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Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on  
Employment Policy for Persons with Disabilities

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Public Policy Forum**

## **21st Century Solidarity: Promoting a Living Wage and Civil Rights for all Workers**

*Speakers:*

Dave Parr

Disability Champions@Work

Louis Guida

Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

Barbara Byers

Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

Larry Trayner

American Postal Workers Union (APWU), Deaf/Hard of Hearing Task Force

*Moderator:*

Richard G. Womack

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)

*Remarks by:*

Representative John Conyers

Representative Jan Schakowsky

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## Welcome

### Susanne Bruyère:

Okay. We're going to get started if you would make sure you have your breakfast and take your seats. Thank you.

My name is Susanne Bruyère and I'm from Cornell University, the ILR School and today I am representing the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Employment Policy for People with Disabilities. This project at Cornell University is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, The National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research.

The purpose of this project is to promote effective employment policy for people with disabilities in order to increase employment outcomes. Part of our efforts include holding policy forums such as the one that you have attended today.

I have two colleagues from Cornell I would like to acknowledge. Dave Stapleton and Bonnie O'Day who are sitting at the front table who are from the Washington, D.C. area. And I'm sorry, Nannette, I didn't see you. And I am on the Ithaca campus.

Our partner for these efforts has been the American Association for People with Disabilities. We have had a relationship with AAPD for several years and we're very pleased about that. AAPD has assisted us in identifying hot topics and appropriate speakers, and we have a great roster for you today.

Our session has four speakers. We'll have comments by two of our Representatives and our moderator is Richard Womack.

To kick this off, I'm going to ask my colleague and our coconspirators in these efforts, Andy Imparato, who is the president and CEO of American Association of People with Disabilities, to come up and introduce our speaker, our facilitator.

[Applause].

### Andy Imparato:

Thank you. Good afternoon. I'm really delighted to be here representing the American Association of People with Disabilities and partnering with Susanne and our colleagues at Cornell University.

The real vision for this forum came from really trying to bring together some good thinking within the labor movement that would spark ideas for folks from both the disability community and disability advocacy and policy community and the labor movement in the U.S and folks on the Hill. We're hosted today by Congressman John Conners who's going to be here later to make some brief remarks for us. It wasn't an accident that we reached out to Congressman Conners. He's been a leader on disability issues for a long time. Representative Jan Schakowsky has been a support on this for a while and she's not going to be here, but I know she's excited that this is happening.

For our colleagues here in Washington with us today, I just want to acknowledge a few people today. Bertha Aponte, who is on the Advisory Panel, is here with us and I'm glad she's in town with us today and Jill, a panelist sitting next to her. I'm a member of that panel and it's a bipartisan group that's working on trying to look at Social Security and Medicaid and Medicare and broader policy issues to promote employment for people with disabilities. We also have Cheryl Bates-Harris as another member of Ticket to Work and Work Advisory Panel. So we're out in force today.

John Lancaster who is the Executive Director on the National Council on Independent Living, a partnering organization with AAPD. Paul who is the head of UCP Public Policy and Collaboration and the Dean of the Disability Lobbying here in Washington. I'm proud to say that Paul and John are both former AAPD board members and were involved in founding the organization. And I also wanted to mention Jeff Rosen who's the General Counsel and Director of Policy at the National Council on Disability. Jeff, thank you for being here.

And we may be pointing out some other folks as the day goes on. Yoshiko Dart, who is also here. Where is Yoshiko? Thank you for being here. She is a sister in the labor movement. She's kind of the Eleanor Roosevelt in the movement in the U.S. Her late husband, Justin Dart was our fearless member who helped us get the disability act passed, and she's working with disability and that's kind of her passion and mission right now and is doing very important work with the next generation of disability leaders.

So without further adieu, I have the honor to introduce Richard Womack. Richard is a former Linda Chavez award winner. That's an award that AAPD gives every year at our gala in the leading movement that's working to make sure that our families are included in the labor movement and Richard has been doing that for a very long time. He's assistant to the president of AFL-CIO. Before that, he was head of the Human Rights Initiatives and before that, he was with the Steelworkers Union, if I'm remembering right, which at that point we were in Pittsburgh. Is that right, Richard?

**Richard Womack:**  
Philadelphia.

**Andy Imparato:**

Okay. Richard is also on the board of the NAACP. He's the Chair of the Board of the National Coalition for Black Civic Participation and I have had the pleasure of being able to work with Richard since the mid '90s and I can tell you that he clearly gets the importance of the labor movement seeing disability issues as equally important with other civil rights issues that the labor movement has been a leader on for so many years. Richard came all the way to Dallas for a summit on disability policy in 1996 and he was in the employment breakout session that John Lancaster was supposed to facilitate. But because his mother died just before it, I had the fine job of doing that, and I'll never forget, we were all talking about jobs and what we

were going to do to make more jobs available for people with disabilities to work. And he said, you know, you all are talking about jobs, let's start talking about good jobs. So that's really what we are here to do today, to talk about not just how we can improve employment opportunities and employment rates for people with all types of disabilities, but how can we make sure that the jobs are good jobs with good benefits, with good wages, and that employers understand that it's good business to provide those kinds of jobs. So without further adieu, please join me in welcoming Richard Womack.

[Applause].

**Richard Womack:**

First of all, let me thank Andy for those wonderful words of encouragement. I got encouraged from it and enticed me to do a little bit more if I can do that if it's possible. But I want to also thank the American Association of People with Disabilities for the tremendous job that they are doing because there are not enough organizations out here that are spreading the gospel in terms of what should we be doing as a society and community to make sure that we advance the rights of all people and I think people with disabilities fits in that category.

But let me just say that it's an honor for me to be here this morning, this afternoon, I'm sorry, but also I want to just thank just a couple of people this morning. I always want to thank all my labor friends who are here, and I won't start naming names, but they are all sitting around the table. It's always wonderful to see them in the crowd and I depend on them and I feel honored that you are here and I know because you're here, we're going to have a lively discussion today.

