



A MESSAGE FROM STEVEN MARTIN

2010 HONOURARY CHAIRMAN - LU 353 DAY OF MOURNING

The National Day of Mourning, held annually on April 28th was chosen when the Canadian Labour Congress proclaimed the Day to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the day the first Ontario Worker's Compensation Act was approved by government. The Day of Mourning was enshrined in national legislation by an Act of Parliament on February 1, 1991.

MARK THE DAY

April 28th is an important day for workers all across Canada, because it represents an opportunity to pause and remember those workers who were killed and injured on the job. It offers workers, unions and employers an opportunity to mark the day with vigils, services, or candle-lighting ceremonies; unveiling monuments, flying flags at half-mast, or wearing ribbons, armbands or stickers. A moment of silence is often observed at 11:00 am.

L.U. 353 has seen its share of tragedy and physical suffering, all compounded by financial loss. On October 3, 2007 we lost an electrical apprentice, Brother Stephen Cuthbertson Jr. who was electrocuted at the Portlands co-gen project. His father was his foreman that day and witnessed his son's death.

Co-workers on-site were also affected as they witnessed the death scene. These are grisly images and a stark reminder of the dangers electrician's face every day when working on or near energized systems.

Since the Portland's fatality, both SNC Lavelin and Lockerbie and Hole pleaded guilty to violations under the **Occupational Health & Safety Act**, and collectively were fined \$500,000 in 2009.

But it doesn't end there. Over the past four years several members have experienced serious injury. While these accidents did not result in death, the injuries were the worst kind - electrical flash burns!





In August 2005 Brothers Jim Steele and Mark Osborne were working in an electrical panel at the CNE when it blew up. The resulting flash burns put these members in hospital for over 5 months. In Mark's case he underwent numerous surgeries 30 months after the accident. Their lives will never be the same.

The CNE was charged under the *Occupational Health & Safety Act*, plead guilty, and fined \$100,000 for failing to provide personal protective equipment.

As this years Honourary Chairman, my message to you this April 28th is that every construction worker who goes to work has the right to return home to their families safe and uninjured. A construction workers life is just as important as any other worker, because regardless of one's uniform, no workers life is more important than another when it comes to death on the job.

On April 28th, let's all observe one minute of silence at 11:00 am to remember all those brothers and sisters who sacrificed their lives and health - because ***An Injury to One, Is an Injury to All.***

HOGG'S HOLLOW - 1960

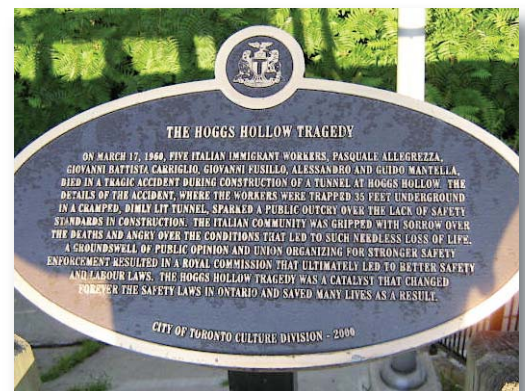
The early 1960s were a turbulent time for this province's labour movement. The exploitation of workers, particularly immigrant workers, was widespread, with many forced to earn a day's wages within highly unsafe working environments.



These men worked for pitiful wages, and in fear of deportation. They were totally unaware of their legal rights, and of the working standards that should have been enforced. On March 17, 1960, an event of tragic proportions occurred that would help spur this province's government into action - the "Hogg's Hollow Disaster". Five Italian Canadian workers were killed while constructing a tunnel at Hogg's Hollow (near Old York Mills Road and Yonge Street).

Working on the tunnel, the men were required to climb down 35 feet into a cramped, dimly lit tunnel with barely enough space to move around. The tunnel itself was 6 feet in diameter, with a 36 inch watermain running through it. To pass each other, the men were forced to crawl into a ball underneath the pipe.

As they worked, they wore no hard hats, carrying only their work tools. They had no flashlights.





