

In Brief...

• The Alward government announced a total of \$6.4 million to be allocated to **pay equity** this year and promised additional adjustments over the next five years. These adjustments will be allocated to public service workers and to workers in groups offering government-mandated services. The Pay Equity Act, 2009 and its corresponding regulations prescribe that public sector adjustments should begin on April 1, 2012 with possible instalments over 4 years. The government also set up voluntary pay equity programs, targeting four groups from the private sector, namely the staff of child care centres, home support agencies, transition houses and group homes. However, group home workers will only start receiving their pay equity payments in 2013-2014.

• Glen Carr says the blame lies with Acadian Coach Lines, and not the workers, for the **five month absence of intercity bus service** in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. The president and business agent for Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local No. 1229 says his workers deserve a fair contract and to be treated with the same respect as bus drivers in other provinces. "We want to know the company's intentions when we resume talks on Sunday. Are they here to negotiate in good faith with their workers or are they using us as pawns to get money from the provincial government to make their operations even more profitable?" questions Carr. The union representing locked-out New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island bus drivers, mechanics and sales agents resumed talks with their employer, Acadian Coach Lines, on Sunday, April 29th in Moncton. Workers voted in favour of a tentative deal on May 6th.

• An estimated 250,000 people marched through Montreal on April 22 in **Quebec's largest ever Earth Day march**. They marched against tar sands and shale gas development, the expansion of the Quebec government's Plan Nord mines and other causes. Many wore the red felt square symbolizing support to the province's students fighting the Liberal government's 75% increase in post-secondary education fees over the next 5 years. The Earth Day march was the largest mobilization to date in a mounting wave of citizen protest throughout the province. In recent days they have battled court injunctions and escalating police repression. Speaking to a large crowd gathered at the foot of Mount Royal, student leader Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois responded to statements made by Premier Jean Charest and Education Minister Line Beauchamp about the students: "In recent days they have been calling Quebec students hoodlums, vandals, violent people. That's false! What is more violent than selling the lands of indigenous peoples to some multinationals? What is more violent than polluting the air that our children are going to breathe? We are not violent, it is they who are violent!"



Firefighters and residents of Fredericton gathered together on April 28th to remember workers killed on the job at the Fallen Firefighters' Monument on the south bank of the Saint John River. David Frank, a labour historian at the University New Brunswick, spoke at the event. "This day is here to remind us that death, disability, and disease are part of the story of the Canadian workplace," said Frank. "The numbers are astonishing. Every day, year in and year out, almost three Canadian lives are claimed by workplace injuries." Photo by Ethan Haslett.

Membership Options

☐ \$3/month

☐ \$10/month

☐ \$25/month

☐ \$10/year

☐ \$25/year

☐ \$50/year

☐ Other _____

☐ I would like to be a member, but I cannot be a sustainer at this time.

Payment Options

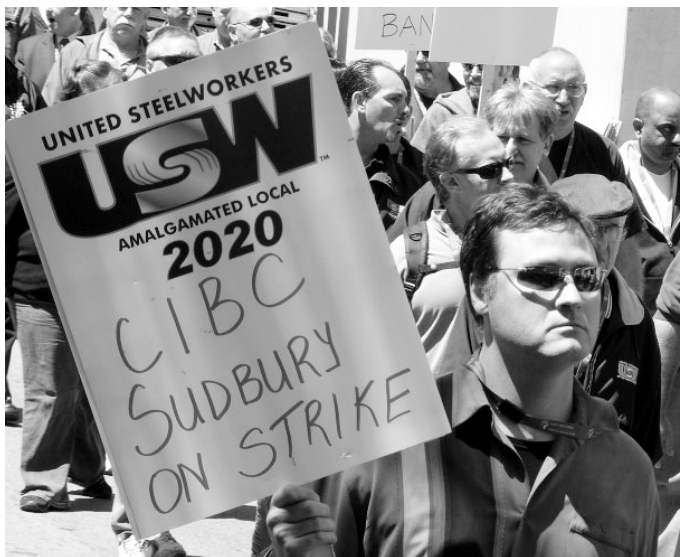
☐ cash

☐ Please send me an application form to establish monthly pre-authorized payments from my bank account.