But I also want to thank a couple of people because, you know, there's always someone who gives you your insight that you need. And I know for a number of years we all have attitudes, we all have things we have to overcome, and I will say that I am so glad that many of us are not planting cement. That we can change with the time, and that we can overcome attitudinal barriers and other things that we are faced with day in and day out and I'm thankful for a couple of people in this room who have given me some insight, not just insights in terms of people but in terms of people with disabilities and I want to thank John Lancaster and Paul. Because of them, for a number of years, we have worked together. He's not here today, but I'm glad his wife is here because many of you know Justin Dart and his wife has been by his side and carried on and I want to thank her as well because these are people in the institution who have made a difference and I'm proud to be associated with all of them today.

I know you are here today because you believe in the issues. You're really concerned. And so I'm not going to take a lot of time because my job is to moderate, not speak. But, you know, sometimes it's tempting, but I'll get over that. I just want to say real briefly, I keep saying -- AAPD, but I do better by saying the American Association of People with Disabilities, because when I first saw those

letters, I couldn't figure out what AAPD meant, but I have learned over the years what it stands for. It stands for making a better life for people with disabilities and I think that's important to remember. But today we have a good panel that's going to talk to us about issues and concerns and give us some good insights and I'm going to have to read these bios. I wish I could tell you that I know every one of them personally, but I don't. But these are some tremendous people with some tremendous insight. So with that, let me just say I'm going to read these bios but the people are going to come forward in the order from which they are seated. So from my right to the left is how they will be presented to address the subject matter. When I introduce them, you say well, why didn't he introduce them that way, well, I will try.

Let me first start off with Dave Parr, Disability Chairman at Work. He has a website and I would encourage all of you to go to that website, it's called Disability Champions at Work. Dave Parr studies tutoring and for the past three years he has done the product work for Disability Champions at Work and initiative created by the trade union as part of Disability People 2003. He became active in the trade movement by working as a designer at BAE Systems. It was there that he became involved in disability issues working with a rep who was profoundly deaf. He was a member of the national committee that devised and wrote the project and continues to be the second project worker. That is Dave, who is sitting first near my right here.

The next person I want to introduce is Louis Guida. He is the co-coordinator of the Save Our Safety Net Campaign. Clergy and groups are organized against the culture of health care facilities while fighting for universal access for quality, affordable health care for all of New York State. As part of his work, the Save Our Safety Net Campaign also advocates for the specialties of medically underserved areas, communities of color, suffering from disparities and access and the outcome and health care and other populations such as those with chronic illnesses and disability for whom there are multiple barriers to accessing the full range of health care services as needed. Mr. Guida works for the Committee for an International Union, representing 12,000 physicians across the United States and in Puerto Rico. Mr. Guida was a nursing home and hospital worker prior to becoming an organizer for The New England Health Care Employees Union, District 1199. He is also a foundation and fellow at The Graduate Center for Worker Education and the Central University of New York City Caucus Scholar, working with the New York State blacks, Puerto Ricans, Hispanics and Asians on health policy. That is Mr. Louis Guida.

Our next presenter is Barbara Byers, Executive Vice President of the Canadian Labor Organization and serving a second three-year term, was the first elected executive vice president in 2002 after more than a decade as president of the Population of Labor. Her upbringing is reflected in her openness and determination to fight for the underdog. Her 17 years with the Social Services brought sister Byers face to face with issues that remain at the center of labor's agenda: worker rights,

equality, youth, unemployment and justice for equality seeking groups. Her conviction naturally led her into political activism, having risen through the ranks of the government Employees Union, she's at the helm of the SGEU. Through the years of the conservative government she made her presence felt nationally as the officer responsible for education, youth, Medicare, health care, training and technology, literacy and employment assurance and apprenticeship and as a labor executive at the executive level, Barbara Byers also ensures that the worker's voices are heard.

Our final panelists will be Larry Trayner, central region representative from the American Postal Workers Union, Deaf, Hard of Hearing Task Force Dearborn Heights, Michigan. He is a leader in the Deaf, Hard of Hearing Task Force at the American Postal Workers Union. This task force is a forum for American Postal Workers Union members to address their union problems and concerns in the workplace. Union and society established in 1988 by amendment to the ADW National Constitution, this includes federal communication, federal representation, better training, better workplace, a better union and building friendship. Mr. Trayner is one of five representatives selected by the National Deaf, Hard of Hearing Conference to serve as spokesperson for the committee.

With that, you now have the number of presenters that will present to you. And let me say as I take my seat, that they will speak briefly, and I know they have a lot to say, but they're not going to do it all here today. So they will speak briefly as we move forward. So with that, Dave, the floor is yours.

[Applause].

## Panel

### Dave Parr:

Thank you. I want to start with an apology to the interpreters because I think I have probably got the worst English speaking accent because of the nature of where I come from in England. It was once said that you set sail and never quite reach home, but I will try my best. I wanted this afternoon to just briefly to talk about the discrimination in the U.K. and some of the flaws and the issues around that and some of the government structure that is in place and then mention about the facilities in the U.K. with respect to training and some other things we have developed and how that developed into the project which we call Disability Champions.

Following that, I was going to talk to you about what we have been doing this week and get into a brief discussion of how this adapts to the U.S. The U.K. Disability Discrimination Act is not similar to the Disability Act. It's got two key duties. First, not to discriminate anybody on the grounds of disability and second is the need to make reasonable adjustments and from reasonable adjustments, reasonable accommodations are basically the same thing.

Nobody has to employ anybody who is disabled but what they have to do is treat everybody fairly. We have got a government program called Access Aware and this provides payments for reasonable accommodations. It can be used for access in terms of software, training. It can be up to 100% of the accommodation and excess of 20 pounds and the government by and large doesn't know about it, what they are doing about it and don't know how to access it.

Back to voluntary code -- and it's got five commitments. First of all, guaranteed interview so all disabled applicants will be interviewed when applying for a job. They have to have a retention policy for workers -- we have got to train all staff on disability issues and they have to review these policies annually, quite a strong commitment. In fact, it sounds fantastic, almost like too good to be true. But we know from the cases in the grievances that, from the tribunal, that it's just not that simple. It doesn't work quite that easily. And in those countries, it's around 80% and the culture of the norm is accepted. Most of the cultures in Europe have similar identities -- so they are almost fostered to employ disabled people and the daily comments about let's talk about job policy, what effect does that have on quality jobs? When in 1997 the labor came to power in the U.K. after 18 years in conservatives the common thread was full employment. Now, I'm sure you have your own views of Mr. Blair, but you can look at this two ways, is it forcing people with benefits to employment? Or is it giving opportunities to everybody? And personally I think it's a blend of the two.

