

Report on the BC Federation of Labour Convention 2014

I would like to begin by thanking the BC Region for providing me with a subsidy and credentials to attend the Convention and to participate in such a history making event in the labour movement. Additionally, I'd like to thank my local for supporting me in attending by providing part of my LWOP to attend. We elected our first woman, Irene Lanzinger, to the position of President of the BC Federation of Labour. It was a very exciting and emotional convention for so many reasons.

Saying good-bye to Jim Sinclair was just the beginning of the emotional roller-coaster ride that this week long convention took me on. While I don't know him personally, Jim Sinclair has been an inspirational leader, always leading the fight and taking on the really important battles, not just for unions and union members, but for the greater good of all British Columbians and Canadians. He has been a passionate and earnest leader, and while he's not completely gone from the movement, I think he will be missed at the forefront of the fight we have ahead. He's left some pretty big shoes to fill, and I think we are all going to have to pull together more than we ever have before to be able to fill them and realize the vision that Jim has left us with.

I think that I saw the glimmerings of that new unity at this Convention. While there were definite divisions during the leadership race, I think that with the leadership we now have that we can pull together and fulfil a vision for a better province and a better country for working people. I think that the divisions can be mended, because in the long run, what I saw on convention floor was an accord on the important issues; such as universal childcare, proper service levels in the public sector, protection of our environment, our resources and most of all, our people. While the approach for getting there may have been different for both of the candidates that ran, I think that in the long run the delegates who supported either Irene or Amber had the same vision - a better place for working people. I believe that Irene's vision was more comprehensive and thought out, but I think that there is also room in her strategy for input from all sides, that she is willing to listen, and is willing to accept recommendations and advice, to make room for everyone.

I base these observations about unity on my previous experience at a BCFed Convention. It was several years ago, but I must be honest, the divisions I saw at that Convention put me off attending for a long time, I didn't even bother asking to be a delegate. These divisions were not only amongst the larger delegation, but even amongst the PSAC members who were in attendance as delegates. This time, I saw us pull together in common cause. The last time I was at BCFed the PSAC Component Delegates sat in their own groups, didn't mingle and seemed to be at odds with each other. This time, and I must credit our current National and Regional leadership for this, we were a cohesive group and we worked together to bring our issues forward and to support each other. The speakers we had at the mics were well-prepared, effective and carried our message clearly to the delegates.

What I appreciated the most at this convention was that we got the business done, we got through all of the priority resolutions, and we got to hear all of the speakers and even got the chance to allow for some of them to go over on their time. What I am disappointed with is the missed opportunities, the week was so packed that I couldn't attend everything that I wanted to. I heard from others that the Women's forum was really good, and I wish that I had been able to attend. I also heard that the Sleep Fatigue and Human Performance lunch and learn was a great learning opportunity, which I also missed, but I am thankful for the opportunities I did get to take advantage of to spend time with fellow PSAC members and to meet union members from all different industries and workplaces and the chance to

reconnect with people who I have met while attending the CLC Winter School and the BCFed Women's Summer Institute in the past year.

The opportunity to hear the speakers gave me so much optimism for our future, I only hope that we can continue to pull together and make it happen. Hearing Thomas Mulcair in person was so much more stirring than seeing him on TV. In person you can really hear his passion and dedication to make Canada a place I want to continue to live in. Listening to Hassan Yussuff I can see why the labour movement voted for change in June. John Horgan made me believe that the NDP can take power back from the provincial Liberals and put things right in this province.

Another highlight for me at this convention was the renewal of our commitment as a labour movement to raising the minimum wage to something closer to a living wage. It was very good to see Mayor Gregor Robertson beginning to follow through on the promise he made at the Metro Vancouver Alliance Accountability Summit around a living wage by making a commitment to the Fight for 15 Campaign.

I am again, so thankful for the opportunity that I was given to attend the 2014 BC Federation of Labour Convention.

In Solidarity,

Jennifer Horsley, Metro Vancouver Co-ordinator, BC Regional Council