

CRWS NEWS

Spring 2005, Issue 26

The Door in the Floor

BY ROBIN SMITH

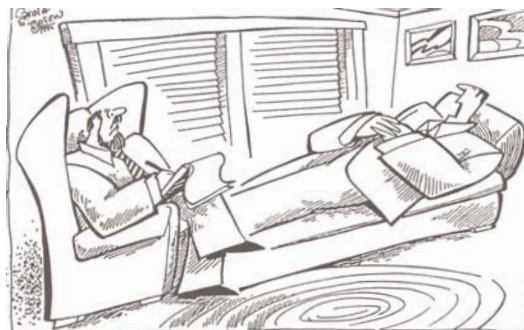
AS I SIT DOWN at my desk to write, I glance at the date on my calendar and note that it is April 29. Although there is no notation on this date, it is nestled between two days that have come to be important to those of us at the CRWS. April 28 - Workers Memorial Day was first established in Canada by the Canadian Labour Congress in 1984 as a solemn recognition of workers who have been killed or injured on the job, and May 1 - a day where workers the world over celebrate their working lives.

This story takes place in a small community in eastern Ontario. A member of my family is responsible for the accounts in a small but thriving dental practice. The offices are lovely, housed in a beautiful century home on the main street. The staff work well together and there is an atmosphere of respect and friendship among them. The one exception is the presiding dentist and business owner - their boss - who has a reputation as a tyrant and a workplace bully.

Over the past several years, as the practice grew, storage space grew sparse and the dentist decided to move some of the patient records to a storage area in the cellar. To access these records, staff members had to first open a heavy trap door disguised as part of the plank floor, then descend in darkness down the narrow, rail-less stairway that led to the basement, often while their arms were laden with heavy files.

At a recent meeting, one staff

member gingerly asked the dentist to have a handrail installed, stating that she was afraid of falling while trying to negotiate the steps. The boss refused outright and a heated discussion ensued. The staff member, in an uncharacteristically assertive voice, stated that she did not want to get hurt and would not use the stairs until this serious health and safety issue was addressed. The dentist fumed back,



"I keep having this nightmare that I'm one of my own employees."

telling her that accessing the patient records was an integral part of her job and that using the stairs was, therefore, a 'condition of her employment' and that she must do as she is instructed.

In order to reinforce his position of authority, the dentist then stalked to his office and immediately called the Labour Board, describing the problem he was facing with his insubordinate staff member and seeking advice on how he could discipline her. This would turn out to be his second bad decision that day. To the Labour Board staffer

fielding this call, something in the dentist's story must have triggered an alarm, for in relatively short order, two health and safety inspectors were dispatched to this workplace.

The inspectors were appalled at what outwardly appeared to be a well-maintained workplace, but beneath the door in the floor a number of dangers lurked. Certainly the staircase was narrow and in want of a railing, but this turned out to be the least of their concerns. Once down in the cellar, they found murky water pooling on the stone floor and moulding clinging to the walls and other surfaces. Preliminary air quality tests determined that damp, musty air was being pumped through the basement furnace and air conditioning units and then circulated by the ventilation system through the entire building.

As the list of violations grew, one inspector openly chastised the arrogant boss. "You," she said, pointing directly to him, "are responsible for the health and safety of your employees! What are you thinking?" The dentist, grumpier than ever, followed behind the inspectors as the staff hid their grins behind their hands. For want of a handrail, or the simple recog-

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CURA-Bridging the Solitudes Project Update: The First Cohort of Students Have a Work Placement



BY ANN EYERMAN

The CURA (Community University Research Alliance) - Bridging the Solitudes projects has now moved beyond its end date of December 2004. This grant, funded by Social Science & Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), provided researchers with an opportunity to examine the barriers that "marginalized" students face contemplating a post secondary education; and, how those barriers look upon entering the work force.

There were over 30 student participants at York University and Seneca College during the life of the grant. Their thoughtful contributions to the Bridging project aided the aca-

demics in their research pursuits.