Single parents can't work because they have to look after the kids during the day. People with low literacy skills said that they couldn't get work. We have free assessments up to level two for anybody who wants it. Disabled people said this is not accessible. Transport isn't accessible and the attitude of the employer prevents us from getting work, and well, very little changed. This is in an industry relying on expanding the European Union. In the U.K., the union represents well established legal rights for time off for training. This applies to shop stewards.

In the 1990's -- I would just like to say a little background about this -- the government started to investigate workers in the U.K. and Britain, and many of the working age population didn't have skills for life. And employers and unions looked for people to return -- and as an example, one branch... It was open to everybody and workers achieved the highest level, an automatic 43% pay raise just by signing up and engaging it. Amazingly the unions couldn't sell the proposal, it was rejected because everybody was looking for a hidden agenda. Everybody was saying, what happens if I fail? Why the is the company suddenly interested?

It was experiences like this which developed this role of the union. Within a year almost half of the workforce was engaged in the course and this was developed and staffed by union people. Recognized by the government, we now have the same steps to carry out the role as shop stewards and safety reps do.

Last year 67,000 people -- and it was projected that it will be 22,000 of them in 2010 and it will... And the agenda is quite clear that union -- so in 2002 it was

European Year of Disabled People... We looked at this union... We wanted to -- not because of disability discrimination, but because of it was the right thing to do. We had written a five-year training course that will provide our Champions with support that way in an interactive website, DisabilityChampions.com.

It's one of the specialist knowledge and share adjustments that has made a real difference for real people. As we did this it was an organization called SCULP for disabled people, initially for people with cerebral palsy, and they were looking to get involved and sent speakers to participate -- and now with the four partners in this current phase of the project and one of their staff working with me on a joint project -- SCULP called Ready, Willing and Disabled, and I have got a copy. These are the difficulties that disabled people have getting a job in the U.K. The front says 10 -- 24 job interviews, 1 disability, no job.

So it's quite... So it's stopped vast knowledge of disability issues is fantastic results of Disability Champions and our Disability Champions will address some of the issues that this report raises. At the end of 2005... Today it's around 200 Disability Champions 17 different unions. Some are male, some are female. The common thread is the genuine equality of work for disabled people.

More than 3,000 people have attended seminars and road shows and the project website -- and the Champion website published information about things and reports on specific disabilities and the kind of work they have been involved with to share ideas. Many employees engage in the project too, either by simply getting people to come to the training course or seeking out people, sending their committees. Can't you go on this training course and send about four or five people at the same time?

And prepare the 15 months of the -- training published by the union education that's available right across the U.K. The legal aspect, the government initiatives, there's a lot more details about the training from the websites and sheets for distribution that are available for the conference outside.

Let me just give you a quick example of how it can be used. Let's take a member of staff with a braille output device computer. This can cost around 6.5 thousand pounds, so it's difficult to say this persons got this skill for the job, but one is going to cost this, who is the employer going to take on? The employee will bear nothing by the government fund. If it's over six weeks, well in this case it's around 5,000 pounds, will be from the employer to pay the 1500. The employer doesn't know what's there. It has an absolutely awful reputation in the disability community. Once an employer has this standard, we don't need to do anything else.

-- So by way of a conclusion, Disability Champions can raise the awareness of what's meant by disability and -- when the accommodations do require funding, it can... By carrying out interactive audience. It can make that into a genuine and workable and what's the word I'm looking for? A realistic and constructive site for

people. So from my experience over the last three years, I don't think anything is fundamentally changing in the U.K. We just need someone to draft the agenda and hopefully Disability Champions can be that candidate.

So I'll be happy to welcome the questions later, but as I mentioned, Louis has been working with me during the last few days before I came over and just look at how we can make this happen in the U.S. So, hats off.

Thank you.

[Applause].

**Louis Guida:**

Hi. Thank you all very much. I really appreciate the opportunity to be here today to talk a little bit about some of the work that we're doing and the work that Dave's been doing in England and how we might be able to adapt that and incorporate it within the community education programs in the United States.

I guess first, my name is Louis Guida. I'm a coordinator at the Save Our Safety Net Campaign. We're based in New York City, a broad-based coalition, labor unions, community-based organizations and advocacy organizations such as The Center for the Independence Disabled in New York and New Yorkers for Accessible Health Care. We have been building a broad-based coalition to work together on health reform specifically, but through that process, we really, I think, are developing a model of this type of coalition work that can be adapted to a variety of different issues in our society, whether it's justice in the workplace or broader social and economic justice issues.

It's really important for us to try and bring as many people together as possible. When we're talking about health reform in New York, obviously as labor unions we have certain interests. But we also as labor unions represent a large number of people with disabilities who also have additional concerns and additional needs that need to be addressed in that process; determining what are health care systems are going to look like and how we can improve it to meet the needs of all of our people. I have really been encouraged with the process of doing this coalition work and developing relationships that we might not have had the opportunity to, that we hope we can utilize later on when we try and tackle other issues.

Fortunately through this program that I have been working on, we have become very good friends with The Center of the Disabled in New York and they have been fantastic, both in doing direct service work and doing the advocacy for the needs of people with disabilities in New York State.

And when Dave had talked to me about the Disability Champions program and whether or not there would be the opportunity to adapt something like what he does in England for the U.S. labor movement, of course we have a fantastic ally in Sydney who can look at the course materials and who can help us adapt those

materials, you know, to change the legal framework from the DEA to the ADA, similarly, but obviously we have a different framework. And we need to figure out how we can do that within the existing structures of unions.

I guess I'll just say I have been working with Dave actually for a couple of years now on an international labor solidarity project where a group of unionists and educators from the United States and the United Kingdom have gotten together to do an exchange program, to bring rank-and-file members of unions who work mostly the public education and emergency response, back and forth to take a look at both terms of conditions of work and the broader provision of public services and health care and education.

