosancic, "give them the resources they



need to provide patients and residents with the care they deserve. But don't insult health care workers with this stunt."



B.C. Grits bad record

The International Labour Organization, a UN agency, has again condemned B.C. Liberals' poor record on protecting workers' human rights.

In a recent report, the ILO slammed the province for violating freedom of association principles. It also recommends the government take specific actions to repair the damage and demands the province come into compliance with international standards.

This is the ninth time in two years the ILO has condemned Premier Gordon Campbell's government for trampling on the basic rights of workers, the worst record in North America.

Campbell now has the dubious honour of having had more ILO complaints filed against his government than any other Canadian province in the agency's 84-year history.

Work Law

Video surveillance evidence: The latest word

by Alison Warrion/CALM

Videotapes are often used when an employer alleges an employee has exaggerated the extent of an injury or illness.

But often, such tapes show workers off-duty and are filmed without the worker's knowledge. Can the employer rely on those videotapes as evidence at arbitration? Don't employees have a right to privacy?

Traditionally, labour arbitrators have been split on the question of whether such videotapes are admissible at arbitration.

One line of cases holds that arbitrators have the power to admit evidence that is relevant. Therefore, if the videotape meets the test of relevance, it should be admissible.

The other line of cases holds that such videotapes should be admissible only where they meet a test of reasonableness.

In a recent decision, Arbitrator Michael Lynk considered the two lines and determined that the preferable approach is the "reasonableness" approach, which better respects the privacy rights of employees. This approach requires that the employer have reasonable grounds for initiating surveillance and that the surveillance be carried out in a reasonable manner.

In determining whether it is reasonable to engage in surveillance, Lynk stated that arbitrators must engage in a balancing exercise that considers both the worker's right to privacy and the employer's legitimate business interests. This requires consideration of, among other factors, whether the employer used other, less intrusive means of obtaining information before resorting to surveillance.

Although Lynk's decision is not binding on other arbitrators, it is noteworthy and may be considered persuasive by other arbitrators, given its thorough review of the law and sound reasoning.

• *Alison Warrion practises law with Sack Goldblatt Mitchell in Toronto. For more information on labour law issues, visit the firm's web site at www.sgmlaw.com*

The labour movement is built
on solidarity among workers.
We understand the need to
promote understanding
and bridge barriers,
build solidarity
and develop
respect.



Saskatchewan Federation of Labour Solidarity and Pride Committee

If you would like additional information or
to become involved contact us at the SFL

220 - 2445 13th Ave. Regina 525-0197

website: www.sfl.sk.ca

e-mail: sfl@sasktel.net



Saskatoon Pride Week June 12 – 18

Regina Pride Week June 18—25

Provincial Pride Parade June 18

Wal-Mart woes

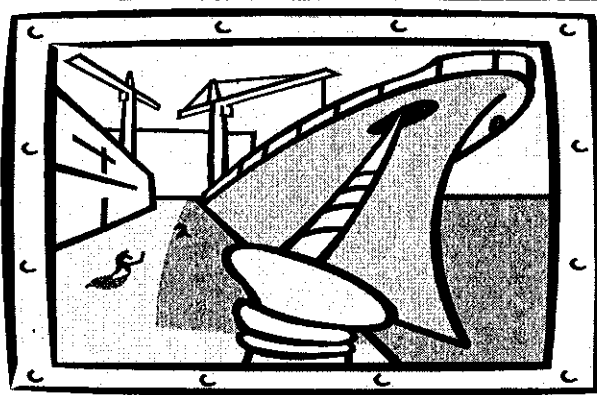
A coalition of union and community activists, small businesses and elected leaders in Queens, New York, successfully mobilized to stop what could have been Wal-Mart's first New York City store.

Media reports revealed that Vornado Reality Trust had hoped to win approval for the shopping centre before the public learned Wal-Mart was to be an anchor store. When that was revealed, opposition to the project soared.

City council member Helen Sears said to win approval to locate a store in the area, Wal-Mart would have to improve its wages, health benefits and pensions and end its vehement stance against unions.

The real estate developer dropped plans to build the city's first Wal-Mart.

A Labour Minute



“Men along the shore”

For decades in the 1800s and before, crew members on sailing ships would yell out “Men along the shore” as the tall ships entered port.

This was a call for extra hands to help the crew unload and load cargo from the ship’s holds. It was backbreaking work shouldering hundred pound loads up plank walkways and down crude wooden ladders.

As sailing ships gave way to steam, the size of vessels and cargos increased dramatically and there developed a steady need for dock-side labour. The itinerant men along the shore became longshoremen.

The longshoremen were no longer vagrants and drifters, but a regular workforce skilled at the tough work of filling and emptying the holds of large ships.

The longshoremen organized very strong unions and fought huge battles for decent pay and conditions. The London Dock Strike of 1889 and the 1934 San Francisco Strike are legendary working class victories.

And it all started with the call for “Men along the shore”.

Labour Minutes recount the great stories of working people and their unions and take just a minute to read

Goings On

Ready for Work Program

Ready for Work facilitators will talk to high school students about safety on the job and workers' rights.

A new group of facilitators has been trained and are available now to speak to classes. For information contact the SFL Ready for Work Coordinator at 924-8576.

This is a great program, that saves lives. Your kids’ school should make use of it.

Labour College courses

The Labour College of Canada offers great labour education programs in Ottawa.

Regional programs are also held at other locations across Canada. For information visit the website - www.labourcollege.ca

SIAST offers Labour courses

The four campuses of the Saskatchewan Institute of Allied Science and Technology in Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw and Regina offer courses in Labour Relations, Human Resources and other classes - including night classes - that would be of interest to working people, particularly those workers interested in being more involved in their union.

Get a SIAST calendar and check it out.

Need a Union...Call Us

The Federation of Labour welcomes calls from working people who want to bring a union to their place of employment.

If you are working in a non-union workplace, and want to improve job security, wages, employee benefit plans, hours of work, holidays or pensions, call us and we will put you in touch with an organizer.

The Saskatchewan Federation of Labour can be reached at 525-0197 in Regina.

We’d like to hear from you.



Labour should be part of the Centennial

This year - 2005 - marks the centennial of our province, and working people and their unions should be involved in the celebrations.

We want to commemorate the part played by workers in the development of Saskatchewan, and have readings from the soon to be published Saskatchewan Labour History Book in all parts of the province, and expand the cultural events during May Works, and take up other good ideas too.

You and your local can help Labour be part of the Centennial.

Cheques made out to the Saskatchewan Centennial Workers