As part of the dissemination of that research, on October 22-23, 2004 the CURA - Bridging the Solitudes project held a two-day Colloquium at York University named School to Work Transitions of Marginalised Youth at College and University: A Bridge Too Far?

This forum provided the researchers an opportunity to discuss their findings with other experts in the field. Keynote Speaker, Horace Henriques of the University of Toronto Transitional Year Program, set the mood for the Colloquium with his talk on teaching and its political realities. On Saturday, over 30 representatives from union and community partners of Bridging the Solitudes, academic institutions, other access programs, and graduate research heard papers from Bridging researchers about the preliminary findings of the grant.

In the morning sessions, Robert Drummond (York University), Henry Decock (Seneca College), Jane Haddad (Seneca College), Carl James

(York University), Leanne Taylor and Tod Duncan (York University) addressed issues regarding barriers to access to post-secondary education both at the college and university level.

In the afternoon, the focus shifted to access to community and work. Carlos Neves (St. Christopher's House) reported on his research at the community level; Jan Kainer (York University) and Jane Haddad (Seneca College) offered papers on the work placement experience of the Bridging students; and Carla Lipsig-Mumme (Monash University) discussed the limits and possibilities of academic-trade union-community partnerships in shifting times.

These presentations were followed by a lively general discussion of some of the issues raised. It is hoped that these papers will eventually be compiled into a book on the CURA-Bridging the Solitudes Research.

Ann Eyerman completed her term at CRWS in March. We wish her well and will miss her presence at the Centre.

Door ...continued from page 1

dition that the employees in a given workplace have the right to raise health and safety concerns and then have them addressed, this employer may have to relocate his practice, for the costs involved in bringing this older building up to current health and safety standards may ultimately prove to be prohibitive.

Many people make the assumption that unsafe workplaces are limited to outside workers, factories

and manufacturing plants, warehouses, food processing plants and the like. Others believe that office workers are largely exempt from health and safety concerns and unsafe work conditions. An outward appearance of order, as is imperative in any medical office, can hide an wide array of hazards. As most of these businesses are small independent operations, most are not unionized and employees must rely on the Labour Board and Employment Standards legislation when they encounter an issue in the workplace.

As my sister was telling me her story, she said something that warmed me throughout. Over the years we have had many long discussions and some animated debates over my commitment to union work. I regularly argue that labour history is really the

history of working people and that gains made throughout Canada's colourful labour heritage affect us all. Thinking about her own workplace dilemma, it became clear. "I never really gave it much thought," she said, "that this is the kind of thing you've been talking about."

On the eve of May Day, as we recognize workers who have lost their jobs, jeopardized their health and even sacrificed their lives, it struck a chord. Here was a small group of non-unionized employees fighting against intimidation and unsafe working conditions - reaping the benefits of a century of labour struggle - and living to tell the tale.

Norene Pupo's Director's Corner will return in the next issue. She is currently on sabbatical leave.

Congratulations Jane

Best wishes to CRWS Council Member Jane Stinson, who is celebrating her 25th Anniversary with CUPE this month. It's been great having you with us!

New Faces at CRWS in 2005

WE AT THE CRWS want to thank our graduate assistants and research staff for another successful year!

Mark Kerpel

M.A. Candidate, Social and Political Thought

Mark comes to the centre from Kelowna, BC, where he completed his undergraduate degree in International Relations. His current research interests are in the fields of political economy and social movements. Mark assisted Professor Mark Thomas in his research this year.

Holly Nagy

M.A. Candidate, Sociology

Holly comes to the centre as a graduate from Millersville University in Pennsylvania. Her primary research interests include health care policy, human rights, and inequality. She worked primarily with Ann Eyerman and has completed research for the Bridging the Solitudes project at CRWS.

