



# Labour Reporter

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220 - 2445 13th Avenue Regina Saskatchewan phone 525-0197 fax 525-8960  
web site - [www.sfl.sk.ca](http://www.sfl.sk.ca) e-mail - [sfl@sasktel.net](mailto:sfl@sasktel.net) This issue - May 2005  
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## Labour takes action on Wal-Mart

The Canadian Labour Congress is calling on all workers to let Wal-Mart know how much we disapprove of their treatment of the company's employees.

The CLC is asking working people to send messages to -

H. Lee Scott Jr.  
President and CEO  
Wal-Mart  
702 SW 8th St  
Bentonville  
Arkansas  
U.S.A.

or

Mario Pilozzi  
Wal-Mart Canada  
1940 Argentic Road  
Mississauga  
Ontario

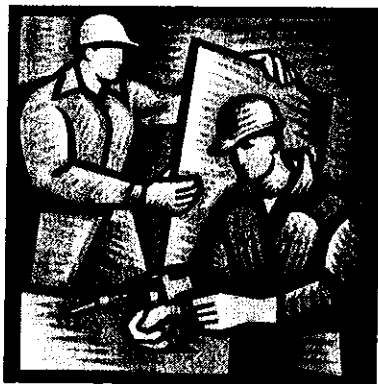
The message could be along the following lines -

Your company's decision to shut down its store in Jonquière

Quebec just as the staff were forming their first union really offends me. I'd heard stories about Wal-Mart being anti-union but never really paid that much attention.

Since then, I've learned that Wal-Mart stores, in Canada and in the U.S., have a record of pleading guilty, of being charged and of being fined huge amounts because they ignored the laws protecting employees. It's incredible that so many of your employees get hurt at work and you continually fail to report. In the U.S., your company has been breaking child labour laws and exploiting illegal immigrants.

I thought a company like Wal-Mart would respect our



laws. I guess I was wrong.

In Canada, working people have the right to join a union. It's their choice, not the employer's. And when they have a union you have the duty to come to agreement with them on a collective agreement that sets working conditions. In Canada, we also have laws that protect workers from getting injured at work and that protect children and young workers from exploitation. I expect you to respect and obey our laws.

What you've done in Jonquière is wrong.

You are violating everything that is dear to us Canadians: our values, our laws, our respect for people and our deeply-set democratic sense of fairness.

What you're doing to the people who make your company so successful is too much for me to take. (then sign the letter)

If you prefer to e-mail or fax a message, go to the CLC website for ready made messages.

# Saskatchewan a dangerous place to work

Any examination of the statistical records kept for workplace fatalities, maimings and injuries will reveal an urgent need for our province and country to make far better efforts to protect working people when they are at their employment.

Depending on the category you chose Saskatchewan has been, for a number of years, either the worst or next to the worst jurisdiction in Canada in terms of killing, permanently disabling and injuring employees while they are on the job.

Those figures are collected, compiled and published by organizations such as the Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada and the Industrial Accident and Prevention Association.

Even the most superficial look at their comparative statistics will demonstrate that there are very few bright spots in the data as it relates to this province.

In recent times Saskatchewan has had the second worst injury frequency per 100 employees in the country, including the northern territories where the accident-prone sectors of resource extraction and primary industries predominate.

For both lost-time injuries and the less severe but still re-

ported no time-loss accidents - Saskatchewan has a shameful record, and the figures for the past decade indicate it is not improving significantly.

The number of fatalities on the job range between 25 and 40 per year over the last decade in Saskatchewan workplaces. This is on average ten or a dozen more fatalities annually than are recorded in other jurisdictions with similar sized populations. Here again there is no sign of a downward trend in the number of workers killed on the job. The Workers' Compensation Board's annual report for 2004 has just been released and it shows 26 fatality claims were accepted during 2004, exactly the same number as the previous year.

This is clearly the worst part of the story. Our province has the highest rate of workplace deaths in Canada.

And work-related fatalities are not the only problem.