“DISASTER ON THE DON”

TORONTO DAILY STAR, MARCH 18, 1960

When a flash fire suddenly hit the tunnel, the men became trapped in choking smoke, and were unable to see their way out. Their passage to safety was blocked by smoldering cables to the east, and by a cement tunnel support wall to the west.

In the mass confusion and panic that ensued, rescue workers shut down the compressors that forced air into the tunnel, causing much of the tunnel to cave in, and leaving the men to suffer the tortures of the bends as nitrogen bubbles expanded within their blood. To make matters worse, the floor of the tunnel was not properly sealed with cement, so that when water was finally poured into the tunnel to quell the fire, behind the water came a torrential flood of quicksand and muck.

For these five men, the dream of a better life died in a cramped, slimy tunnel beneath the Don River.

The official cause of death was ruled acute poisoning by carbon monoxide and suffocation due to the inhalation of smoke, sand and water.

Imagine the terror and the horror that these men experienced during their final hours - trapped in a swirl of water, quicksand, and choking smoke!

The details of the accident, where the workers were trapped 10.5 metres underground in a cramped, dimly lit tunnel, sparked a public outcry over the lack of safety standards in construction. The Italian community was gripped with sorrow over the deaths and angry over the conditions that led to such needless loss of life. A groundswell of public opinion and union organizing for stronger safety enforcement resulted that ultimately led to better safety and labour laws. The Hoggs Hollow tragedy was a catalyst that changed forever the safety laws in Ontario and saved many lives as a result.

SCAFFOLD TRAGEDY DECEMBER 24, 2009

50 YEARS AFTER HOGG’S HOLLOW



Now 50 years later tragedy struck again on December 24, 2009 when four immigrant workers plunged to their deaths in a horrific industrial accident in Rexdale while a fifth was left fighting for his life.

The five man restoration crew was working 13 storeys up on a highrise apartment building repairing balconies when the scaffolding they were standing on suddenly gave way. The contractor had previously been issued stop work orders by the

Ministry of Labour, and when the scaffold broke none of the workers harnesses were tied off and they plunged to their death.





LABOUR LEADERS SPEAK OUT

Pat Dillon of the Provincial Building Trades Council wants an investigator to examine the holes in labour laws that fail to protect construction workers. In spite of a recent labour ministry blitz on scaffolding platforms, he says that is not enough to probe the problems of unsavoury business practices and lax worker safety. Dillon referred to seedy business practices that led up to this tragedy taking place. Questionable practices in his view include people enticed to work without proper training and workers not knowing their rights.

Sid Ryan, President of the Ontario Federation of Labour, representing over one million Ontario workers has called for a criminal investigation into the deaths, as well as charges under the Criminal Code brought in by Bill C-45, in which corporations and their officers can be punished for failing to protect the health of their employees or the public. Citing the Quebec Attorney General's efforts at successfully prosecuting a company for criminal negligence, Quebec is the first provincial jurisdiction where a company pleaded guilty to a charge of criminal negligence causing the death of one of its employees.

LU 353 IN FOREFRONT FIGHTING FOR WORKER RIGHTS

As a leader in the construction industry, Local Union 353 has a long history fighting for our members rights, and working with our industry partners to ensure we maintain the safest work practices possible. But the job is a never ending challenge. Each year many electrical workers sustain injuries that result in permanent impairments. Some electrical workers can never return to the trade because of their injuries.

Gary Majesky our WSIB representative deals first hand with the legacy of occupational disease. Long term latency diseases such as Asbestosis and deafness are a frequent problem for our older members, as well as the physical injuries after a 40 year career. Yet when an electrician dies due to occupational disease their deaths are not trumpeted in the newspaper headlines, yet the tragedy and impact on family and friends is just the same.

VOICES OF ELECTRICIANS INJURED AT WORK

In 2008 our membership unanimously supported the funding of a Day of Mourning Campaign to remember our brothers and sisters who died and suffer from workplace injury and disease. The ***Voices of Electricians Injured at Work*** told their personal stories, and the importance of having a union fight for them, and in the event of death, on behalf of the survivors. On April 28th, please take a moment to honour the sacrifices made by all working people, and to renew our commitment to workplace health and safety.

