

Maurice Kenny Delegate

August 18 to 20th 2017 Canadian Council

“Solidarity for A Better World’ The theme of Canadian Council in Winnipeg.

After the Native Hoop dance ceremony of animals and plant life, Council was welcomed by Mayor Brian Bowman of Winnipeg on Treaty 1 territory. Brian comes from a working class Metis background and is working hard to make Winnipeg a racist free city (750,000 in population). Important chapter in Canadian history is the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. Workers from all sectors banded together to create what still is A UNION CITY. Also Winnipeg is where Canadian women first gained the right to vote.

Council paid tribute to **Bob White (former CAW and Canadian Labour Congress Presidents)** who had a dream of a large Canadian union that could shape the politics of Canada. **“WE MISS YOU BOB.”**

National Unifor President Jerry Dias addressed council having just arrived from Washington after a weeklong opening of NAFTA discussions. The Trudeau Federal Liberals invited the Labour movement to observe and advise on various trade topics. Jerry had this to say, **“Free Trade has not worked for any workers in Mexico, USA or Canada.” NAFTA needs more than a tweak or twist; we should walk away from it if we cannot reform NAFTA to protect workers.”** The Federal government asked President Jerry Dias to sign a non-disclosure agreement on the NAFTA talks and a statement that Free Trade has been good for Canada. Jerry refused and stated “only the **1%** has gained while allowing corporations to exploit workers and drive wages, benefits and working standards down in all of North America.” A Mexican Ford worker could never earn enough to purchase the vehicles they build.

USA President Donald Trump was clever to appeal to the Rust belt states knowing that Democrats promise

help to the working class, but maintained the status Quo furthering the Global trade agreements. In time workers will see President Trump as an opportunist who now elected will remove health care to poor Americans, reduce taxes for the rich and only support American industries that support him. This is the reality of Right Wing Populism to Misdirect Americans who still bother to vote. Trump claims he will protect them from the bad people because the intellectual elites are too focused on Social Liberties.

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Wing Populism will soon reinvent itself in Canada. Unifor will need to align itself with the true Left in Canada (for example the recent NDP/Green Party election victory in B.C.); not the Liberals and their broken promises. For example, Electoral reform and Tax on corporate shares, etc.

Unifor position on NAFTA is for “stronger labour rules and demonstrated adherence to those rules: The elimination of NAFTA chapter 11, and the extraordinary investor privileges that allow private investors to sue governments over lost profits. Needed: Bold New Rules, Cross-Border Trade in auto and auto parts, including stricter rules of origin, higher Labour and Wage standards, a greater balance in Trade and Investment, and a fair share of the benefits for workers in each country; The full protection of Canada’s Supply Management System and its ability to provide a safe and stable food supply; Assurances that public services such as Health and Education are fully excluded from the deal; The rejection of any demand that restricts the strengthening of foreign ownership rules in telecommunications, and that restricts the right of Canada’s regulatory bodies to impose licensing conditions on foreign online broadcasters; The elimination of energy proportionality- the NAFTA clause requiring Canada to continue oil and gas exports to the U.S. **Even in the event of a shortage;** A new continental standard on the use of domestic purchasing policies, reflecting governments ability to direct public procurement to domestic suppliers in fair and equitable way; Ongoing consultation with Labour and other Civil Society, and a commitment to independently evaluate the costs and benefits of the new deal before and after ratification. **Are you thinking what I am thinking, “it will not happen under the Federal liberals or Conservatives.”**

Unifor is working with the Canadian Labour Congress on another push to get governments and political parties interested in a national Pharma Care system. Every country that has national health coverage also has Pharma Care **except** Canada. **National Health and Pharma Care go hand and hand.** We are covering the costs of people who end up in hospital because they cannot afford to pay for medical lifesaving drugs? **Drug cost is the highest costs of our socialized medicine.** “A National drug plan through bulk purchasing would lower (net saving of \$7 billion annually to Canadians) the costs of drugs enough to finance a full Pharma Care system with no increase to government costs. Polls show 91% of Canadians want this because we pay more than any other country. “Our country’s drug spending on a per capita basis is **30%** above the OECD average and second amongst OECD countries only after the United States.” Pharma Care would make all industries in Canada (private drug plans) more competitive.

For a full list of all resolutions and President recommendations that were passed at Canadian council,

go to www.Unifor.org

*On a different note, but one that ties in with the social conscience of our union and its members, I recommend two brilliant movies in which I recently had the opportunity to view “**Detroit**” and “**Wind River**” both enlightening and brutally honest*