

National Rail Conference – September 22-24

In working with local unions in Rail the CAW National office will be organizing a National Rail Conference for September 22-24, 2006 at the CAW's Family Education Centre in Port Elgin, Ontario.

A committee has been set up with the major rail locals and staff to start planning for this important conference.

The call letter to the locals from CAW president Buzz Hargrove's office will be sent in the next few weeks. Full participation from the locals is encouraged. The conference will include workshops, plenary sessions and guest speakers on issues that are facing our rail membership and leadership.

Rail Leaders Attend CAW Skilled Trades Union Education Program

Nine CAW leaders from the rail sector attended the last session of the Skilled Trades Union Education Program in Port Elgin from February 27 to March 3.

The STUEP was negotiated with the auto companies in 1999 to provide a union education program for our trades members. It is a week-long course that covers CAW history, bargaining gains, union policies and structures, trades issues, politics, and future challenges. In the past five years, over 1800 of our members from the Big 3 have attended the 32 sessions.

The rail reps were able to get a thorough look at our course to help them consider bargaining something similar for their own members. They also presented an information session to the rest of the participants about the history, issues and structures of the CAW in rail. This session was well received, and gave people a better understanding of the diversity of the CAW.

Both groups learned a lot from each other, and many friendships were made. Some comments from the rail representatives: "The rail guys thoroughly enjoyed the week... Many thanks to coordinators and discussion leaders for making all the rail participants feel at ease and fully comfortable in sharing the rail perspective in an auto forum. Well done."

The rail participants were Bryon DeBaets, Les Lilley and Richard Brosseau (Local 100), Tom Murphy, Nelson Gagne and Ron McLaren (Local 101), Robert Fitzgerald and Val Hyden (Local 4000) and Clyde Duncan (Local 4001),

Forced Overtime

As a result of a review by HRDC on the amount of overtime being worked in the Rail sector, the federal government has notified CN/CP Rail that they have exceeded allowable limits and in some locations the CAW has lodged grievances on this matter and in others the union has been able to work out an acceptable arrangement to coincide with the recommendations to CN/CP from HRDC.

Both companies must start hiring which is the key solution to the problem of excessive overtime.

On March 7th, in a conference call with Bryon DeBaets, president, CAW Local 100 and Robert Fitzgerald, president, National Council 4000, with senior levels of CN, the CAW expressed frustration and anger over its members being disciplined and forced into this situation.

The explanation from the corporation was that they were not interested in forcing people but had to adhere to the rules outlined by HRDC. The CAW is exploring a number of different ways to solve this critical problem but the union's key demand is for CN and CP to start hiring in the workplaces. The CAW is awaiting a response back from senior levels of management and labour relations.

Update on CN Takeover of BC Rail

In the later part of 2002, CAW Local 102 and CAW Local 110 on BC Rail began hearing rumours of the BC Government's intent to sell BC Rail.

CAW Local 102, CAW Local 110 and the other five unions on BC Rail along with the BC Federation of Labour began a campaign in January of 2003 to stop any sale of BC Rail.

The fight culminated in an Agreement between the Council of Unions on BC Rail and Canadian National Railway in the fall of 2004 giving those leaving the employ of the Railway, a healthy Severance package and those staying with the CN, wage protections of the BC Rail wages and compensation for bargaining gains lost as a result of the combining of the BC Rail and CN Collective Agreements.

The Council of Trade Unions on BC Rail challenged particular aspects of the final agreement. That challenge was dismissed by the CIRB and a final ruling by the Board was issued in October of 2005. The Board's order concluded that there had been a sale of business under Section 44 of the Canada Labour Code and that Canadian National Railway was the successor Employer.

Locomotive Safety Rules

These changes have come about in part through the efforts of CAW Local 100 submitting proposals to the RAC and the Transport Minister.

The word "qualified" has been removed and "certified" has been inserted in its place, which strengthens trade rights and work jurisdiction on locomotive inspections.

In addition the safety inspection interval has been shortened. While the union didn't get the 15 days applied for, the RAC was requesting 92 days.

Red Sealed Trades

On March 23, 2006, the CAW made a presentation to the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship, Industrial Relations Committee.

In attendance were most of the Directors of Apprenticeship from the provinces: Colin Heslop, Director for CAW Skilled Trades, Tom Murphy, president of Local 101 and member of the local 101 skilled trades committee, Paul Soetemans, manager of Training for Canadian Pacific Railway and Brian McDonagh, CAW National Representative for Rail.

The presentation outlined the obstacles presently being encountered by our CAW Modernization of the Trades Committees as they try to institute consistent Red Sealed Trades on the Federal Railways across the country.

The discussions were both frank and open, with an emphasis on finding solutions.

The CAW will make a similar presentation at the Canadian Apprentice Forum in June this year.

Bargaining at Great Canadian Railway Tours/ Rocky Mountaineer Vacations

CAW Council 4000/Local 4001 (GCRT Sector) and the Great Canadian Rail Tour Company Ltd. recently reached a three-year tentative agreement, which the membership ratified by 89.4 per cent on April 6.

The monetary aspects of the agreement are as follows:

- three year agreement, January 1, 2006 through December 31, 2008;
- wage increase January 1, 2006, January 1, 2007 - 3%, January 1, 2008 - 3%;

- bonus increase January 1, 2006 - 5% (\$2.63), January 1, 2007 - 5% (\$2.76), January 1, 2008 - 5% (\$2.90);

- January 1, 2006 \$300 for employees, 1 through 5 years. \$500 for employees, 6 years and up;

- overtime averaging: overtime will be averaged over an eight (8) week period for all employees.

- statutory holidays: Acknowledged during periods of active employment in season and with the application of two dollars (\$2.00) per hour for off season work in lieu of stats."

The union's bargaining committee consists of Local 4001 Rocky Mountaineer Chairperson Matthew Fischer, Council 4000 Regional Representative Dave Mercer-Hazlitt, and National Representative Brian McDonagh.

Savage Alberta Railway Negotiations

Bargaining got underway in Grande Prairie, Alberta on December 7, 2005 between the CAW and Savage Alberta Railway (SAR) on a second collective agreement for Council 4000/Local 4001 members employed as Conductors and Locomotive Engineers at SAR, formerly Alberta RailNet (ARN).

Savage Alberta Railway is a shortline railway that operates in Alberta and is based in Grande Prairie. The CAW successfully certified the running trade workers at ARN back in 2002, and unanimously ratified a first collective agreement on May 30, 2003 that included, among other items, an 8% wage increase over two and a half years, an additional statutory holiday and five days paid sick leave (up to ten banked).

This time out, in addition to wage and benefit improvements, the Union and its membership is looking to establish training provisions and allowances; improved provisions and payments on changes to assignments; improved rest and dead heading rules, Material Change provisions and improved language that protects bargaining unit work from contracting out to CANAC, a former subsidiary of CN and now owned by Savage companies.

The union's bargaining committee is comprised of Local 4001 SAR Chairpersons Pat McLaughlin and Dave Judge, along with Council 4000 Regional Representative Barry Kennedy and CAW National Representative Doug Olshewski, who will join the committee for monetary and benefit negotiations.

Watch for bargaining updates on CAW bargaining at Savage Alberta Railway and Rocky Mountaineer Vacations by logging on to:

www.cawcouncil4000.com/negotiations.html