☐ cheque

Please mail application forms and cheques to the NB Media Co-op at 180 St. John Street, Fredericton, NB E3B 4A9. Thank you!

Union Organizing Raymond Taavel



Mario Fortunato, United Steelworker organizer based in Fredericton, travels across the country supporting workers in their struggles to unionize their workplaces and on the picket line. Photo courtesy of Mario Fortunato.

(continued from page 1) ...St. Thomas University are in a union. I can assure you they have given some thought as to whether or not a union would be of value to them. More generally, union workers earn 44% more than non-union workers – that’s significant. Employers know this – that’s why they fight unions tooth and nail and do everything they can to convince workers that unions only make things worse!

CW: Since the last federal election we have seen back-to-work legislation used twice on the pretext that our “fragile economic recovery” cannot handle such disruptions. What do you make of this?

MF: You need to understand that the law isn’t static. It’s always changing. The democratic process is the means by which various groups in society attempt to change aspects of the law to better suit their interests. For example when the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) passed, capital threw a party. The industrial base in Canada was gutted and for those operations that remained, just the threat of relocating to Mexico was enough to keep workers in their place. As of today, public sector unions represent the largest section of organized labour in Canada and as such they are the single greatest obstacle to the neo-liberal privatization and deregulation agenda. So naturally, capital wants to crush them. By taking away their legal right to withhold labour – their only serious weapon to use against management – they cut the union off at the knees. In some ways this radical anti-union politics is actually backfiring. You see it in Greece, Britain, Canada, and in the U.S. Since the legal way of resolving disputes is no longer functioning, workers are going on wildcat strikes, collectively calling in sick and so on. We are returning to the lawlessness and despotism of 1920s labour relations where workers had the right to obey and nothing more. So, we’ll see where this leads – interesting times lay ahead.

CW: If someone who wanted to get more information on this subject, or wanted to form a union in their workplace, what would you advise?

MF: The best place to start is on the Internet. Every union has a good website. Do your research, find out what union would be best for your work place and call an organizer. It’s not easy – it’s called the labour struggle for real reasons. The only way to improve things for everyone is through effort, building solidarity and working together.

Community Calendar

For details and updated event listings, visit nbmediacoop.org To list your event or to receive the community calendar by email once per week, email: community@nbmediacoop.org.

Investigative Journalism Workshop with award-winning broadcast journalist, Michele Mitchell. Tues, May 15, 12pm-2pm. Gallery Connexion, 440 York St., Fredericton. \$10. RSVP at info@nbmediacoop.org Hosts: NB Media Co-op and Gallery Connexion.

Haiti, Aid and Imperialism. Tues, May 15, 7pm. Cedar Tree Café, 418 Queen St., Fredericton. Film Screening of Haiti: Where did the money go? Join Michele Mitchell for a screening of her film, Haiti: Where did the money go? Followed by book launch of Paved with Good Intentions: Join Dru Oja Jay examines the impact of funding ties on NGOs’ ability to support popular demands for democratic reforms and wealth redistribution. Free admission. Contact: info@frederictonpeace.org

International Day Against Homophobia Film Screening. AIDS NB and NB Film Co-op present the film, We Were Here. Thurs., May 17, 7pm at the Charlotte Street Arts Centre, 723 Charlotte St., Fredericton.

Grind Out Homophobia/Skate Bash. AIDS NB presents a skate bash at the Fred Pitre Memorial skatepark in Bathurst on May 17, 6 to 8pm. There will be a free BBQ, music, cake, prize giveaways, skateboard demonstrations by the local Culture Skateshop team and information booth by AIDS NB.

Rally Against Shale Gas. Sat., June 2, 11am-1pm. Moncton

(continued from page 1) ...leave them to die in the snow. As a woman, a queer person, and an anti-racist person, I do not trust the police. I do not trust them not to harass and abuse me, and I did not trust them not to harass and abuse the man who was making me so nervous in the store last week.

I told them which way he went. “But listen,” I said. “If you see him on the street, don’t pick him up. He didn’t do anything. He didn’t steal anything or threaten anyone. Don’t pick him up.”