Mandy Nourse

M.A. Candidate, Sociology

Mandy is new to centre, coming as a graduate from the Human Justice program at the University of Regina. Her research interests include class inequality, the working poor, social stratification and social policy. Mandy worked on the CRWS newsletter and provided research assistance to Norene Pupo.

Isabel Sousa

M.A. Candidate, Sociology

Isabel is a graduate from Kings' University College, The University of Western Ontario, and is also a new graduate assistant at the centre. Her primary research interests are the new economy, work and health care restructuring. In addition to working on the CRWS newsletter, Isabel assisted Norene Pupo with her current research.

Stavros Strathopoulos

Undergraduate, Labour Studies

A work placement student from Labour Studies, Stavros worked at the Working Student Centre. He assisted with the Film Series, promotions, and educational workshops. He also promoted the Working Student Centre and workers' rights to high school and community college students in the Greater Toronto Area.

Mark Thomas

Assistant Professor of Sociology

After working as a Ph.D student at CRWS a few years ago, we were pleased to have Professor Thomas back to the centre. His current research projects examine the relationships between citizenship and labour rights in the context of globalization.

Daphne Paszterko

M.A. Candidate, Political Science

Daphne continued as co-coordinator of the Working Student Centre, supported the INE and is organizing the How Unions Matter Conference scheduled for the Fall of 2005.

Baktage Nekzai

High School Student

Baktage was a participant in the Advanced Credit Experience (ACE) Program, a partnership between York University and the Westview Family of Schools. Working at CRWS has taught him about pay equity, employment standards and labour studies.

Tod Duncan

Ph.D, Social and Political Thought

Tod has conducted the Bridging Student Common Hour Meetings for the life of the project. He is currently assisting with the preparation of the Final Productivity Report.

Amarina Norris

Undergraduate, Political Science

This is Amarina's third year at the Working Students Centre. She assisted with the Film Series, educational workshops and the Centre's Annual Report.

Sean Cain

M.A., Political Science

A former Graduate Assistant, Sean coordinated the INE in Reuben's absence, assisted with the Union Equity Conference and edited the CRWS News.

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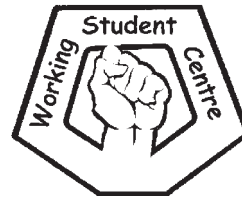
CRWS News, Editors

We welcome reader feedback.

Send comments to Daphne Paszterko (paszter@yorku.ca)

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Working Student Centre Update



Forging Links and Building Struggles: My Visit to the Working Students Centre

BY CHRIS ARSENAULT

IN THE MIDST of a drive to organize young, low-wage, health food store workers in Halifax, I was invited to network with comrades at the Working Student Centre (WSC). At first, I was leery to leave town during a campaign, but now that the drive has progressed, it seems obvious that organizing, especially in the anti-union climate of neoliberalism, is about more than signing

had never been exposed to union activism before, so we'd start our presentations by asking how working people first won minimum wage laws, the 40 hour week, women's suffrage and other rights we now take for granted. Many had no real idea.

Although there have been substantial changes in how history has been taught over the last 30 years, students all too often (and especially in business management) learn only the stories of politicians, generals and other members of the elite. Working class history isn't standard material in

tions at York about workers' self-management in Chiapas, Mexico. On New Year's Day 1994, The Zapatistas, a peasant army of 3,000 or so

poorly armed rebels, took control of six towns in southern Mexico, protesting a situation that the Mexican government calls "acute marginalization." A child born in Chiapas has a 1 in 5 chance of dying before the age of five. The Zapatista's cause resonated with unionized workers in Canada. They called Free Trade a "death sentence."

Today, eleven years after the initial insurgency, the Zapatistas are trying to build a democratic economy, outside the domination of the state or market. They have started a collective boot factory, producing high quality boots without the coercion and hierarchy that define sweatshop apparel production. I presented information about Chiapas and the boot factory to students and workers at a brownbag lunchtime meeting and to a 3rd year labour studies class. Both groups responded positively.

