



Volume 3, number 5, Winter/Spring 2001

CUPW "signs" its collective agreement

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers has taken a bold new step by releasing the first in a series of sign language videos of the collective agreement.

"This is a result of rank-and-file pressure to ensure that all have equal access to the collective agreement," said Denis Lemelin, vice-president of education for CUPW "As a result of this demand, we negotiated a clause in the contract that Canada Post must pay up to \$60,000 of the cost."



"Solidarity" in sign language.
(With thanks to Geneviève Deguire
of the Canadian Hearing Society.)

An introductory video, and five three-hour videos, cover the 500-page collective agreement. A sign language specialist interprets the contract into American Sign Language (ASL) and the Langage des Signes Québécois (LSQ). There is also a guide that provides a glossary of terms.

"This as an issue of literacy "

Deaf members of CUP-W; who number almost 400 at Canada Post, will now have better access to a document that covers their working conditions.

Dave Bleakney, CUP-W; Ottawa

Learning Together is published three times a year with financial support from the National Literacy Secretariat. We welcome your articles, event notices and opinion pieces.



CUPE launches new literacy project

The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) has launched a new literacy project, Union Building through Basic Skills Training. The goal of the project is to provide support to members, locals and staff interested in literacy and basic skills.

"Our project is about building the union by building on and sharing our members' skills," said CUPE National President, Judy Darcy. "It is about providing opportunities for our members to participate more fully in the workplace, in the union, and in the community."

"Our project is about building the union"

In the first phase, the union will work to create a network of members and staff interested in workplace literacy and basic education, and a database of existing CUPE programs. The union also plans to hold a national conference, *Literacy-a union issue*, in January 2001.

A group of CUPE literacy activists from across Canada will help guide the project and promote its work. "I'm willing to do whatever is needed to further this cause," said Jim Jensen from CUPE Local 825 in Pon Moody, B.C.

The project has received funding from the National Literacy Secretariat.

For more information, contact Sylvia Sioufi, CUPE Literacy Project Coordinator, at (613) 237-1590, ext. 341, literacy@cupe.ca, or visit the CUPE web site www.cupe.ca (look for *Literacy* under *Issues*).

Sylvia Sioufi, CUPE, Onawa



Front row left to right: Ron Bishop (I. 30, AB), Dianne Martin (L. 1289, NF), Jim Jensen (I. 825, BC), Donald McLaughlin (L. 1282, NB). **Middle row left to right:** Monique Joly (National Staff), Gail Lasiuk (L. 1975, SK), Allan Bleich (L. 2348, Manitoba), Ray Smith (L. 503, ON), Sylvia Sioufi (Literacy Project Coordinator), Nancy Friday-Cockburn (L. 1582, ON), Cathy Remus (National Staff). **Back row left to right:** Catherine Jeffrey (HEU, BC), Leo Cheverie (I. 1870, PEI), Danny Cavanagh (L. 734, NS), Tom Ciancone (L. 4400, ON).

Clear language helps workers know their rights

Clear language is coming to health and safety in the Northwest Territories through a pilot project to make Workers' Compensation Board forms and manuals easier to understand. The project came about after the WCB looked at the CLC's manual on clear language and design, *Making it Clear: Clear Language for Union Communications*.

The need for easier to read documents is especially critical because of the huge demand for workers in the diamond, oil and gas resource boom in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. As well, there is a government and band councils' requirement that a certain percentage of the workforce be aboriginal.

The Northwest Territories Literacy Council was approached to facilitate the project. The Northern Territories Federation of Labour (NTFL) organized a representative focus group to critique the finished product, which covers issues such as the right to refuse and how to file Workers' Compensation reports.

The *Workers' Handbook to Workers' Compensation* will have positive ramifications for the aboriginal population, with its 19 different dialects in 32 communities. The handbook's clear language will make it easier to adapt it for translation.

Steve Petersen, Northern Territories Federation of Labour

A growing circle of literacy activists

"We believe in setting workers free, and we have found the key, through union literacy." That was the refrain of the song developed by participants of the week-long *Union-based Literacy* course recently offered at the Alberta Federation of Labour/CLC Fall School.

The course, held in Jasper in mid-November, drew participants from the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the International Association of Technicians and Stage Employees (IATSE), the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), the United Steel Workers of America (USWA), and the Non-Academic Staff Association (NASA) from Edmonton.