The incidence of Saskatchewan injured workers left with permanent functional impairments is also unacceptably high, and it is also consistently and continuously high over the years surveyed by the Association of Compensation Boards.

It should be noted too that on the national level our record is terrible as well. The Canadian experience of killing and

injuring people on the job is not an enviable one at all. Compared to many other modern, western, industrialized countries Canada has an unacceptably poor record of workplace safety and occupational health.

Whether it's the G8 or OECD countries that our record is held up against, we in Canada have nothing to be proud of, and a whole lot that needs to be improved.

The 16 member nations of the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development are all advanced democracies with highly developed economies. Canada stands out in the group as the place where workers have a greater chance of a work-related death than almost any of the other countries. Our national rate of employment injuries has been 4<sup>th</sup> worst among the OECD states in Europe, the U.S. and Japan.

So our workplaces in Canada are relatively unsafe when compared to other democratic and developed countries. Our national record for killing and injuring workers is terrible. But even in that sad context, Saskatchewan manages to be at or near the bottom of the heap in one category after another that measure workplace safety and occupational health among Canadian provinces.

# Top court to hear contract busting case

The Supreme Court of Canada has decided to hear a case which challenges an anti-worker, collective agreement busting labour law in British Columbia.

The Supreme Court won't hear arguments about Bill 29 until after the current BC election campaign is over, but Hospital Employees' Union business manager Judy Darcy said the timing of the court's decision - on the second day of the election campaign - will cause voters to think about the Liberal Party's labour record.

"It's a victory for us, and the timing couldn't be better."

The B.C. Nurses' Union and the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union will challenge Bill 29 on constitutional grounds.

"The court of public opinion will judge the Liberals May 17, but the highest court of the land will have a chance to decide whether they violated our constitutional rights," Darcy said.

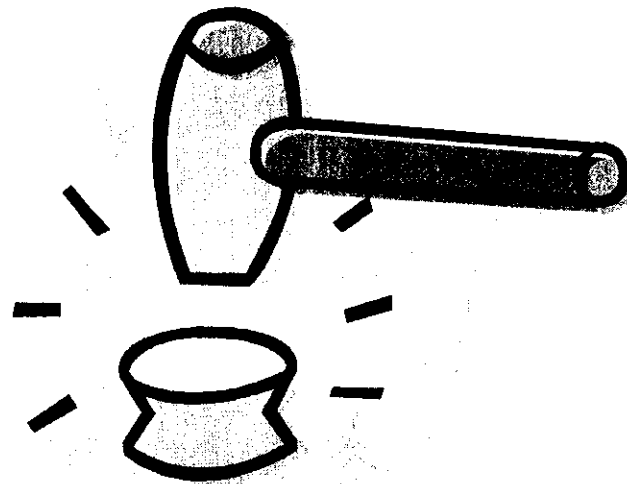
The legislation, passed in 2002, allowed the Liberals to cancel collective agreements, contract out work and lay off

health-care workers.

The unions are arguing that the legislation violates the equality and freedom of association provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

"Our case is about equality rights, and about freedom of association because the right to form a trade union, and to negotiate, is stripped away when they can just take away major portions of a contract," Darcy said.

"Bill 29 basically stripped



our contract of the protections around contracting out and privatization, it then paved the way for massive privatization across the province and for the layoff of 8,000 workers, 90 per cent of whom are women."

Judy Darcy told reporters

that the issue raises questions about the honesty of the Liberal government.

"It is fundamentally about broken trust and broken promises," Darcy noted.

"Gordon Campbell, when he ran for office, promised that he would not privatize health care. He broke that. He promised that he wouldn't tear up contracts and he's done that. He also said he supported pay equity and he basically destroyed pay equity for thousands of women."

George Heyman, president of the B.C. Government Employees Union, said the case is important because it deals with the right of workers to engage in free collective bargaining.

"This government has treated the collective bargaining process with contempt," Heyman said.

Anne Shannon, vice-president of the B.C. Nurses' Union, said Bill 29 resulted in the layoffs of hundreds of nurses.