I'm now back in Halifax organizing workers at a print shop and I think the visit to the WSC was one more positive step in an ongoing process. The labour movement needs to continue informing people about their rights and making links with international struggles. Beyond that, networking, sharing experiences, lessons, knowledge and simply hanging out with activists from other parts of the country is a crucial step in movement building.

Thanks to YUSA and all the other groups who made the visit possible,

In Solidarity,

Chris Arsenault
Maritime Organizer,
Canadian Confederation of Unions

For information about the Solidarity Boots project, log onto www.stacmexico.com/blackstarbootcooperative



There is an alternative to corporate exploitation: Workers outside the democratically-controlled Black Star Boot Cooperative in Chiapas, Mexico.

cards, gathering staff lists and meeting with employees. If unions are going to make a significant break into the low-wage service sector (the fastest growing area of the Canadian economy), we need a shift in consciousness, especially among youth.

Activists at the Working Student Centre are organizing to inspire this cultural shift. During my visit, other WSC'ers and I spoke to five different classes of business students at Seneca College. Many of the students

community college or high school, but it is a necessary perspective. Without it, many will continue to think the rights we now possess were kind gifts handed to us from the industrialists and politicians.

Along with historical perspective, we hosted 'Know Your Rights' question and answer workshops to the five Seneca classes. Most of the students worked and seemed to find the hands on information useful.

In addition to our work at Seneca, we also hosted two presenta-

Working Student Centre Draws Inspiration from Controversial Hero

BY AMY NORRIS

AFTER STARING AT a framed picture of George W. Bush for thirty minutes at the United States border, I was more than excited to attend one of the dates of Michael Moore's "Slacker Uprising Tour."

Imagine: It's Thursday, September 30th, 2004. Dr. Norene Pupo and I are stuck at the American border for a "random check" with only two hours to spare until Michael Moore, my personal hero, takes the stage at Michigan State University.

When we finally arrived at MSU, I was immediately taken aback by the atmosphere in this unfamiliar academic environment. The campus was bustling and as we approached the Auditorium, my heart sank at the sight of the line-up to get into the free lecture.

We had left that morning at 5:00 a.m. and fatigue was kicking in. I started to panic. Did we come all this way only to be turned away at the door? I decided to distract myself by taking pictures of the Anti-Abortion/Anti-Equal Marriage sign-carrying Bush supporters. They all seemed so media friendly and were

smiling and posing for the students and press who were waiting to see Moore in action.

We made it in and found great seats. I was surprised to learn that this lecture at MSU had only been organized in the five days prior to the event and that Michael Moore had added this



Michael Moore at the Oscars

date to the tour at the very last minute. The place was packed with eager students.

As expected, Michael Moore was witty, thought provoking and just plain brilliant. He began with a critical look at the Bush regime over the past four years. It was all typical Moore-speak, yet the experience of seeing him in a live setting in a room full of left-leaning students was definitely

unique. The audience was laughing, cheering, clapping, standing up and shouting after almost every sentence he completed.

One of the highlights of the event was a series of commercials that he had so generously created to promote Bush and the Republicans in the then upcoming election. Images of Bush vacationing, playing golf and generally making an ass out of himself flashed across the screen as Moore's voice-over provided ridiculous campaign slogans.

As final encouragement for the non/first-time voters in the crowd to register, Michael Moore threw pairs of fresh underwear and ramen noodles (staples of the student lifestyle) to those who promised that they would vote this year. Apparently the Republican Party did not appreciate the gesture, and ended up filing a criminal complaint the following week with prosecutors in the areas of Michigan he visited (including the event we had attended) with the intention of having Moore arrested for "bribing" students to vote.

Moore's goal of the Slacker Uprising Tour 2004 was to encourage as many individuals to vote as he possibly could. He stressed that no matter who you vote for, all it really comes down to is that you vote. I believe his mission was successful regardless of Bush winning the election; a record-breaking number of young individuals went to the polls this year to express their political support.