"I came into the course thinking of literacy as a noun, but now I think of it as a verb."

Participants spent an awesome week sharing personal experiences and insights as the power of literacy and the tremendous possibilities for unions were revealed. As one participant said: "I came into the course thinking of literacy as a noun, but now I think of it as a verb."

The course covered all the basics needed to develop a vision for literacy within an organization. Specific program models were highlighted, such as the Hospital Employees Union (HEU)'s program in British Columbia.

The *Union-based Literacy* course will be offered at the CLC Pacific Region Winter School, Harrison Hot Springs, BC, February 4 to 9, 2001.

Karen Kennedy, CUPW, Edmonton

Changing the face of training

It was an intensive week of "training the trainers." And it gave a group of Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees' (UNITE) members the tools to take union education to a higher level.

Nine participants representing all UNITE councils and boards across Canada attended the instructor training from October 29 to November 3 in Toronto. The training represented the final stage of the union's essential skills program, Skills for Tomorrow, and provided participants with the skills to act as facilitators for the union.



Participants and facilitators include: Joyce Santos, James Deane, Lenora Jones, Eva Genido, Pat Wright, Jawara Gairey, Vas Gunaratna, Alain M'Bonipa and in the front, Nirfeep Maan and Adina Ungureanu.

The first of its kind session, developed by long-time union activists and educators Pat Wright, D'Arcy Martin and Janice Gairey, was designed to change the face of UNITE's way of delivering training.

Participants discussed literacy as a learning tool-as a means to an end, and not the end itself. They learned about the broader goals of union training and education: to help empower workers to take control of their lives, to speak with their own voices, to question, criticize and evaluate, and to act as full citizens with a broad social vision.

Each participating UNITE member received a CLC instructor's certificate. They now have the skills and resources to act as facilitators for the union, and are already scheduled to co-facilitate in some regions.

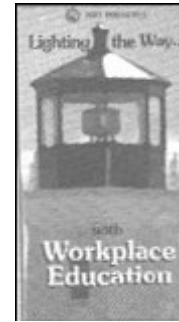
Janice Gairey, UNITE, Toronto

Tools for learning

Lighting the Way with Workplace Education. A video produced by the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour to inform unions and labour councils about the benefits of union-based literacy programs. The video explains why literacy is a union issue, how unions can start their own programs and how a good program affects a worker's life. \$10 each.

To purchase, contact:

Linda Wentzel, P.O. Box 1759, Lunenburg,
NS, BOJ 2CO; Phone/Fax: (902) 634-4501;
e-mail: linda.wentzel@ns.sympatico.ca



Coming soon!

Seeds for Change: A Curriculum Guide for Worker-Centred Unions Literacy. A "how to" guide for instructors on integrating literacy into a problem-posing curriculum. The aim is to encourage critical reflection and action in and beyond the workplace. A new resource from the CLC's *Learning in Solidarity* series. Coming in Spring 2001.

Making It Clear: A Clear Language Screen. A companion resource to *Making It Clear: Clear Language for Union Communications*. This coloured laminated 8 1/2" x 17" "screen" is a convenient and practical tool that will help you check your drafts for clear language and design. A new resource from the CLC's *Learning in Solidarity* series. Coming in early 2001.

Challenging business

"You can't have it both ways. You can't have a more empowered worker who is simply going to toe the line," said Jean-Claude Parrot, CLC Executive Vice-President at the *National Summit on Literacy and Productivity* held in Toronto October 27 and 28.

"You can't have it both ways. You can't have a more empowered worker who is simply going to toe the line, "

One of four panelists, Parrot challenged the narrow view of literacy for productivity often touted by business. He spoke about labour's vision of literacy as a way to empower workers and others so that they become more "productive" in the largest sense-as conscious, active citizens. He also said there is a need for a publicly supported system of adult learning. His views resonated with the vast majority of summit delegates, which included about 50 representatives of unions, literacy organizations, learners, government, the media and business.

Mark your calendar

Courses

Making it Clear: Clear Language for Union Communications, is a new, hands-on course that teaches practical skills for writing and designing more effective communications. It will be offered for the first time at the CLC Ontario Region Winter School at the Kempenfelt Conference Centre, Barrie, Ont., February 18 to 23, 2001. The cost, including accommodation and meals, is \$650. To register, contact Adrienne Smith, (416) 441-3710. For more information, contact Tamara Levine, (613) 526-7437.