Through that process of working on this international labor solidarity project, I was fortunate to be able to see the beginning and the development of the Disability Champions program in the U.K. And I thought as someone would come out of the rank and file as a health care worker, who was a shop steward, who worked with many of my brothers and sisters of people with disabilities, I felt terribly under prepared, completely unprepared sometimes to be able to assist them with securing their legal rights in the workplace and into making the workplace fully accessible and fully accepted.

And I thought, you know, when I looked at this program and saw the commitment of the British Trade Union to incorporate this work into their regular work to teach the union representatives as part of their day-to-day duties, this is in the United States more than five people as a person with a disability. When we talk about labor unions and representing our members, we're not able to do that unless we're able to represent all 6 of our members. So I have been working with Dave to try and build some relationships here where we can try and work with unions who have disability committees and maybe start a couple of project pilots, pilot projects, excuse me.

There are two unions in New York City, which we're hopeful we'll be able to work with and then with an ally like Sydney, we can adapt and develop those materials. Obviously there are some real challenges that we face in the United States that in the U.K. aren't issues. The issues of funding, where they do receive significant government support for the program and for the access to work program to pay for accessibility demands in the workplace. That's something that we would have to figure out here.

Another thing that I think is probably the single biggest challenges that labor would face in adopting a program like this is that, like Dave said in the U.K., they have statutory release time for union representatives, which essentially means the student is released from work with pay time mandated by the government for a five-week training program. We would have to figure out how to condense that in getting our union representatives in for training and education and how we work that, that's something that we still need to figure out. But I'm very pleased that we have a model that has been very effective. And as Dave said, the Disability

Champions website is a tremendous resource.

When reps in different industries and different fields are trying to figure out how to get their employers to make the accommodations that they should be required to do, you know, they can talk with each other and facilitate those discussions over great distances and across industrial and union lines and really build a network of solidarity that I think is a model for us to look at and build upon.

So I just want to say, I'm really hopeful that over the course of the next, you know, coming month, we'll be able to develop a pilot project that we can prove to be successful and that we can then, you know, hold up as an example of one more thing that the labor movement should do. As I have said, you know, through the Save Our Safety Net Campaign, I can't stress the value of bringing together labor, community, clergy, advocacy organizations, public health advocates to try and tackle these broader issues and to do it together.

If we're talking about social and economic justice in building a better society that's better for all of our members and all of the people who live in this country, then we really have to do more of this collaborative work. I think that we have been doing it in the Save Our Safety Net Campaign model and Dave's model and hopefully working with many of you in the future. So thank you very much.

[Applause].

**Barbara Byers:**

Okay. I think I got the message. Good afternoon. My name is Barbara Byers and I'm with the Canadian Labor Congress. I'm one of the executive vice presidents and it's been my pleasure to be here, bringing greetings on behalf of your brothers and sisters in the CLC. Our president, Ken George, Idea Jette, the other executive, our secretary of treasurer and most especially from our staff in our Human Rights Department who work on human rights issues very intensely and intently.

I wanted an opportunity to hear what other people are doing because what we're really gathered here to talk about is mobilizing for change, mobilizing for disability rights at the political level and mobilizing for change within. Because those are some of the places that we do have to be able to work, I want to talk this afternoon mostly about the self-organizing of our CLC disability rights activists and our MORE Campaign, which I'll get to the acronym. But I want to say first up that unashamedly I believe that we stole the acronym from people in the United States. We think that that's where it came from at any rate. So we're giving you it back, I guess, the name.

But first I want to look at the Canadian context so you understand what we're dealing with and I'm going to ask people's indulgence while I occasionally deal with a cold I developed somehow.

We don't have an act like the ADA, the Americans with Disabilities act, although, such legislation has been envisioned. Most recently, in fact, promised by our

newly elected prime minister. Now, it's been the position of the Canadian Rights Movement, a position that the Canadian movement has ordered, that comprehensive legal protection already exists through our charter rights and freedom, through our human rights legislation in all of our jurisdictions and in our Employment Equity Affirmative Action law federally.

In addition, we had a landmark Supreme Court decision in 1999, which reflected the arguments of the CLC because we intervened and the Coalition of Disabled Network of Women in Canada and the Legal Education Women Action Fund and it's made a huge impact in our ability to fight this in the workplace discrimination. Employers and the collective bargaining now face a much greater obligation to accommodate employees and must, proactively design workplace standards, tests, policies, including hiring to ensure that from the very beginning they do not discriminate.

This case means systemic, not only individual redress and it's a huge step forward. Of course, strong enforcement of the law is quite something else and that really takes political will. It also takes political will to address the economic and social reality of people with disabilities in Canada who are still among the poorest in the country, still facing barriers in employment and community life.

And I think it was important when we started out, it was mentioned yes it's about jobs, but it's not about any jobs, it's about decent jobs. And I just came from an economic and social council at the U.N. yesterday that's dealing with the whole issue of decent work.

There was an interesting discussion with a panel on disability rights. The disability rights community, including training and activists for years, and at times our progress has been achieved. And in others, we have seemed to have rolled back, and so some of the solutions are the ones that we have been talking about for years and trying to make those steps forward for political action. We need a federal provision labor market strategy that quite clearly encompasses disability rights. At our convention last June, disability rights activists got up on the convention floor -- delegates got up and said, when we had a paper on the whole question of labor market trends on training that we didn't have enough of the disability rights screen in there and so it was a challenge to the rest of the labor movement.

We need quality reduction obviously. We need a national supports fund. We need to have the barriers removed and we need to have wider accessibility and we need accessible election campaigns. And we need continued reform of our taxation system. So those are some of what we're looking at in terms of the outside.

Now, in terms of mobilizing with the U.N., we believe in the Canadian movement that we have a proud history of activism and self-organizing and a proud history that we have called Social Unionism, that it's not our job to only bargain contracts or look after grievances. Our job is to be very much embedded and connected into

our communities so we responded to the challenges that have been presented to us.

And I want to first talk about the structural changes in the Canadian Labor Congress and in our fight for equality. It's really a reflection of self-organizing because no structural change comes about without activists mobilizing, and I think about I as a woman coming through the movement. It was the voices of women organized inside the movement that created some of the first changes in terms of women's equality at our executive level.