This experience was the highlight of this semester for me. I feel very privileged to have had the opportunity to see Michael Moore in action, as he is truly an inspiration in mobilizing and informing the youth of the world today.

Films and Workshops

The 2004/2005 Working Student Centre film series was launched with a free screening of the documentary *The Corporation*, which was introduced by our own very special guest speaker Reuben Roth. An unprecedented turnout encouraged us to continue raising awareness about labour and social justice issues through film. Other films included Morgan Spurlock's Academy Award nominated *Super Size Me*.

We offered a workshop for York students on employment standards and occupational health and safety. In coordination with other student organizations both on and off-campus, next year we hope to organize workshops on the following: Pay Equity and Negotiating Salary and Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace.

JL

Just Labour: A Canadian Journal of Work and Society (Volume Five) is now available free at www.justlabour.yorku.ca

John Calvert: Public-Private Partnerships
Robert Hatfield: Duty to Accomodate
Jeremy Reiss: Social Unionism in New York City
Luis Aguiar: Cleaners and Pop Culture Representation
Jamie Swift: Stories from CEP's First Ten Years

An Afternoon with Ursula Huws

BY CRWS STAFF

THE EARLY afternoon sun streamed through glass in the Sociology Staff room as the warm air charged with the energy of anticipation. Dozens of students came to listen to visiting speaker, Ursula Huws, renowned author, researcher and honorary professor of International Labour Studies at the Working Lives Research Institute at London Metropolitan University in England.

Her most recent book, *The Making of the Cybertariat*, analyzes the transformation of work and technology in contemporary capitalism, and has been described by York U. professor Leo Panitch as "not only a truly educational experience but also a thoroughly enjoyable one." The topic at this CRWS-sponsored presentation was *The Destruction of Occupational Identities in the "Knowledge Based*

Economy." Her focus was how our traditional identification with occupational groups has broken down with the restructuring of work and transformations in the global economy. Historically, the fact that workers tend to identify within their occupation has presented its own set of problems. While these categories have been used to assign people into different classes, they have also been a barrier to the development of a unifying working-class consciousness.

The erosion of these identities is a function of changes in the global economy and technological developments (such as telework, e-work and the proliferation of information-based industry). Business owners who can save in labour costs by outsourcing work are no longer seeking traditional occupational groups.

Rather, they are looking to mix and match specific skills and competencies. Huws discussed the fact that although traditional "hard skills" are attractive to employers (such as those learned in educational institutions), alternative "soft skills," or the willingness of workers to accept lower wages and poorer working conditions in order to

find work in an increasingly flexible labour market, are even more important considering the expanding global reserve army of unemployed knowledge workers.

Huws mentioned that in the virtual marketplace, the disembodied identities of worker and customer encounter each other in an adversarial relationship mediated by technology. While customer frustration increases because some of the work of the service encounter is offloaded onto them, workers are required to control the service interaction through standardized scripts. This is especially the case in the public sector, where the delivery of programs has moved towards telephone and e-based services. If this divide can be bridged, there is great potential for bringing together both workers and citizens to create more democratic and accountable program delivery systems.

Her presentation was followed by a lively question and answer session. Huws combined the grounded knowledge and experience of a seasoned activist with theoretical sophistication and originality. The sense of humour that permeates Huws' written work is even more marked and engaging in person.

CRWS is planning to bring more engaging speakers such as Ursula to York University in the near future.



Call for proposals for participation in CRWS Conference

How Unions Matter in the New Economy

Themes include:

Getting Organized

with interactive case-study panels on Organizing Wal-Mart and Organizing Around Employment Standards

Making Connections

with interactive case-study panels on Young Workers and Equity Groups Connecting with Unions

Toronto, Ontario
October 28 and 29, 2005

We welcome your feedback and suggestions.
Contact Daphne Paszterko at paszter@yorku.ca for more information or to submit a proposal.

Submission deadline: June 30, 2005.

