

CEC Bulletin

(March, 2010)

ILO Meeting of Experts to Adopt a Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Agriculture

(Geneva, November 23 - December 1, 2009)

The Meeting of Experts to consider the draft Code of Safety and Health in Agriculture took place in Geneva on November 23 to December 1, 2009.

The draft Code for Safety and Health in Agriculture was presented to the group of experts only a week before the meeting, a document of more than 200 pages, obviously put together by many. There apparently was some delay on the formation of the document, but the decision of the secretariat was to go ahead and consider the document. At the beginning of the session, it was apparent to the employers group that the worker side (ie. union) had some other agendas. The major issue was a so-called safety and health representative who would have the power of access on any agriculture operation (farm), more or less a rogue union rep. From the start, the employers were unanimously opposed to this position. A meeting of the Committee chairs was convened (employer, government, and worker, along with reps from the secretariat). The worker group stated they would never give up the roving union (safety and health and safety rep.). The employers stated we would never accept the position and if that decision prevailed the meeting was over immediately. It was "indicated" that the issue was resolved.

The balance of the meeting (8 more days) went reasonably well, considering some of the chapters were poorly presented, and positions were firm. I will say the position of the employers was more compromising than the workers or government, a position that was noted to the employer chair by members of the secretariat. However, we did not give away "the farm" and our overall position was not compromised.

During the wrap up, however, the union decided that they needed that roving safety and health rep. The employer suggested some text that would allow it under these conditions:

- (1) where a tripartite committee of government (to enforce national laws and practice) workers and employers agreed on training of the rep. and protocol for the rep.;
- (2) was not allowed on any farm not unionized; and
- (3) must be invited by the farmer (actually at the farmer's request).

The union all at once decided they could not accept this and we would compromise no more, clearly it was a last session "end run".

So all but this issue are close to agreement, pending the next draft with protocol for comment only on the comments, not anything new, no more positions. The secretariat were reasonably pleased with the progress except, of course, the last hour.

A further draft will be completed for our comments, with more details in the future.

With the protocol in place already (for years) in Canada, this document when/if it is released will have no impact on farmers in Canada.

For the information of the CEC, the Canadian employer representative was appointed chair of the employer group.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ken Forth
Chair
Labour Issues Coordinating Committee (LICC)