So in 1984, there were six additional positions added to our executive council for the Canadian Congress for the six largest unions and those were positions to be held by women. And obviously the ranking officer was the first position. But the additional position was to be held by a woman. And if the ranking officer was a woman, well, then both positions were held by women. We weren't flipping it around. And then with that door sort of open so that in 1994, two additional seats were added which were workers of color. In 1996, which was our next convention, there was a position added for workers. Then we went to three-year worker, so the next change came in 1999 when seats were added for persons with disabilities, for youth, for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender members, so again we added positions. So again saying that these positions were added because of organizing from within.

Because in 1994 four working groups were established following the adoption of a CLC convention policy and that created the space for self-organizing and for moving that agenda forward for all equality seeking groups within the Canadian movement, the first person that was selected for Vice President for Disabilities was brother Derrick Fudge and he was elected at a rights conference in Montreal. And that's, again, those positions are elected by their communities. They are not a general election on the floor.

So the disability rights vice president is elected by a caucus of people who self-identify as coming from the disability rights community. And the words of the disability rights itself in terms of a vice president in hopes of achieving a vice president person with abilities is an important structural improvement as it affords persons with disabilities with the opportunity to participate directly in the highest decision making body in the entire labor movement in Canada. And what the group says in its own words is that it has done this since its establishment. The CLC Disability Rights Working Group has been involved in a wide range of activities, including policy development, organizing, publicizing and educating ourselves on the range of issues facing persons with various disabilities, attempting to bridge the gap between injured workers and other workers with disabilities, working with the community, acting as a resource for affiliates and educational activities.

So that's pretty ambitious and they are committed to the principles of self-help and advocacy. And they believe that persons with disabilities are their own best spokespersons. They reject the traditional attitudes that society has had -- society

based on the medical model, the assumption that persons with disabilities need to be taken care of or that there needs to be charity or dependence and so on. And all of those things can be found if you go to our website and take a look at our information, you'll see that quite well laid out. And really lots of ways they reflect a class analysis as well as the whole question of disability rights, that this is about a class discussion as well.

So I want to briefly just spend the next, maybe, five minutes on the MORE campaign. And as I said, thank you very much, we borrowed it from you and we're not quite sure from who, but we give them all the credit. When the Canadian Labor Congress began a program called Work Working for You, which is a 10-year program to look at a yearly basis of how people are doing in the workplace, the disability working group really saw that as an avenue to participate so they developed the MORE campaign to fit with the broader initiative. It covers four areas of regular, everyday union work.

MORE stands for Mobilize, Organize, Represent, and Educate, and I brought some of our leaflets with me. But I just want to outline some of those.

MORE, in terms of Mobilize. Unions must create vehicles so all levels of people with disabilities can work together as sisters and brothers in the struggle for workplace democracy and economic justice. Bring us into every facet of union activity so we are involved and our voices are heard.

Organize says work works better for us when we belong to a union. Unions need to ensure that their organizing strategies include approaches aimed specifically at working people with disabilities. Holding meetings at fully accessible locations include a disability rights perspective in a certification drive and ongoing participation in campaigns and public policy issues are ways that unions can let us know that they are on our side.

Represent. Unions have a legal duty to represent all members. Issues of accessibility and accommodation are bare bone fundamentals for working people with a disability, creating opportunities for us to participate at all levels within the union insures that our issues are on the bargaining table and the results translate into victory for all workers.

And finally, educate. Make it a priority to integrate a disability rights perspective into all regular union educational programs. Our public policy and workplace demands need to be better understood by our bargaining teams, by our executives, by our staff and by our members.

So we have -- we took on more. We have an interim report on what we did. It's an ongoing focus. It wasn't something that we just did on one occasion and then said okay, that's it. That's what we're doing for December whatever year. We produced as you have seen, brochures, they are out in the hallway and I invite you if you need more of them, to get a hold of our Human Rights Department. There are posters, and as someone who hates to see a poster folded, if you do want one

that's in more -- that's in a better shape for framing, let us know. We won't send it to you framed, but we will send it to you in a tube. We presented -- we have done buttons. We have sent out surveys. We have extended the deadline on our surveys. We sent up another letter and so it goes on and on and on and you'll see as well there that we have -- we have stickers with -- that are done in braille with the MORE message on it as well.

It's a work in progress. But I want to say to you that it's a work that we're continually challenging ourselves on.

A number of our affiliates and our territory federations of labor have developed policy statements. They have established a disability rights caucus or committee. They provide vehicles for promoting our agenda through collective action. Policies have been adopted. Courses on disability rights and the duty to accommodate are being developed and being offered as union education. Some affiliates have done what the CLC has done, which is set aside this on their executives for various seeking groups.

But perhaps it is that an increasing number of members with disabilities are getting involved in their locals and that's the reward for the labor movement, quite frankly. That's what makes it very good for us because we have people who are taking more and more of a leadership role and demanding that as well. They're being elected to come to conventions, they're being elected as disability rights vice presidents in our organizations. And it's going to be through continuing to encourage more activists for more equality seeking groups, including persons with disabilities to get fully involved in the labor movement as a whole will attract, I think, a wider range of new members and support.

True solidarity requires the active involvement of everyone. It requires our involvement in terms of the labor movement, but it requires that we reach out, that we be sensitive in organizing, but we really reflect all those things that MORE says. And our workplaces can become truly the diversity that they need to be and that they should be in our communities. If we're doing our job, if we're mobilizing, if we're organizing, if we're representing and if we're educating. And for us it is about work and decent work.

Finally -- decent work. Finally, we have left a lot of information out there and I invite you to take that up. We also -- I'll leave you more -- more, that's a good word.

We have a disability rights collective bargaining manual that was done and so you'll see as well that that's the result of some of the conferences the we're having and it does make a big difference. And, yes, it does put demands on the union. I don't know leadership and you know what? That's okay. Because it's important that our workplaces be truly representative.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to be here. I always feel like I get far more out of these interactions than I can possibly give. I want to thank you very,

very much on behalf of Canadian workers and hope to continue a long standing working relationship and make sure that we get more for working people.

Thank you very much.

[Applause].

**Larry Trayner:**

Hello, everybody. I was very honored to be involved in this today. I know the microphone issue seems to be a little bit of a difficulty because I'm relying on the interpreter to voice for me as I sign.