Flight of the Beaver, Return of the Bear: Roots, Kodiak and Canadian Apparel

BY DAPHNE PASZTERKO

IN THE WORLD of fashion and pop culture, Canadian companies have been dwarfed by their American counterparts. Sleeping next to the red, white and blue elephant has meant the incorporation of American pop culture into our own, sometimes at the expense of made-in-Canada alternatives.

Big-box retailers have invaded our communities and buying American brands has been integrated into the all-too-unexamined life of the Canadian consumer. Of course if space permitted, we could engage in a much-needed critical evaluation of the whole notion that culture can be reduced to consumption and identification with brands in the first place (a diatribe for another day). Nonetheless, there are a few iconic Canadian companies whose products (at least according to corporate marketing departments) have worked their way into the Canadian psyche, and supposedly represent what it means to be an inhabitant of the Great White North.

Enter Roots and Kodiak, iconic Canadian clothing brands that we form attachments to in our formative years. And who could help but get a warm feeling when reminiscing about their young, hanging-about days, their oldest friends, and the style emblematic of their generation? Whether you were a 70's pot-head or rocker with the Grebs, the lumber-jacket and the long mane/mullet, or the 80's feather-haired preppy with the sweats, the negative heeled shoe, the leather jacket; whether you identify with SCTV hosers, Bob and Doug MacKenzie, or the Canadian Olympic team, either the growl of the Kodiak bear and/or the scurry of Roots beaver likely resonates deeply in the vessel that is your Canadian soul.

However, this nostalgic interlude obscures fundamental questions surrounding where and under what working conditions these products are manufactured. From the corporate media, we hear regularly about sweatshops in the Global South, especially in the garment industry. When domestic jobs are relocated offshore, we not only deal with the issue of lost jobs at home, but exploitative labour practices within these industries abroad.

Ironically, these thoughts were sparked when I read the news that Kodiak is moving some of its offshore footwear production back to Canada. This reverse shift is the result of their merger with Canadian producer Terra Shoes, whose high-tech shoe factories in Harbour Grace, NL, and Markham, ON, employ 300 workers at wages between \$15 to 18 an hour. At first glance, this is an interesting development for Canadian workers, as surely it will bring some manufacturing jobs back to Canada.

What an altruistic and patriotic bear, I thought. But alas, I was mistaken. For as I read more closely it became clear that Kodiak doesn't intend to create any new jobs since the existing plants and workforce can absorb the increased production. The

ultimate goal is to pick up 'cost efficiencies' (surprise, surprise) and reduce shipping costs which have soared because of rising fuel prices. I couldn't help but think of Roots, who just last year closed down their Toronto apparel factory and redistributed the work to sub-contractors, both on and off-shore, claiming that it simply could no longer compete.

Roots explained: "It's a shame that free trade, globalization and the saturation of the Canadian market by

There has been much scrutiny of large American multi-nationals like Wal-mart and Nike. I'm not sure that we have demanded as much of Canadian companies.

major US and European companies manufacturing overseas have made this situation worse. The result: the technical capacity simply no longer exists in Canada to make certain categories of merchandise."

These companies are happy to profit off the positive image of having their products made in Canada, but are not really interested in providing opportunities for Canadians, or being accountable to the Canadian public. Lately there has been much scrutiny of large American multi-nationals like Wal-mart and Nike. I'm not sure that we have demanded as much of Canadian companies.

While it is perhaps unrealistic to expect that products be made in Canada, it should be reasonable to expect disclosure of factory locations, so that working conditions can be monitored and codes of conduct enforced. Canadians have the right to make informed and ethical choices. While Nike recently made full disclosure of all factory locations under large-scale public pressure, ROOTS refuses such disclosure, citing the confidential nature of this proprietary information. One hopes that a recent proposal to introduce factory disclosure regulations for all apparel sold in Canada will be adopted.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: A GUIDE TO ONTARIO'S WORKPLACE

The updated, 44-page edition of *Know Your Rights* is now available. The CRWS has distributed over 90,000 copies of *Know Your Rights* to labour and community organizations, high schools, HRDC employment centres, colleges and university campuses.