"Finally we are having our voices heard," Sister Shannon said.

# CUPW fights privatization, closures

Close to 1,000 members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) gathered in Quebec City recently to attend the union's 22nd National Triennial Convention.

National President Deborah Bourque was re-elected for a second three-year term.

CUPW delegates reaffirmed that union activists must rally to the cause of fending off postal deregulation, privatization and keeping public post offices open.

"After forty years of struggle we are still facing some very ominous challenges from Canada Post," says Na-

tional President Deborah Bourque. "We will not tolerate CPC's short sighted measures to save costs through postal closures and contracting out union jobs. These actions not only hurt our members, but also weaken the quality of service the public expects."

Although CUPW represents members from the urban and



rural postal operations at Canada Post, the union continues to organize smaller private sector bargaining units, including couriers, post office cleaners and mailing houses.

Most recently the union organized and negotiated a 1st collective agreement for 6,000 rural and suburban mail carriers with the signing of their first contract with Canada Post in 2003. Delegates from all sectors attended this year's convention.

CUPW represents 54,000 members in rural, urban and suburban postal operations and private sector bargaining units, from coast to coast to coast.

## Important Upcoming Events for Trade Unionists

**Solidarity WORKS!** – May 30<sup>th</sup> - June 17<sup>th</sup>. A paid, hands-on youth activist training program designed to equip young people with labour education, practical organizing experience, and activist skills to demand their working rights. Application deadline is May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005. Please contact Jessica for more information at 924-8300 or [sfl.youth@sasktel.net](mailto:sfl.youth@sasktel.net) Check out the poster at: [http://www.sfl.sk.ca/solidarity\\_works.php](http://www.sfl.sk.ca/solidarity_works.php)

**9<sup>th</sup> Prairie School for Union Women** – June 12-16 at Luther College, University of Regina. Whether you are a long time activist or just starting to get involved in your union, this school is open to you. The brochure is available on our website at [www.sfl.sk.ca](http://www.sfl.sk.ca)

**17<sup>th</sup> 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.

**SFL Annual Occupational Health and Safety Conference** – September 8-10 at the Delta Bessborough in Saskatoon. Earlybird deadline is August 8<sup>th</sup>. The brochure is available on the SFL website at [www.sfl.sk.ca](http://www.sfl.sk.ca)

## 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/>

## Would you like fries?

Decades ago, North America began exporting its garment trade jobs. Today, it's nearly impossible to buy a shirt made on this continent.

Once corporations moved clothing jobs to low-wage countries, shoe assembly followed. The next wave saw North America move its entire machine tool production system to low-wage, low-benefit, low-worker-protection countries.

In the 80s and 90s, the computer-manufacturing sector

waved goodbye, looking for more "liberal" economies. Home appliance factories were similarly relocated.

More and more of our automotive components are produced off continent.

India has become a software development centre and a leading call centre. Canadians are getting calls on behalf of their local bank or insurance company and these calls are not originating in the next city or province, but in call centres in India, the Philippines or elsewhere. George Bush used a call centre in India to solicit donations during the U.S. election campaign.

Now there's a new development in the U.S. that will make even the most devoted followers of globalization wonder.

A sharp entrepreneur named Steve Bigari has outsourced order taking at his McDonald's restaurants in Colorado.

When customers at one of Bigari's 12 McDonald's pull up to the menu and speaker at the drive-through and hear "Would you like fries with that?" they assume the disembodied voice belongs to someone in the building a few feet away. But they're wrong.

Bigari has set up a centralized call centre in Minnesota where minimum wage rates are lower than in Colorado.

A high-speed data link relays the Colorado customer's voice to the Minnesota call centre and the call centre employees type up the order and flash it, with a picture of the customer

(so restaurant staff can match orders to faces) back to the remote restaurant where the order is placed, assembled and served.

Knowing that India and Russia have lower wage rates than Minnesota, is there any doubt that once the kinks are worked out, you'll be placing your fast-food order with someone on the other side of the world?