Okay. Anyway, my name is Larry Trayner. I'm from Michigan and I'm involved with the American Postal Workers Union Task Force and have been involved with that task force for the past three years and I have been very appreciative and I want to thank the AAPD for giving me that opportunity to help us get deaf people involved in that program.

Since 1988 when the first group of deaf individuals got together and started talking about our issue, we decided to figure out how to establish and find a way to get involved with the APWU and encourage those individuals that were working with us and we became good buddies with Judy Beard who helped us to bond this relationship and they gave us a great opportunity to become involved in the APWU

Since 1988 to 1989, the hearing people in the group were fantastic in letting us get involved and allowing us to have a say in the creation of our subcommittee. The purpose of the task force is to give all the information regarding deaf employees' issues and concerns that the management of the Post Office needs to understand. We wanted to better educate them, and the APWU gave us the opportunity to be involved -- us deaf people to be involved in that education process.

Since the years have gone by, we have had a lot of opportunities given to us by the APWU such as negotiation processes to have words added to the contract such as a memo of understanding -- a memorandum of understanding. And in that memo it really emphasizes that the key for the relationship between us and the management and how we can succeed.

We have several people involved like Bill Norris, our president. He's been fabulous in allowing us -- been very supportive in allowing us to give more education. Larry Stapleton, who is our liaison, he really wants to be involved and understand more about our rights. Since we have been involved and established a stronger relationship, we're seeing a big difference in our contracts. Without those people supporting us, we never would have been successful.

So once they agree and once they really got behind us in this effort, we have been able to give more education about deaf issues and get more deaf people involved. You know, for many deaf people, their language is ASL, American Sign Language. Their first language is not English.

So those of us on the task force in the five different regions, and we have in the East, one in the Northeast, one in the Central, Western, and the Southern. Those five regions fall under the task force for deaf people in each of those regions. And what we have done is we give more information to the hearing people and to the deaf people alike. And we give seminars, annual seminars, to educate deaf people and we allow hearing people to be involved in those seminars to give them more information and also we have established a national deaf conference and at that deaf conference we have seen more expression, more people getting involved in explaining about the issues that they have to raise the awareness.

So those people like Bill Burries and Larry Stapleton, Mike Reed, Jody Burk, those people have been involved and they have become the people that have stood behind us to allow the APWU to be on the rank and file and have us involved.

And I would like Marcie Ryan to stand up. She's the first deaf woman who will be in the rank and file.

[Applause].

In the past several years, we have seen during the negotiation process, the Post Office management and the APWU have allowed us to be more involved in that discussion, and what's more, what has really impressed us is even though they do agree with some of our rights, the APWU has been very strong and great in advocacy.

So we had 10,000 deaf employees working throughout the United States and those 10,000 employee, that's a large number for those people on the task force to represent. During the National Hearing Convention we had about 4,000 delegates that are in that convention and the APWU allowed us individuals to be involved during that de-- and we were able to give our input to the resolutions that were brought up and were able to share the issues that us deaf individuals have. And what I really feel very strongly -- I was very impressed with the APWU because they were the first union that really worked with us. Nationwide I have noticed that really there are unions that are getting more involved in different issues, but not like what the APWU has done for us. The deaf people are stewards for example, they are allowing us to be involved, be on the task forces.

There are many things that can I name. But suffice its to stay I just am very proud to be an APWU member and a representative. But they are really amazing. It's hard for me to put that into words just exactly what it's like. But I'm just very impressed.

Thank you.

[Applause].

Questions from the Audience

Richard Womack:

Let me just say that now is your opportunity if you have some burning questions that you have to ask. I would only ask if you want to identify a specific person, they will answer it from where they are sitting.

So does anybody have any questions?

**Female Audience Member:**

I would like to ask one of the members of the Canadian trade movement. We represent federal employees and we work closely with veteran groups, federal government employees and a lot of the administration here are veterans because of veterans preference and many of them are disabled and so we have a concern here because as this administration tries to shrink the federal government and outsource federal jobs to the private sector, we think it has a particular impact on disabled people because they are represented both as veterans and as disabled employees and I wonder if you have the same concerns in whether you fight the same battles there.

**Barbara Byers:**

As you know, we have just gone through a change in government in Canada.

**Female Audience Member:**

Yes.

**Barbara Byers:**

And, yes, we have a lot of concerns. On a lot of things.

But -- I mean, I think in terms of the whole equality rights, disability rights, I want to say something from a perspective that I think the disability rights, even though we have done some very good work, has been -- hasn't had the same stature as some of our other equality work has. For example, on women, on workers of color, and I think it's going to be -- and not roll backwards and to ensure that disability rights doesn't get thrown farther back.

So yes, it is a large concern. And I don't know if that specifically answers it. I mean, people who work for the federal government in the public service alliance of Canada, which is the union that represents most federal government employees, would be in a better position to talk specifically about that.

But, yes, we're very concerned that we're taking a turn to social and economic conservatism and that's our challenge in front of us. We have met it before. So I guess we'll meet it again.

**Richard Womack:**

Gwen?

**Gwen Johnson:**

Yes, I'm Gwen Johnson. I'm with the communication workers here in Washington, D.C. My question is for Louis.

If I understood you correctly in your presentation, you talked about the education and training and how to get it done by the stewards within the labor unions. Can you expound on that a little bit? If you have students training within the labor union, why would it be difficult?

**Louis Guida:**

I think the key difficulty would be that the program that Dave has developed and has modeled throughout the U.K. is a very extensive program. It's a five-week training course, and under a law that was passed by the labor party several years ago, union representatives are actually given paid released time to attend those programs. So essentially you get time paid off from work to attend those classes.

In some sectors of the labor in the United States, we do have contractual provisions which allow for this time for union representative to get training, but in many unions that's not the case. And for, you know, as you can imagine, for most working people to take five weeks, or even five days of unpaid time on their own dollar to attend training course, I think that would be sort of the structural difficulty which we would have to face in certain unions and have to figure out a way to incorporate it into the existing training regimens or to attract people to participate and this is a stand alone working program on a volunteer basis.

So I think that's what really my main concern is about, how we apply this program in the U.S. And, I don't know, Dave, if you have...

