



**B.C.
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OF LABOUR
(CLC)**

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Jim Sinclair
President
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April 14, 2009

TO: ALL AFFILIATES

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

RE: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING FOR WORKERS WHO HAVE BEEN KILLED OR INJURED ON THE JOB OR DIED OF AN OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE

On April 28, 2009 people in nearly 100 countries around the world will stop and pay tribute to workers who died or were killed on the job.

This is the 25th Anniversary of the Day of Mourning, first declared by the Canadian Labour Congress in 1984, and then passed by the Canadian Parliament in 1991. A year later, the NDP government did the same in BC.

The Day of Mourning is an opportunity for people to honour those workers who have died and to recommit to the fight for improved workplace health and safety to prevent further deaths.

Fatalities in 2008 in BC:

160 workers died as a result of a workplace incident.

- 21 motor vehicle accidents
- 76 occupational disease
- 63 traumatic fatalities
- 4 young workers died

Day of Mourning Theme for 2009: “Is Today the Day You Die at Work”?

In BC, 160 workers died in 2008. Since 1998, work-related accidents and diseases have claimed the lives of 1,704 workers; an average of 155 workers per year. In Canada, 1,055 workers died in 2007. Workplace fatalities are not decreasing.

In comparison to the numbers of workers who died in BC in 2008, 117 soldiers have died since the start of the Afghan mission in 2002. And yet, there is little public attention paid to workplace deaths. The Federation looks forward to a day when we can show the same respect for workers who have died on the job as the Canadian soldiers who have died in Afghanistan.

The workplace fatality statistics are only the tip of the iceberg and doesn't come close to reflecting the real number of workers who die at work. For example, increasing numbers of workers are dying of illnesses that are caused by exposure to toxic substances at work. Yet many workers who die of occupational diseases do not report their illnesses to the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB.) Neither they, nor their doctors, are aware that the disease is work-related and compensable.

Accidents must not be seen to be 'just a part of doing business', they don't just happen, they are caused.

Health and safety in the workplace is the responsibility of the employer.

The provincial government must provide legislation that tackles the negligent employer and must be prepared to pursue criminal charges against these employers. The WCB must implement regulation that provides workers with the highest level of protection and enforce those regulations vigorously.

Two years after the farmworker van accident deaths, and almost a year after the mushroom farm deaths and injuries, the Federation is still waiting for the government to implement better health and safety and employment standards for all farmworkers.

In this 25th year of the Day of Mourning, it is time for workers to stand together to demand that government, employers and the WCB be held accountable.

The Federation recommends that the government take immediate action:

1. Pursue criminal negligence charges against employers for serious breaches of workplace safety;
2. Direct the WCB to implement stricter enforcement rules, including vigilant inspections and penalties that will act as a meaningful deterrent to employers for non-compliance with regulation;
3. Direct the WCB to implement an enforcement strategy for the prevention of toxic hazard exposures in BC workplaces; and
4. Amend the **Workers' Compensation Act** to restore full compensation benefits for injured workers; and
5. On all 27 Recommendations of the 2007 Report on the farmworker van accident, to improve safety and working conditions for all farmworkers.

The Federation encourages all affiliates to ensure that health and safety is a priority in the workplace by providing support to their Occupational Health & Safety Committee representatives.

Day of Mourning Events:

Every year unions and Labour Councils organize activities in their workplaces and their communities to commemorate April 28th. Attached is a list of events in communities in BC.

The Federation encourages Brothers and Sisters to attend the events in their communities, bring union banners and invite co-workers, friends and family members to attend.

In solidarity,



JIM SINCLAIR
President

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0140-09aa-Day of Mourning



Attachment