

Event: BC Federation of Labour Convention

Date: November 24-28, 2014

Location: Vancouver Convention Centre

I had the opportunity to attend this year's BC Federation of Labour Convention in Vancouver from November 24-28th. This was my first BCFed convention and it was exciting to attend as a young worker delegate. I also had the chance to participate in the Young Worker Mock Convention that was hosted the Sunday before convention.

The Young Worker Mock Convention provided a chance to learn the rules of order, practice speaking at the microphone, and network with other young workers from BC. A panel of speakers included presentations by Layne Clark from the BCFed Health and Safety Centre, Gavin McGarrigle with Unifor, and Deanna Ogle with the Living Wage Campaign.

The convention was a very full week of resolutions, caucus meetings, lunch and learn events, and guest speakers. We heard addresses from Hassan Yussuff from the Canadian Labour Congress, Tom Muclair, federal leader of the NDP; and John Horgan, leader of the BC-NDP. I participated in the Minimum Wage lunch and learn which heard presentations from an activist that had been involved in the minimum wage campaign in Seattle and a community organizer with the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) group which advocates for low income earners. These speeches were very inspiring and spoke to the ability of individuals to make a difference and the power of the collective.

It was enlightening to hear the variety of resolutions brought forward to the convention. Being a provincial convention, the resolutions were regional in scope and might not apply to PSAC at a national level, but being residents of BC, the resolutions were relevant on a BC citizen level. The resolution regarding raising the definition age of a young worker from 30 years to 35 years was of particular interest to the young worker movement. There was much debate on the topic with strong points for and against; however, the resolution was defeated, so the existing definition stands.

The elections were an exciting day. There was a definite buzz on the convention floor. It was interesting to observe some of the rituals that experienced convention delegates performed such as wearing their "lucky election day socks." It was amazing to witness history in the making as the BC Federation of Labour elected its first female president, Irene Lanzinger. It was a close race, with strong support for both candidates. It was great to see that at the end of the elections all delegates, regardless of who they were supporting, left convention united in the labour movement and the work that lies ahead.

This learning experience provided a broader perspective of the concerns faced by all unions in the province whether they are public or private sector. The opportunity to speak to other young workers from different unions and hear about their experiences was valuable. The time spent learning from experienced convention delegates especially in the strategy for getting in line for the microphone will definitely be helpful for future conventions. Thank you to the BC Regional Council, the REVP, and the BC Young Worker Caucus for their support of my attendance at this convention.