



News Release

For immediate release

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Workers honour May Day: the struggle for labour rights

Tomorrow is International Workers' Day, commonly known as May Day. May Day came into existence after the Haymarket Massacre in Chicago in 1886, when police fired on workers during a general strike for the eight-hour day, killing a dozen demonstrators.

The history of workers is one of protesting for better working conditions, like decent wages, safe workplaces, and end to child labour, and of course, the shorter work day. Workers protesting for their rights are what the union movement is all about, and the victories are often shared by all workers, not just those with unions.

Union members in Saskatchewan mark this May Day with a series of workplace educationals entitled Labour Rights are Human Rights. 22 workshops have so far been delivered to over a dozen unions across the province, and they will continue throughout the month of May and beyond.

"Union locals, labour councils and workers from across the province are being provided with basic information about how the new essential services law and the changes to the *Trade Union Act* are affecting collective bargaining and union organizing," says SFL President Larry Hubich. "The basic message is that together these laws are curtailing the legitimate role of the labour movement by destroying our rights to bargain and to organize."

"We also discuss the fact that unions don't just deliver better contracts for their members, they also build more democratic societies by advocating for progressive social policies like employment insurance, pension plans, minimum wage, and so on. The union movement has always played a major role in building a more equal society – through our promotion of medicare, public services, and Crown corporations, to name just a few examples. We have a proud history in Saskatchewan of advancing human rights that goes beyond workplaces. The key message is that the government's attack on our movement is an attack on democracy itself," adds Hubich.

The SFL has also been circulating a “Labour Rights are Human Rights” Backgrounder for widespread use that summarizes the most regressive aspects of the two pieces of legislation (see attached). It also updates workers about the proposed amendments to the Construction Industry Labour Relations Act (Bill 80) and the anti-trespass act (Bill 43). Both Bills are scheduled to become law this year.

“It is amazing what happens when you provide the facts about these laws to workers. A lot of lightbulbs go on about the real purpose behind the changes – they are not about public safety and balance – they are about giving more power and clout to employers and to government as an employer,” says Hubich.

“We are seeing a lot of frustration with the Saskatchewan Party government. People are making the connection that this government does not share the same values that the labour movement does. And it’s exciting to feel that renewed sense of pride in being union,” adds Hubich.

Union members across the province will be holding short meetings on lunch breaks or coffee breaks to discuss the anti-worker legislation of the Saskatchewan Party government throughout the month of May.

Several upcoming workshops are open to the media. Locations include North Battleford, Regina, Moose Jaw, Yorkton. For details, contact Cara Banks at (306) 533-3423 or Larry Hubich at (306) 537-7330.

The SFL represents over 95,000 unionized workers from 37 affiliated unions in Saskatchewan.

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