Conferences

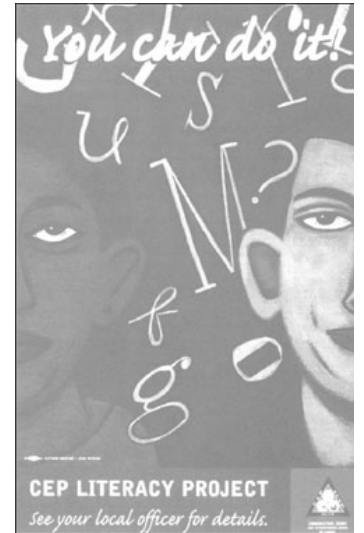
The *Second International Conference on Researching Work and Learning* is taking place at the University of Calgary from July 26 to 28, 2001. Conference themes include issues around work, technology, partnerships, gender and diversity, ideology, learning, action research and epistemology. For more information, contact Margaret-Anne Stroh, (403) 220-6229 or mastroh@ucalgary.ca.

CEP changing people's lives - literally

"Literacy is about gaining power as citizens and workers" said Brian Payne, President of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union. "That's why literacy is a priority for CEP."

"Participation is a key theme that runs throughout CEP's literacy program", said Ian Thorn, National Literacy Co-ordinator. The project's development phase included literacy awareness presentations to local, regional and national leadership across the country and a needs assessment based on the principles of action research undertaken by CEP regional staff. The results: an empowered membership with increased knowledge and the identification of new and inspired local literacy activists. At the same time, the union discovered how its members perceive their learning needs so it can determine a CEP approach to essential skills development.

Fortunately, CEP already had a base to build on in developing its national literacy program. Several BC locals were already participating in LEAP (Learning and Education Assisted by Peers), the basic skills component of the JUMP Joint Union Management Program) program. Developed within the British Columbia forest industry in 1996, CEP and the Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers Union of Canada (PPWC) were the union partners in JUMP. Many other locals, such as Local 1309 at the Irving sawmill in Sussex, New Brunswick are involved in a union-initiated joint literacy project.



Jim Dixon, CEP Co-ordinator with LEAP, says, "Of the twenty people who went through a local program the first time, two of the tutors who had not been active are now on the local executive. Six of the participants who had never taken part in meetings are regulars now. It really does build solidarity."

Employers like literacy programs too. Dixon reports that a maintenance superintendent, who had seven of his people in the class, initially complained about inconvenient scheduling. After the fourth week, however, "he turned into a strong supporter, because he just couldn't believe the change in the workers, how much more positive they were and how when something new came up they were the first to want to learn about it. He became an advocate for the program. It's been quite a powerful experience," says Dixon. "You keep hearing stories about how this program has literally changed people's lives."

"Literacy is about gaining
power as citizens and workers"

Unfortunately, after a remarkable record of success, the JUMP/LEAP program was forced to close its doors when funding from Forest Renewal BC ended in November, 2000. LEAP was an innovative and exiting project that combined the strengths of the peer tutor and college instructor models. When members of the CLC Literacy Working Group from across Canada visited BC in March, 2000, there were many rich exchanges with JUMP staff and involved members. It is a great loss to union literacy in Canada, and another wake-up call to unions about the urgent need to entrench these programs. A special thanks for their hard work and dedication to this project goes to Jim Dixon and Rob Tukum, JUMP co-ordinators.

CEP, which receives funding from the National Literacy Secretariat, is now moving forward in the next phase of its project: *Advancing Literacy for Personal, Social and Economic Well-being*. Phase II will develop literacy activists and local, provincial and regional committees and provide them with the tools to access resources and the skills to initiate and facilitate literacy programs for their members.

Co-ordinator Jan Thorn is convinced that "literacy and learning skills development must be for the purpose of enhancing the individual's whole life. Our goal is greater participation in the union and in the democratic political process, so vital in the rapidly changing world of work and global economic concentration.

Through the CEP National Literacy Program, it looks like the union will be doing just that - enhancing members' lives, and enhancing the union at the same time.

Jan Thorn, CEP, Moncton

The CLC Literacy Working Group

The CLC Literacy Working Group is composed of affiliates and federation representatives with an interest in union-based literacy and clear language, The Working Group meets twice yearly to share information and resources, learn from our collective experiences and advise the CLC on its Workplace Literacy Project Contact your Literacy Working Group representative for more information about what's going on in your organization.

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