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CLC-FTQ

NEWSLETTER OF UNITE HERE CANADA • ISSUE NO. 4

■ **JANUARY 2005** • www.unitehere.ca

We like federal announcement, but more needed

We were encouraged by the federal government announcement in December about tariff elimination on certain textile inputs used by the apparel industry, more funding for the Textile Production Efficiency Component (CANtex), and the extension of current duty remission orders benefiting textile and apparel manufacturers.

"These are good initial moves but they fall short of a true industrial strategy to help the Canadian textile and apparel industry thrive," said UNITE HERE Canadian Director Alexandra Dagg.

"Close to 144,000 people (47,000 in textile and 97,000 in apparel manufacturing) would be helped by a more aggressive focus by the federal government on this important Canadian industry," she argued.

As well, "these modest initiatives need to be seen against the background of federal Liberal governments' rollbacks in Employment Insurance and other important programs for Canada's working people. And the government should reinstate the Program for Older Worker Adjustment (POWA) because there are a lot of long term workers in the sector who will still be threatened by layoffs."

Dagg concluded, "We hope that textile tariff relief and the extension of duty remission will allow both industries to cope a bit better with the global market situation. The sharp rise in the Canadian dollar has battered the manufacturing sector enough, and apparel and textile workers need all the respite they can get."

Anti-sweatshop news from West and East

Exciting news in the anti-sweatshop movement came from two parts of the country recently. The City of Vancouver is the first Canadian municipality of its size to adopt, in principle, an Ethical Purchasing Policy and Supplier Code of Conduct. As well, the City of Toronto is inviting comment on how to move ahead and put its anti-sweat resolution into purchasing policy.

VANCOUVER On December 16 2004, Vancouver city council unanimously voted to accept the Final Report of the Ethical Purchasing Policy Task Force, subject to a financial impact report. Congratulations to Vas Gunaratna of the UNITE HERE BC Joint Council and others who worked on this and participated in the work of the city's committee to draft the policies. Vancouver's Ethical Purchasing Policy and Supplier Code of Conduct will serve as a great model for other Canadian municipalities aiming to develop purchasing policies that respect the rights and dignity of workers.

Some of the items that stand out in Vancouver are:

- the provision for industry standard wages and an environmental commitment in the code of conduct;
- provisions for regular review of the policy, including stakeholder consultation and annual reporting to council;
- provision for cancellation of contracts;
- mandating of public disclosure;
- not awarding contracts to known violating companies.

TORONTO The Toronto meetings will take place in mid-January and UNITE HERE will be there to push for a truly progressive policy. Members of our union continue to work with groups and municipalities across North America to pass resolutions like these. Look for activity on the Olympics and in Burnaby next!

UNITE HERE Tsunami Relief

Canadian Co-Directors Alex Dagg and Nick Worhaug wrote to all affiliates just after the disaster in Southeast Asia to encourage donations to Oxfam to aid those so badly affected by this unprecedented event. As well, we know that many UNITE HERE members are making personal donations.

Quebec Updates

ADVANCING OUR AGENDA The UNITE HERE Quebec Council was very well represented during the recent Quebec Federation of Labour Convention. Our delegates made strong presentations at the mikes on key issues. As well, at the November 2004 UNITE HERE Quebec Council assembly, our members formed new committees in finance, education and political action in order to advance our agenda.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS In defence of employment standards, the Union filed collective grievances against eight Quebec employers who refused to respect the Regulations of Labour Standards concerning the \$8.00 minimum wage in the clothing industry. UNITE HERE won major news coverage in this matter and we will continue to fight all the way through arbitration.

STRIKE READINESS Quebec members will be bringing food bank donations to union meetings in case of a strike for the upcoming negotiation of the master collective agreement in the men's clothing industry covering close to 4,000 members.

INJURED WORKERS VICTORY UNITE HERE won an important decision last October for two workers of Joseph Ribkoff Ltd. who had filed a complaint according to Article 32 of LATMP (Quebec's law regarding workplace injury and occupational disease). In this decision, the CSST (Health and Safety Board in Quebec) established that the employer must continue contributing to the workers' insurance and retirement fund when workers are victims of industrial injuries. The CSST mediator based his decision on jurisprudence that concludes that when a worker is victim of an industrial injury, he is considered to be at work.

ORGANIZING Our Quebec organizing staff helped the 40 workers at the Montreal area distribution centre of the well-known Buffalo Jeans brand to join UNITE HERE. Issues in the campaign were wages, benefits and respect on the job. Ontario updates

LABOUR LAW REFORM The Ontario government has proposed to return card-check certification rights only for workers in the construction industry. UNITE HERE members are demanding equal rights for all non-union workers. Harminder Singh Gill President Local 192, Silgan Plastics, Jessie Ghoman, President Local 1885, Lear Canada, Gurbachan Pannu, President Local 2715 Amhil Enterprises, along with stewards Ranjit Mathoun and Kushwant Gill from Local 2715 recently met with

Brampton area MPPs to press them on providing real organizing rights to all workers in Ontario. As well, UNITE HERE members are writing to their local MPP's urging them to do the right thing for working people.

WINNERS Bargaining continues for a second contract for our members at the Winners distribution centres – our largest Ontario bargaining unit with over 1,200 members.

COUNCIL MEETING Plans for our first meeting of the newly merged UNITE HERE Ontario council continue, preceded by delegate elections across all former HERE Local 75 workplaces.

REFRESHER COURSE Organizing staff in Ontario recently had an intensive refresher course on provincial labour law, in anticipation of aggressive organizing campaigns in multi-service, and hotels for the rest of 2005. As well, we will devote organizing staff to campaigns among residual units employees at our industrial shops.

IN THE COMMUNITY UNITE HERE Local 261 in Ottawa is working to raise funds and awareness for Operation Go Home. Operation Go Home is a non-profit organization that reunites families by focusing on children on the streets who for whatever reason have left their homes. The fundraising helps to give the kids shelter/food, to contact their families and send them home. Local 261 is working with CARA Operations Limited to combine its annual golf tournament with year-round efforts to raise money for this good cause.

Pressuring governments on Cintas

UNITE HERE has contacted Andy Mitchell, the federal government's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food regarding Cintas. We are seeking to meet with the Minister about the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's use of Cintas products and services. All of this is part of our effort to ensure that users of Cintas services are aware of the corporation's record.

The Union has recently learned of developments with another Cintas client. In July 2002, the Transportation, Solid Waste and Parks and Recreation Department in the Township of Loyalist in eastern Ontario terminated its agreement for the supply of coveralls and facility mats with Cintas Corporation. The department manager wrote to Cintas stating, "due to previous service problems and your firm's inability and unwillingness to upgrade our current coverall issue," he would be terminating the contract.