

BULLETIN

NUPGE International Women's Day Message - The Struggle for Equality Continues

February 28, 2006

Ottawa (22 Feb. 2006) - International Women's Day (IWD) is the story of ordinary women as makers of history. It is rooted in the centuries old struggle of women seeking to participate in society on an equal footing with men.

The idea of an IWD (March 8) first arose at the turn of the century, which in the industrialized world was a period of expansion and turbulence, booming population growth and radical ideologies.

NUPGE gender equality success

Until women are fully represented at senior leadership levels of public, professional and economic life, women do not have equal rights nor an equal voice. In the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), we have numerous women leaders on our Executive, who have been elected to top positions in their unions. On IWD, we need to celebrate what has already been achieved while continuing the challenges that remain.

NUPGE's National Executive Board is now comprised of 12 women and 7 men. We have from the West Coast ... Cindy Stewart (HSABC), Judi Fillion (BCGEU), Elisabeth Ballermann (HSAA), Charlotte Poier (SGEU); Central ... Lois Wales (MGEU), Leah Casselman (OPSEU), Sue Brown (OPSEU); and East Coast ... Debbie Lacelle (NBUPPE), Joan Jessome (NSGEU), Martha Brown (NSGEU), Carol Furlong (NAPE), Cynthia Burke (NAPE).

These sisters, along with many other sisters in leadership roles, speak out on women's issues and rights. They speak out on pay equity, women's health care, violence against women, globalization, opposition to the war in Iraq, child care, full employment, and pension entitlements. Successes have been achieved and, as women, we applaud their efforts.

However, we recognize that women are connected internationally. Sisters in Kenya, the Philippines, Colombia, Afghanistan and other regions of the world, including Canada's own First Nations community ... have successes and challenges that resound within the hearts and souls of women.

Yes there are differences within the respective cultures and political landscapes, but the underlying connection is that women constantly strive for fully recognized equality with men and for basic, and improved, human rights. A trite saying that was written stated that "Women hold up half the sky" ... so why is it so hard for society to treat women as equals!

International conference

To this end, the National Union is holding a "Building International Sisterhood" conference in October 2006 in Ottawa and sisters from these regions of the world will be invited to come and speak of their worlds, their cultures, their economic and social challenges, their political climate ... their lives.

IWD is a time to reflect on the progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of women's rights.

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