

In this issue - A new direction for YEU, changes at the union office, a message from the President, union electoral clout, shop steward round tables

Expanded planning sessions held

Executive charts new course for 2006

Members of the newly elected union Executive gathered for their annual planning session this January. The meeting was their first opportunity for joint planning.

The significance of these annual meetings is sometimes lost on our members. In short, delegates to the triennial convention determine what they expect the Executive to do. The Executive then determines, at these meetings, how to fulfill those expectations.

We encourage our members to carefully review the points presented here, as well as the *Strategic Plan* which will be published in the coming weeks on our website. We welcome critical evaluations and suggestions.

In a departure from previous sessions, presidents of the union's locals and YEU staff attended the first day of the 3 day event.

President Laurie Butterworth explained, "The delegates to the triennial convention directed the new Executive to improve com-

munication. They also made it clear that the business of the union had to be conducted in an open and inclusive way."

"We invited the local presidents to help achieve this. Their involvement opened another door for direct member input", he said.

The participants held a frank discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of the union's operations. They also listed and evaluated the external influences anticipated during the upcoming year. A list of priorities was then compiled.

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Yukon unions have voting clout

Now that the federal election is history, Yukoners will face a territorial election later this year.

At times our elected representatives and even our own members overlook the electoral power of Yukon unions. The ability of Yukon union members to bring forward a labour agenda, gain the attention of the candidates from all parties, and influence the outcome at the polls is significant. Consider the numbers.

The Yukon Bureau of Statistics reports that 15,600 Yukoners were employed in December, 2005. During the last territorial election, 14,116 of 18,067 registered Yukon voters cast ballots.

The Yukon Employees' Union alone represents 4000 Yukon workers, with other territorial unions representing approximately 500 more.

Unionized workers therefore represent about 29% of all Yukon employees, and a quarter of all registered voters in the territory.

That's a lot of clout at the ballot box.

The current Yukon government ignored the concerns of organized labour. It rode roughshod on collective agreements and treated its own workforce with disdain. Union members can, together, impose a heavy penalty on election day.

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Executive charts new course *continued from page 1*

2006 Priorities

- Collective bargaining
- Training and education
- Job site representation
- Public interest advocacy
- Community involvement, and
- Governance

Collective bargaining – Four YEU locals will begin collective bargaining in 2006. In preparation, the union will evaluate past collective bargaining practices to ensure that they are consistent and effective. A Policy Development Committee will be formed for this purpose. It will include representation from each of the bargaining units entering negotiations.

Training and education – The Executive committed to developing a three-year Training and Education Plan under the guidance of the Education Standing Committee. A collective bargaining education program designed for delivery beginning six months prior to the expiry of each agreement will be introduced.

The new member orientation program established in 2005, has proven valuable both as an information dissemination tool and as an activist recruitment mechanism. It will be expanded. New communication tools will be developed to support this program.

Job site representation – A shop steward recruitment and development drive will be undertaken. Creation of new materials in support of this initiative will begin

immediately. These will include a basic training kit and brochure. Fact sheets will identify union representative's roles and responsibilities, as well as the benefits of being a Shop Steward. This work will be guided by a Shop Steward Development Plan, which will include the deliverables as well as a standard by which to evaluate the project's success.

Public interest advocacy – In response to the convention delegate's direction, YEU will undertake public interest campaigns to address local and global issues of concern to our members. Among other subjects, YEU will continue to speak out on global social justice issues, human rights, the dangers of privatization and the threat of big-box stores.

Community involvement – YEU will develop and implement an *Outreach Initiative* directed toward our rural union members. This two-year program will begin with identification of an outreach team and creation of an action plan.

YEU's Community Representation Committee will lead the initiative. We anticipate that a series of community visits will occur to ensure our members have the opportunity to provide face-to-face input and network with other members.

The Communications Committee will also explore actions to promote awareness of the union as a good citizen in the community. The extent of YEU's contribution to community groups and activities is often overlooked, and is frequently unknown even to our members. YEU is considering a

variety of creative ways to raise awareness about the work of the union in the community.

Governance – The executive will explore the possibility of electing the YEU executive by a process of one-member, one-vote. Research will be conducted over the next two years. This project will involve the solicitation of input from all locals, an examination of the constitutional, organizational and financial implications, and the delivery of a report to the next Triennial Convention.

In summary, much follow-up work will be required to identify, quantify and assign specific tasks, and finalize a time-table for delivery of each priority outlined here.

All attendees left with a spirit of optimism and commitment. Details about the status of each initiative will be published in this newsletter throughout the coming year.

Shop Steward Round Tables

Shop Steward Round Tables provide an opportunity for YEU members to get together and learn while sharing experiences.

The setting is informal, with topics tailored to meet practical needs. These events are intended for Shop Stewards, members interested in becoming Shop Stewards, and local executive members who provide representation. Please contact Gwen at the union hall: 667-2331, or by email: gwain@yeu.ca for more information.