## Wal-Mart manager's handbook

"Staying union free is a full-time commitment". "Unless union prevention is a goal equal to other objectives within an organization, the goal will usually not be attained". "The commitment to stay union free must exist at all levels of management—from the Chairperson of the Board down to front-line manager".

"Therefore, no one in management is immune to carrying his or her 'own weight' in the union prevention effort. The entire management staff should fully comprehend and appreciate exactly what is expected of their individual efforts to meet the union free objective".

"Unless each member of management is willing to spend the necessary time, effort, energy, and money, it will not be accomplished. The time involved is...365 days per year."

• from a handbook Wal-Mart distributes to managers

## The “union effect”

The U.K. periodical *Hazards* describes the “union effect” as health and safety know-how and organization that “is not only good for your livelihood—it can be a life saver.”

Union safety tools and strategies prevent thousands of serious workplace accidents each year, and extend the lifesaving union safety effect beyond union workplaces. Organized workplaces are much safer workplaces, because union safety reps have the knowledge, skills, rights and influence to make sure they are safer.

*Hazards* cites a plethora of evidence including research by the London School of Economics showing that “labour possesses vital, tacit, shop floor knowledge regarding health and safety, and knowledge is imperative for reducing accident rates.

## Night work is unhealthy

Workers’ bodies are being “thrown out of whack” by increasing amounts of night-time work, says a report in the Detroit News.

According to the report, work-related sleep disorders affect tens of thousands of workers, leading to chronic exhaustion and an inability to concentrate, which can become a serious safety concern.

The report also found strong correlations between night work and weight gain, heart disease, digestive problems and high blood pressure.

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](http://www.sfl.sk.ca)  
e-mail: [sfl@sasktel.net](mailto:sfl@sasktel.net)



**Saskatoon Pride Week June 12 – 18**  
**Regina Pride Week June 18—25**  
**Provincial Pride Parade June 18**

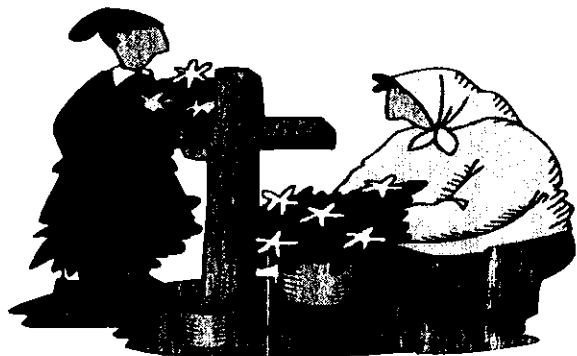
### Quebec’s environment minister needs a math lesson

Quebec environment minister Thomas Mulcair raised eyebrows, if not wages, when he blamed the province’s public transit woes on bus drivers, who, he claimed, earn \$100,000 per year.

Claude Benoit, the president of CUPE 1983, which represents Montreal bus drivers, pointed out that the average salary for his members is \$47,000.

“The minister is misleading the public and trying to make us take the blame for government inaction on public transit,” Benoit said.

## A Labour Minute



### Day of Mourning began in Canada

For decades Canadian working people have had a greater chance of being killed or injured on the job than the workers in almost any other industrialized country.

In 1984, the Canadian Labour Congress decided to dramatically draw attention to this unacceptably high workplace accident rate. The CLC declared a National Day of Mourning for workers killed and injured on the job.

April 28 was chosen as the actual date to honour the deceased and damaged workers. It commemorates the enactment of Canada's first comprehensive Workers' Compensation Act in Ontario in 1914.

Observances of the Day of Mourning are now widespread in Canada. They are led by unions and labour councils and involve thousands of workers.

And some 80 other countries around the world have adopted the Day of Mourning to commemorate those who are maimed or kill in work related accidents. The Day has also become an opportunity to press lawmakers for better occupational health and safety regulations and more effective enforcement of the laws protecting the lives of workers.

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](http://www.labourcollege.ca)

### SIAST offers Labour courses

The 4 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 Celebration Committee, can be sent to the Saskatchewan