Individual copies of *Know Your Rights* can be downloaded from our website: www.yorku.ca/crws.

To order your printed and bound copy of *Know Your Rights* in single or bulk, contact the CRWS at 416-736-5612 or crws@yorku.ca. A limited number of bound copies are available at a cost of \$1 each.

CRWS Conference Seeks Answers on Creating Greater Union Equity

BY SEAN CAIN

HOW ARE equity-seeking groups organizing to ensure greater representation in bargaining and leadership roles within their unions? This is one of many questions addressed by more than 125 participants attending a conference on union equity organized by CRWS. Advancing the Union Equity Agenda: Inside Unions at the Bargaining Table took place at Toronto on March 18 and 19. Delegates represented more than a dozen different unions, universities, and government agencies. Over 75% were women, and a large number of participants represented equity groups within their respective organizations.

The conference emerged from a research project managed by York University professor Linda Briskin and is part of a larger, three-year program funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) named Restructuring Work and Labour in the New Economy, which looks at how the "new economy" is effecting the lives and working conditions of Canadians.

The aim of the conference was to address the issue of union equity in regards to bargaining, leadership, representation, and organizing for equity-seeking groups such as women, people of colour, Aboriginals, lesbians, gays, bisexual, and transgendered peoples (LGBT), and people with special needs. Many delegates saw the conference as a starting point for creating short and long-term strategies around equity issues.

More than a dozen guest speakers from across Canada were invited to present at workshops that

dealt with a variety of issues, including equity wage bargaining, how to mobilize your union local to support equity bargaining initiatives, equity bargaining in the new economy, and the effects of seniority on equity and collective bargaining. Other workshops featured discussions on Aboriginal organizing, implementing equity policies and practices at the local level, overcoming union resistance to representing marginalized members, and the backlash to union equity initiatives.

Former CLC Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Riche discussed the importance of linking struggles



Carleton University Professor Rosemary Warskett addresses the delegates with (from left) former CUPE President Judy Darcy, PSAC negotiator Carol Wall and York University Professor Linda Briskin

between equity-seeking groups. She stated that too many of them look internally without considering other struggles taking place inside the union and proposed the creation of a "caucus of caucuses" so that all equity groups could share information and best practices, set goals, and strategize for future gains.

Many delegates believed there were important differences in struggles between different equity-seeking groups. Some, like women's groups, are simply more experienced from their struggles inside the union movement reaching back to the late 1960s. Others, such as Disability Caucuses or

LGBT groups, have joined equity battles in unions relatively recently and have greater challenges in overcoming barriers.

Other speakers raised the significance of equity-seeking groups educating rank and file members about equity bargaining and representation in their union. Too many of them are simply not aware of the week to week obstacles faced by equity-seeking members. Engaging the general membership is one step towards involving them in the battle for greater equality.

Delegates agreed that the conference acted as a safe forum for real debate on equity issues. Many were impressed with the fact that CRWS could bring together those from the academia and the trade union movement to create such an event, one that organizers hope will have an positive influence on equity struggles for years to come.

Looking back, the advances that have been made are more than impressive. Judy Darcy spoke about her experiences at the very first CLC Conference she attended in 1974, where go-go dancers were hired to entertain the predominately white male delegation in the hospitality suites. "There was no talk of racism and disabilities. Certainly we

weren't talking about gay and lesbian rights... We didn't talk about harassment," said Darcy. "It wasn't even in our vocabulary."

At the same time, Darcy maintains that important gains made over the decades by equity-seeking groups are very fragile and need to be defended by a diverse group of activists inside the trade union movement, and it is the struggles from these gains which we can learn from in advancing the union equity agenda in the future.

Audio clips from the Conference will soon be available for download at www.yorku.ca/crws/ine.