YEU from the President

I'm pleased to report on a successful executive retreat held

this January. The decision to involve staff and local presidents was a welcome innovation. Their fresh insight and alternate perspective was most helpful in preparing for the next year.

As outlined in the article on pages one and two, we worked to solidify the first year of an action plan that will implement the direction given by members and delegates at the triennial convention. Details will emerge in the coming months.

Whitehorse Correctional Centre

We have been working for over a year on an issue relating to hours of work for employees at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. Inexplicably, management has chosen to abandon a well established shift schedule, and impose a regime that is opposed by the majority of WCC workers. Worse, they have taken action that contravenes the collective agreement.

The YEU Executive authorized Past President Hobbis to work with me on this issue. I'm pleased to have Brother Hobbis' knowledge and experience available.

The Executive has also directed that, until this matter is successfully resolved, YEU will completely withdraw from any further contract amendment discussions with the Public Service Commission.

Collective Bargaining

In 2006, several collective agreements between YEU locals and their employers will expire – agreements that protect workers at the Yukon government, the City of Whitehorse, the Yukon Arts Centre, and the Women's Transition Home. Pre-bargaining work is now under way to solicit input from our members.

Community Outreach

At our last triennial convention, I left little doubt about my commitment to engage our members in the business and decisions of the union – in particular, those members working in rural communities,

Toward that end, YEU has undertaken a major outreach initiative to be completed over the last two years. Step one involves planning a well-coordinated approach to the project including:

- contact identification
- local needs assessment
- solicitation of advance member input
- development of communication materials
- specific task assignments
- budget development, and
- preparation of measures-of-effectiveness.

The underlying goals of this initiative are to increase YEU visibility and presence, recruit more representatives (in co-operation with the Shop Steward Development Plan), enhance networking opportunities, provide training, undertake advocacy work and engage partnerships.

Federal Election

The decision of Canada's electorate on January 23 leaves many challenges for the country's unions. We will need to pay particular attention to how Prime Minister Harper begins to activate his agenda. Global issues of long-standing concern to organized labour in Canada will be front and centre.

Here in the Yukon, an already repressive and uncooperative Yukon party government may be emboldened by the federal results. We can reasonably anticipate a hard-line agenda at the bargaining table.

The territorial government employer has shown itself to be no friend of its own workforce. We should be prepared for a difficult fight to achieve our objectives.

YEU-PSC Relationship

A deterioration in the day-to-day relationship between YEU's Executive and representatives of the Public Service Commission has been evident recently. This regressive state of affairs has been exacerbated by the disrespectful and uncooperative attitude of the Acting Director of Staff Relations.

YEU has lodged a complaint with the Public Service Commissioner. I also raised the issue directly with Premier Fentie during my first meeting with the Yukon Party leader.

Hopefully a more enlightened and cooperative approach to union-employer relations will result.

Rebecca Anderson

Rebecca Anderson is a life-long Yukoner, born and raised in Whitehorse. Married with one child – daughter Madi, she has been working with YEU for 6 years.

Rebecca has served with passion and dedication since joining the Yukon Employees' Union, always striving to uphold the rights of working people. Throughout her employment she has advanced her knowledge of the issues that challenge our membership, and the solutions available to best address member concerns.

Rebecca served as Intake Officer during the emotionally charged computer use investigation. In 2005, she fulfilled the role of Project Coordinator during implementation of the YTG-YEU grievance procedure.

She has pursued training opportunities whenever they occurred. Her courses included CLC Winter School's *Young Workers in Action* program, and PSAC's *Building Union Solidarity* and *Advanced Representation Training*.



Rebecca hit the ground running in her new assignment as Service Officer. Her charm, dedication and knowledge will be great assets to our membership.

Rebecca will be working in an acting capacity as Service Officer for the full 2006 calendar year. Her knowledge and positive attitude will serve our members well.



Gwen Wain joined YEU in January

YEU welcomes Gwen Wain

Gwen Wain joined the Yukon Employees' Union office staff as Administrative Assistant, Secretarial this January.

A dyed-in-the-wool Yukoner, Gwen was raised in Dawson City. She attended the Business Administration program at Yukon College, and previously worked as Officer Administrator for Whitehorse Physiotherapy.

We're delighted to have Gwen join our team.

YEU calendar

March 2, 2006, 9:00 a.m., YEU Hall
Shop Steward Round Tables

Contacts:

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2nd Thursday, 6:30 p.m., YEU Hall
Monthly YEU Executive Meeting
2nd Wednesday, 5:00 p.m., YEU Hall
Y010 Monthly Meeting
4th Thursday, 7:30 p.m., YEU Hall
Y017 Monthly Meeting



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Members are reminded to notify the YEU office of any change of address or name changes. Call Linda Bidrman – Membership Services, email lbidrman@yeu.ca or fax the number above.