And this is complicated, because someone who is aggressive, who suffers from delusions and expresses hateful thoughts could become someone who commits hateful acts. I do not have the ability to protect myself, my friends, or the general public from someone who is violent and wants to cause harm.

Two days later, I saw this man at the shelter I volunteer at. He was really calm. He thanked me for the meal I served him. He told me about when he used to work as a chef and his favourite thing to cook was curried chicken. He didn’t remember me from before.

This man was not the man who killed Raymond, but he could have been. Shelter staff who knew him better than I did suspected he was in a prolonged state of psychosis. He did end up being picked up by police and taken to the hospital later that week for aggressive behaviour and threats, but they released him, saying there was nothing they could do.

There are so many failings around us. Of the police system, for being corrupt and unaccountable, for targeting and abusing women, queers, people of colour, poor people and people with addictions. Of the mental healthcare system for failing to provide people with the medication and therapy and support they need to not harm themselves and not harm others. Of the justice system and the prison system for being far more likely to lock up black and Aboriginal people, for not providing incarcerated people with the support they need to function and thrive once they leave prison, such as addictions counselling and job training.

Last summer in South Minneapolis, a young, black trans woman named CeCe McDonald was violently attacked by a group of white adults. As she walked by the group standing outside of a bar, they shouted racist and transphobic insults at her and one hit her across the face with a bottle, cutting through her cheek. A fight broke out, during which one of the attackers was stabbed. CeCe was arrested, and now stands accused of murder, while her attackers face no charges. The fact that she was acting in self-defense seems to be irrelevant.

If things had gone differently on Gottingen Street at 2 a.m. Tuesday morning and Raymond had hurt or killed Andre Denny, it’s possible that Raymond would be in prison for defending himself as CeCe is now. I know that people are feeling grateful to Halifax police for arresting Andre after Raymond was found on the sidewalk, but it’s important to examine the oppressive ways in which the police system, the justice system, and the prison system treat and have treated gay people like Raymond, Aboriginal people like Andre, and trans women of colour like CeCe.

So where does this leave me? I can’t say I know exactly how to support a person like Andre Denny, who deals with systemic racism as an Aboriginal person from a reserve, who faces enormous challenges and stigma for his schizophrenia, who has problems with drugs and alcohol, and who has the ability to harm and kill people from my queer community, and from his own community, without a real understanding of the harm he is doing or why it is wrong.

I want to feel safe walking down Gottingen Street. Down any street. I want to kiss my lover outside, in bars, in restaurants, anywhere. But I don’t feel safe in a largely misogynistic, homophobic society, and I don’t feel protected by the police. I don’t feel safe knowing that, if I did manage to defend myself against violence, I could be charged and imprisoned.

I want a government that increases funding to our healthcare system, not one that cuts all funding to the National Aboriginal Health Organization. And not one that calls for the provinces to spend hundreds of millions of dollars building more prisons, and passes bills intended to lock up more of us for longer terms.

While I mourn Raymond’s death and its impact on the Halifax LGBTQ community, and while I think of the difficulties facing Andre Denny and his family, I want to reflect on the failings of our society and its institutions that allowed this to happen. I want to keep these reflections in mind when I think about the Harper government’s crime bills and healthcare cuts, the Native Women’s Association of Canada’s campaign to push the RCMP to investigate the many unsolved cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, the open homophobia professed by members of both the Wildrose and PC parties in the Alberta provincial election this month.

These problems, this institutional corruption, these prejudices and forms of oppression are complicated, layered, and have been going on for centuries. We need to pay attention, think critically, speak up, and work for change in the name of social justice. I think it’s the only way to begin to make sense of a tragedy that feels so senseless.

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City Hall. Oil and gas companies have been given the go ahead by the NB government for shale gas exploration and hydraulic fracturing.

AIDS NB Red Tie Affair. With Steve Patterson, host of CBC Radio's "The Debaters." An evening of comedy, dessert and dance with The Downtown Blues Bands. Sat, June 9. Crowne Plaza Fredericton Lord Beaverbrook. In support of people living with HIV in New Brunswick. Pre-sale tickets: \$100 each. At the door: \$125. Tickets to the dance-only are \$25. Tickets can be purchased online at etix now, or by calling AIDS NB at 800-561-4009.