**Dave Parr:**

Yeah, the training is five weeks because that was, as I mentioned, it was built on something that was already there. So we said... And obviously different groups of work have problems with that and an example of that in front of the schoolteachers union and for them to take five Mondays for example in a half term and missing the same group, it's inconsiderable. Equal rights or no equal rights, it's disruptive to the classes.

So we have developed... And some things to follow on and that kind of thing and we're looking to develop meetings -- I mean, it's not quite as simple as maybe I made out but there's still a lot of issues and I think that debate about the issues we have will help focus a little bit on how we're going to get people to take the training in a similar manner.

**Richard Womack:**

Yes?

**Eileen Seitzer:**

Hi, my name is Eileen Seitzer and I have done comparative disability policies for last 30 years and one of the issues that has come up very often as key to whether people who are workers who develop a disability are able to stay in the workforce is the issue of the labor laws, particularly the issue of the mandate on an employer to hold the job and to pay salary.

As you know in the United States, and I hope you know, we don't really have strong labor laws. There are no -- there is no mandate that prescribes how long an employer must hold the job, and the only thing we have is the Family and Medical Leave Act, which is only for employees, it's only for 12 weeks within a year and it does not provide any pay. So we don't have that underpinning of strong labor laws.

So my question to Mr. Parr is what are the laws in your country and how do they act to encourage or mandate the employer to hold the job when a worker develops a disabling condition?

**Barbara Byers:**

I'll start out. The Canadian context is that we don't have one set of labor laws, and the people at The National Labor Organization would really like it if we did.

We have a federal government. We have three territorial governments and 10 provisional governments and the vast majority of workers are covered under provisional or territory labor laws which are all set by their jurisdiction, which is a huge variance in that as well, in terms of how people are covered.

There is, though -- again, the Supreme Court's decision in part is what we would rely on about employer's duty to accommodate people returning to the workplace, and obviously the whole question of -- and this would be in mostly unionized workplaces where people have long-term disability plans where they return to work. And again it's duty to accommodate and the same thing with workers compensation plans. There are some preventional jurisdictions that have some amount of time for people who have a disability.

But again, it's unpaid. And there are not a huge amount of guarantees, but obviously with somebody returning to the workplace the question is about the employer making the accommodation.

When I say that, I also say it's about union making the accommodations. Because we had situations where there are more than one union, there's more than one union in a workplace. And a worker had a disability in one bargaining group, and when they are due to return to work, there is -- there is not a reasonable job. I mean, taking into account all sorts of accommodation in their current bargaining group, but it's still the same employer.

So there is a duty to accommodate in the other bargaining room, and that creates all sorts of interesting discussions between unions, and it's difficult, but it's one that quite clearly the law has laid out to us that says the union can't also be seen as, you know, the gatekeeper in keeping people out.

And so it's a long way to say that we haven't got near what we would like either. But, again, I look at it from, and I'm admittedly bias, but I think research also proves it, is that if people are in a unionized workplace, they have a much better chance, a much better chance of being able to get access back to the workplace

because of the accommodations, because of the union's responsibility to take that up.

**Dave Parr:**

And the answer is probably yes. However, as a union rep in that kind of case, there are so many little bits of legislation... Domestic emergencies and time off for dependence and time off for people who are adopting kids for example. And these things are just happening a step at a time.

Things are just slowly changing and so the issue of we're better off in a labor shop, I think that's the key thing. I would be very comfortable in that situation as a -- but there isn't just the where does it say it? Is it Section 214a, where something that says --

**Barbara Byers:**

Can I just add one thing? It is that one of the other things that is a requirement of unions in many jurisdictions is what we call Duty of Fair Representation. And that in fact if, for example, I know that in a jurisdiction where I was the president of the Federation of Labor for a number of years, we had a fairly well known case where a man who had a psychiatric disability was dismissed from the job. The union had tried to make some accommodations and, in fact, he took the union to the labor board because he felt that they did not represent him correctly.

He tried his case and he won it -- it was one of those ones where people said, okay, now what do we do because he won it on the basis that even though they gave him every bit of good, legal, union advice that they could possibly give him, he refused to follow it and he wasn't -- and they felt that they couldn't represent him anymore and the labor board said you have a responsibility because he was incapable of knowing that he was not -- that he was not taking up the best advice possible.

So it was one of those ones that the union stood back and said oh, okay, we're going to have to think about how we do this. But there is both the duty to accommodate in terms of people coming back into the workplace, but also in terms of fair representation.

**Richard Womack:**

Anybody? I see a hand back there in the back.

**Male Audience Member:**

I have read of big differences between different employers, not just based on knowledge-ization or legislation but because of some employers who really appreciate the business case for employing people with disabilities in terms of their loyalty, activity and so on. But the great majority of employers don't focus on this, don't think about it and therefore if you want to increase the employment for people with disabilities, we have to motivate and educate employers. I wonder if any of you have anything to say about how we might do that?

**Richard Womack:**

Anybody?

**Louis Guida:**

I'll actually say just the discussion that Dave and I had this week with our friends at Center for the Independence and Disabled in New York. They had developed a program which they do in partnership with employers to talk about advocacy and awareness in the workplace. That is increasingly part of how they show employers the added value, you know, making marketed arguments about why it makes good business sense as well as is the right thing to do and they have a number of employers in New York City to bring them in to do workplace presentations and, you know, starting to make some progress in that area. More broadly, but that was actually the first time that I had heard about a program like that, and it's very exciting that they are trying some new techniques to entice employers to open their doors and open their minds a little bit.

**Richard Womack:**

Anybody else?

**Unidentified Panelist:**

I'll just add, I always think education of employers is always welcomed. But I think that you're right about the business case because too often they also use the business case back on why persons with disabilities end up being hired part-time, in contingent, precarious jobs. So, for example, call centers, you know, when you challenge about the level of part-time work that's in a call center and the employer says well, we're doing that because we're giving jobs to people with disabilities and they can't work the long hours. So I mean, they try to use the business case back. Probably a more positive thing though.

The work that -- well, one employer in particular, the Canadian Union and postal workers have worked with the Canadian Post, has done a lot of work on disability rights, not just with their own members.

But in fact about the children of their members -- the children who may have disability who are CPW members and employees, and that union has taken that up very, very vigorously and in fact to provide special, I guess, opportunities for those kids in the summertime that is in fact paid for through an agreement between the union and the employer.

