

Report – BC Federation of Labour

I attended the BC Fed Convention from November 24 – 28 2014. This was a very interesting convention in many ways. From a young worker perspective it was interesting to participate in the mock convention prior to the start of the convention. This provided an understanding of the convention procedures, especially relating to the resolutions as we were not to be voting on the recommendation of the committee as we do within the PSAC but on the resolution itself.

As a part of the Young Worker Committee, I was able to participate in our caucus meeting on November 26 in the morning. We discussed our resolutions that would be coming forward that day and there was debate amongst the group as to the resolution moving forward on the age definition of the young workers. When we sat as a committee to present our report, it was clear that the floor appeared divided on the issue with key unions supporting either side.

I found it interesting that after many of the other reports, and resolutions people had been able to speak for multiple speakers, but despite the fact that young workers were lined up at the mics to speak to this issue debate was cut off after three speakers. There had been a resolution to revert back to the original rules which had not limited the speakers on each issue. The resolution to raise the age to 35 was defeated on the floor. It was also great to hear the support for the report that we had submitted which spoke to timeframes for the \$15 minimum wage campaign, with indexing to a living wage. Further there were recommendations to all affiliates regarding two tiered pensions and ensuring that we do not create a “class system” within our own unions. It is so important that we fight to protect our benefits for generations to come.

While all of the resolutions were important, one of the other notable resolutions that came forward was a resolution that had been submitted by the PSAC on the cuts to Employment Insurance. It was great to see the mics stacked with our CEIU members speaking to the cuts and how it is affecting Canadians. Everyone who spoke on this issue had great points. It was really powerful to be able to speak out and explain exactly what the changes in the legislation are because there is often a lot of misinformation in the public about Employment Insurance and the changes that had occurred. It was also exciting to see the support of the affiliates for a public campaign addressing the legislative changes and the cuts by the Harper Government.

Aside from resolutions several videos were shown as created by various unions. I thought the video that was created and shared by the Longshoreman Union was particularly powerful. It was on women in the work place and the changes they have seen in their union. It was about creating that space to ensure that all are welcome and treated as equal. Especially in careers that have been male dominated for so long it was very powerful to see these men and women speak out publicly about how their lives have changed and how they belong there just the same as anyone else.

Finally, it was amazing to be a part of the group that saw Irene Lanzinger elected as the first Public Sector and Female President of the BC Federation of Labour. The vote was won by just 57 votes. This just further solidified that each vote matters. Also knowing that our union utilized their delegate’s seats to ensure that an amazing woman was elected made me really proud. It was an amazing energy on the floor. I had a bit of a different perspective on the day because I

was a part of the balloting committee. I was running a poll station versus sitting with the group in PSAC. You could feel the hope coming from all the delegates. It was energizing and empowering to know that I played a part, however small, in what happened.

Overall, the experience was amazing. I would recommend anyone who had the chance to take part to do so. I feel that it is so important to see where we fit within the labour movement outside of just our own internal politics within the PSAC.