



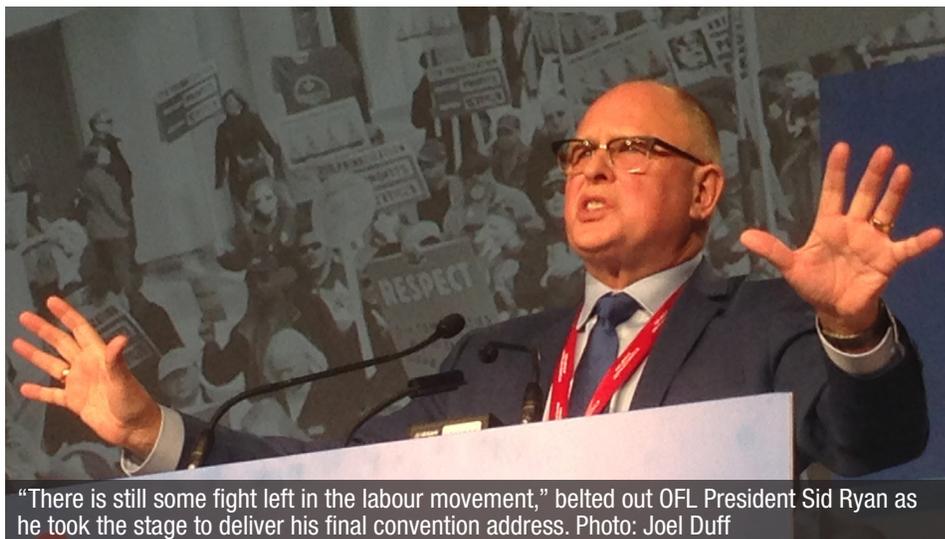
MONDAY REPORT

NOV. 23
2015



We have a lot of healing to do in the labour movement in Ontario. We have to restore unity. But we also have to get our mojo back. It is time to start occupying plants.

Sid Ryan, OFL President



“There is still some fight left in the labour movement,” belted out OFL President Sid Ryan as he took the stage to deliver his final convention address. Photo: Joel Duff



SID RYAN'S FINAL CONVENTION ADDRESS WAS A HEARTFELT ONE

Out-going OFL President Sid Ryan marked his final convention with a bold call for “labour to get its mojo back” that was characteristic of his fire-brand leadership in Ontario’s labour movement.

The 2015 OFL Convention kicked off on the first morning with an inspiring music video, featuring original music written and performed by Toronto’s Mohammad Ali, aka Socialist Hip Hop.

The title track of the Convention video was written as a direct response to the convention theme and called on labour and community activists to demand the change we need and to fight for the **Ontario We Want**. The full convention video clocked in at 20 minutes and provided a powerful account of Ontario’s reinvigorated labour movement. Stay tuned to Facebook and YouTube for daily releases of the full video ... in 5 parts.

Watch and share the music video at: <https://youtu.be/7B2X8uqRjoQ>



**13TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION
NOVEMBER 23-27, 2015
TORONTO, ONTARIO**

However, Sid proved that he is still capable of a few surprises, when his address took a heartfelt turn, reflecting on emotional touchstones as he acknowledged that “Ontario’s labour movement has some healing to do.” The crux of his challenge was a bold acknowledgment that divisions in the labour movement could not be allowed to hinder labour’s demand for workers’ rights.

The speech reminded delegates of the historic opportunity to redraft Ontario’s labour laws so that every job is a pathway out of poverty.

Sid’s speech was anchored on four pillars for change.

Front and centre was a call to put equity at the centre of the labour movement’s campaigns. More importantly, however, is the need for labour union leadership to be representative of the diversity of the membership.

“It is not enough to simply demand employment equity from our government, we must run our own internal employment equity pro-

gram in every union,” said Ryan. “We must develop diversity in our leadership and promote people of colour and other equity-seeking workers. Otherwise, we are going to die on the vine of the labour movement.”

Ryan also called on labour to re-engage with government, build stronger alliances with community partners and mobilize the membership.