But that's been ongoing work in that particular area and it's not necessarily connected exclusively to the workplace.

**Richard Womack:**

Yes, sir?

**Male Audience Member:**

Yes, I want to just give you a little context of what I think we're doing in the U.S. that may differ from you. Our federal minimum wage is \$5.15 an hour. People

estimate or I have seen estimates that 70% of the jobs in the country pay less than \$10 an hour. For \$10 an hour in many regions in our country it's not a living wage.

And, you know, we're just dealing with -- we have very few obviously union shops. And our shops that might be union are diminishing. I guess the question I would have is another thing, when we talk of poverty in our country, it's about half of what the U.K. or in other developed countries, where they draw the line. So we're twice as poor in our poverty level than you would be.

Given these factors that the disabled, many of the disabled along with so many more of the under-class of this country, are pretty stymied at dealing with these sort of situations because --

**Dave Parr:**

Back to this thing about policy and jobs in the U.K. The legislation around politics is this separate piece of legislation of gender, sexuality. It's almost unthinkable. Two people for whatever the difference doing the same job -- and it's so easy to prove and it's so easy to prosecute.

But the disparities are still there and for all the reasons that you said, opportunity, barriers put in place and disability -- whatever the issue is. One of the things that we need to show are the abilities of people, rather than disabilities of people. The more we can share and the kind of jobs that people are doing, the more we can get disabled people involved in the training of people and they will meet disabled people in that group of people along the course.

And instead of being some strange people that they are not concerned about -- they are tackling the same things together and so... And we have done a little bit of work where a specific wants to train their union members and the managers together, but they couldn't find one organization who will not be inviting union people or a person who is not even a member from somewhere else and we will have things that people -- you know, is it always necessary to...

**Barbara Byers:**

Well, things aren't really great in Canada, you know. We do have some advantages, but, I mean, take a look around worldwide, consider what's going on in France with young people where the government has decided to take away, you know, basically some key rights for young French workers.

I was just on this panel yesterday with somebody from World Bank who said the way to increase employment for young people was to remove the minimum wage problems and the other sorts of regulations. So this is a global push, and it gets, you know, it gets played out in better or worse terms in various regions in all of our countries and around the world. That's why I said in our remarks I really think the work that we have done with the disability community in the labor has been key for us.

So we're not going to be able to break those barriers whether or not somebody

has a contract. And again going back to my previous life as a federation president, we regularly made submissions to the government on the question of minimum wage, even though most of our members did not make minimum wage anyway because they had organized and somebody shouldn't have to have a union contract to be paid decently, but probably end up with a better chance of it. And those sorts of things and that's why I think the whole community is absolutely important. The community ground and people have lost of a lot of ground on the minimum wage issue.

In the mid' 70s, minimum wage earners in that province made 100% of the poverty line. So if you were a single person working 40 hours, it meant that you were doing better than poverty line wages. By the mid 1990's, they were at 70% of the poverty line. So people have lost a huge amount of grounds and huge ways to disparity.

I remember a quote, it was a U.S. quote that if the minimum wage in the U.S. had kept pace with the increases that corporate executives had received, I think your minimum wage would have been \$25 an hour and instead of the average wage being on total \$35,000 a year, it would be \$135,000 a year.

I'm sure those figures have gone up since, like I said, five or six years ago when I used that quote. But we spend a lot of time trying to bring up the sort of bottom wages of people and the argument of somebody on minimum wage gets a nickel or a dime, boy, they got a quarter an hour. And that's going to be really -- and meanwhile, we don't have maximum wages, which is something I think is a good idea.

But -- I mean, I guess all I'm saying to you is that the conditions, it's a global push, it's a global push on all of our wages and on all of our standards. And we're all fighting sometimes to stay still, to not lose ground. And instead -- my last point, and I'm sorry I took so much time.

But we just released two studies, one in August and one in January. One was about young workers and obviously young workers with disabilities are doubly hit on this. But at that point, we released information that showed that young workers in 200 PA were making 25% less with wages adjusted for inflation and in terms of real wages they were making 25% less than people of my generation from 25 years before. So they have lost, and obviously that crunch then comes harder down on those who are already -- who are still disenfranchised.

Then we just released another study on workers of color generally, but young workers of color who are again, who are at the bottom, even though they have got better education than their white counterparts.

So we are all facing it and we have got to figure out a way to push ahead and not go backwards and I don't think we should think standing still is a victory by the way.

**Richard Womack:**

Let me just interject for a few minutes. We are fast approaching cut-off time and I have one last question over here unless I'm told otherwise.

So the floor is yours.

**Female Audience Member:**

Oh, wow, I get the last question. I'm delighted.

There's a very vigorous debate in this country among policy and activists in the disability arena about the role that income supports play in the decision to work or not to work. We are known for the enormous strength of our U.S. safety net, but there is some belief that people make decisions about working in part based on their assessment of the relative -- their relative position, vis-a-vis income supports and pensions that may be available.

I'd love to hear your comment, all of you, on that issue and what you think is going on in your country on that level?

**Richard Womack:**

Who wants to take it first?

**Dave Parr:**

Well in the U.K. the disability package around some of the debate happens around disability. It's fairly complicated and it relies on different components, so if... There's a whole range of different issues and for somebody who's near the... But there are real benefits in disability, especially when you talk about how do you get on with the employment ladder.

Our minimum wage is 5 pounds an hour which I guess is 8.50. But even that, to get into a job, where you have got part of the benefit package, there's a real barrier and to go from maybe quite a long time on benefits to try to get 5 pounds an hour. You know, if I can go in on 10 pounds an hour, then I can make this -- it's the troubles that people have of getting benefits...

**Richard Womack:**

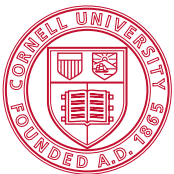
Anybody else?

**Barbara Byers:**

Well, I agree.

I mean, it is really complicated whenever you go and people do end up having to make some real decisions about whether they're going to work, what kind of work they go into because they can potentially lose benefits and I'm thinking specifically in the Canadian case at any rate about people losing benefits that they may have for glasses, for dental work -- all of those sorts of things that they may have on a Social Security system that they don't have otherwise.

Obviously in the Medicare system there are things that a lot of our folks don't



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