



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

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Jim Sinclair
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April 17, 2008

TO: ALL AFFILIATES

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

**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, 2008 people in nearly 100 countries around the world will stop and pay tribute to workers who died or were injured on the job.

The annual Day of Mourning was first declared by the Canadian Labour Congress in 1984. Since then, unions, labour councils and governments around the world have adopted April 28th as a day to remember workers who have been injured or killed on the job or died from an occupational disease.

The Canadian Parliament passed **Bill C-223** in 1991, declaring April 28th the annual day to remember fallen workers. A year later the BC NDP government did the same.

In the labour movement, we will stop work on April 28th and publicly renew our commitment to “Fight for the Living and Mourn for the Dead”.

How many fatalities for 2007 in BC?

139 workers died as a result of a workplace incident

- 23 motor vehicle accidents
- 71 occupational diseases (59 asbestos related)
- 45 traumatic fatalities
- 6 young workers between the ages of 15-24

Day of Mourning Theme for 2008: Why Occupational Disease?

This year the B.C. Federation of Labour theme is “***Silent Killers: Toxic Hazards at Work***”. More than half of the workplace fatalities are due to occupational diseases. The vast majority of those deaths are asbestos related.

The 71 occupational disease fatalities are just the tip of the iceberg. This number doesn't come close to reflecting the real number of workers profoundly affected by these diseases. Many workers and their doctors may not be aware that a disease is work related and compensable. In far too many cases they do not report their diseases to the WCB.

Many diseases, such as cancer, asbestosis and mesothelioma do not manifest until long after the initial exposure. Often workers do not become ill until after they have retired.

We know that cancer and occupational diseases of the respiratory, nervous, circulatory and reproductive systems kill hundreds of workers in BC every year. Many more people live with these illnesses and endure great physical and social hardship.

In a study done in 2004, the UBC Centre of Health Services and Policy Research found that fewer than half of the mesothelioma cases are reported to the WCB. The study also found that rates of both asbestosis and mesothelioma are on the rise and predicted to peak in the next few years.

Under-reported cases mean uncompensated workers. It also means employers aren't being held responsible for these exposures.

Even though the use of asbestos in Canada declined sharply in the 1980's, it can still be found in far too many workplaces and workers are still being exposed.

Workers in BC are also exposed to hundreds of chemicals at their workplaces. The Occupational Health and Safety regulation guarantees the right of workers to know about chemical hazards at work. The Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System requires that chemicals are properly identified, stored and used in compliance with the Material Safety Data Sheet. Workers must also be properly trained in the use of chemicals.

In 2003, the WCB made amendments to allowable exposure limits for workplace chemicals. Pressured by industry, the WCB refused to approve more protective exposure limits for two chemicals known to cause cancer, styrene and formaldehyde. Five years later, workers are still being exposed to high levels of these widely used chemicals.

In 2008, the WCB is introducing an amendment which will allow for the use of an outdated list for chemicals that cause birth defects and other reproductive harm and chemicals that cause allergic reactions. This amendment will not provide adequate protection of workers.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

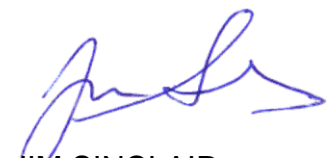
1. The WCB establish and maintain a permanent registry to record worker exposures to asbestos;
2. The WCB implement lower levels of exposure rates for styrene and formaldehyde;
3. The WCB approve the implementation of the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) list for reproductive toxins and sensitizers;
4. The WCB immediately implement an enforcement strategy for the prevention of toxic hazard exposures in BC workplaces.

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 our Brothers and Sisters to attend the events in their communities. Bring your union banners and invite a co-worker, friend or family member to attend with you.

In solidarity,



JIM SINCLAIR
President

encl:

SM/cm



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