“We’ve got to get our mojo back in the labour movement,” said Ryan. “Our strength is the people we put on the streets. We can no longer wait for workers’ rights to be handed to us; it is time to take action to create the change we want. When employers strip the rights of workers,

we must start occupying their plants. When the WSIB strips the rights of injured workers, we must occupy the WSIB!”

It was a fitting, and often moving, closing address from a 25-year veteran labour leader, who has earned a reputation for pushing the labour movement to stand by the courage of its convictions.

*History says, Don't hope
On this side of the grave,
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up
And hope and history rhyme.*

- from the Cure at Troy by
Seamus Heaney



Dynamic Human Rights Panel challenges delegates to address the intersectionality of inequality. Photo: Peter Boyle

HUMAN RIGHTS PANEL TALKS INTERSECTIONALITY

Human Rights Panelist Pam Dogra (ETFO) called on delegates to become allies to equity-seeking workers: "To be an ally is to be supportive, to speak out and to be an agent of change. Allies recognize that we all have a stake in equity. We must say to each other, 'your life is connected to mine.' We can't do activism in isolation. We build our movement through those alliances."

Five remarkable activists spoke about intersectionality and being a good ally during the Human Rights panel Monday afternoon.

Activist and journalist Desmond Cole moderated the panel, which included school board trustee Ausma Malik, Pam Dogra from ETFO, Jessica Burnie from OSSTF and Elaine White from Unifor.

They spoke of how multiple realities as women, racialized workers and people with disabilities affect them as workers, union members and activists. Many highlighted that good allies both take their lead from the movement they support and realize they have a stake in it too.

"There aren't a lot of places in the world that are vehicles for equity and equality, and I feel like education is one, and labour is one of them," said Malik, who encountered a well-funded and co-ordinated campaign of Islamophobia during her election campaign.

RESOLUTIONS CORNER

The following resolutions were adopted by Convention:

#1 - Black Lives Matter, #2 - Racial Profiling (also covers resolution #3 and #4), #6 - Equity Focused Action Plan (also covered resolution # 5), #7 - Protect Minority Rights, #8 - Crimes Motivated by Homophobia and Transphobia, #9 - Protection from Normalizing Surgery to a Child's Reproductive Organs, #10 - Solidarity and Pride, #21 - Fight Back Against Austerity, #11 - Workers of Colour, #22 - Workers Rights Campaign, #27 - Minimum Wage/Living Wage, #88 - Repeal Bill C-24, #89 - Public Education.

CBTU'S TERRY MELVIN CALLS FOR EQUITY SOLIDARITY

"In order to be successful we must all work together, to motivate and mobilize our members, our communities and our leaders," said Terry Melvin, president of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists in an electrifying speech on unity and equity.

He pointed to the way labour and social justice groups banded together to defeat Tim Hudak and Stephen Harper, and encouraged us to continue fighting together against the attacks against unions moving north from the U.S.

"We are in this boat together," he said. "This is not a Canadian struggle, it is not a U.S. struggle, it is not a South American struggle. It is a working people's struggle and we have a common cause, with a common enemy."

Melvin delivered a sharp call for labour's leadership to better reflect the diversity of its membership.

"If all we do is talk about the good old days, then we'll be back in the good old days," he said. "For people who look like me, the good old days weren't so good. We came here in ships and it wasn't by choice."

Racialized workers are the future of the labour movement, he said, but added that it is not enough to have equality positions on our union executive boards.

"We must stop unionizing our sisters and brothers of colour then expecting them to sit in the corner and wait to be seen," he said. "Stand with me for a united movement."



CBTU President Terry Melvin said unions cannot organize workers of colour and make them to wait for their leadership turn. Photo: Peter Boyle

DELEGATES TO RALLY FOR \$15 AND FAIRNESS

Delegates will seize the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reform Ontario's outmoded labour laws, not only to lift the minimum wage above the poverty line, but to make it easier to join a union and to lift employment standards for every worker in Ontario. The rally starts at the Sheraton Hotel at 11:30 am on Wed., Nov. 25, followed by a march to Queen's Park.

