

CUPE Manitoba convention report

The 50th CUPE Manitoba convention was held on May 1-4, 2013 in Winnipeg. CUPE 3909 sent four delegates – President Ana Vialard, Vice-President Unit 2 Karen Naylor, Treasurer George Buri, and outgoing VP Unit 1 Brian Latour.

CUPE 3909 had put forward three resolutions to the convention. One resolution in support of Bill 18, the government's anti-bullying and anti-homophobia legislation, was passed unanimously. Our emergency resolution condemning the provincial government's renegeing on its post-secondary education funding promises also passed overwhelmingly.

Unfortunately, our resolution calling on CUPE-Manitoba to support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement for Palestinian rights – a policy which had been adopted by CUPE-Ontario seven years ago and is supported by many other unions, including the Public Services International – was defeated. Despite forceful speeches by CUPE 3909 delegates, the resolution was opposed by the executive of CUPE Manitoba and CUPE 3909 delegates found themselves alone in their courageous stance in support of international solidarity and Palestinian human rights.

Guest speakers at the convention included premier Greg Selinger. During his speech, delegates from CUPE 3909 raised the issue of the provincial government renegeing on its post-secondary education funding promises. We also hand-delivered a letter containing our concerns to the premier, and attempted to distribute it to convention delegates as an open letter.

The general tone of the convention was one of fear and powerlessness. CUPE Manitoba is still reeling from the loss of thousands of members to the MGEU in representation votes in various regional health authorities. Added to that is the fear of the right-wing anti-union agenda, such as bill C-377, being promoted by the Harper government, and the fear that the conservatives will get elected in Manitoba in 2015. The labour movement is nearly powerless against such initiatives, because its political strategy consists almost entirely of working to elect the NDP and hoping for the best.

Despite an occasional setback, CUPE Local 3909 will continue to put forward resolutions that respond to the social and economic interests of our members and pressure both the NDP and CUPE Manitoba to live up to promises and uphold their stated standards.