

IAF NORTHWEST NEWS

SECOND EDITION

SYDNEY ALLIANCE CEREMONY LAUNCHES ORGANIZING PHASE

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

MACG DEVELOPS TRIPLE-BOTTOM LINE 2

SUSTAINABLE WORKS 2

CONTRACTOR TRANSPARENCY IN SPOKANE COUNTY 3

GEA FOOD FIGHT CONTINUES 3

LIVING WAGE IN LONDON 4

CONTACT INFO 4

ARCHIVES

[First](#) edition of IAF Northwest News

Representatives of faith institutions, unions, and other community-based groups gathered on November 28, 2008 to celebrate the start of the organizing phase of **Sydney Alliance**.



Although only recently formed, the Sydney Alliance already boasts commitments from the Uniting Church NSW Synod, the Arab Council of Australia, the Jewish Board of Deputies, the Parramatta Diocese of the Catholic Church, Asian Women at Work and a number of key labor organizations.

Glen Powell of the Uniting Church in Australia asserted that Sydney Alliance has created “a groundswell of hope, energy and enthusiasm for rebuilding civil society”—all the more important in the wake of the global financial crisis.

Photo: Leaders with Sydney Alliance banner after vote.

SKAGIT COMMUNITY ALLIANCE TO INCORPORATE WHATCOM & SNOHOMISH COUNTIES

Skagit Community Alliance made significant strides during 2008. In January, leaders decided to broaden the Alliance’s geographic scope from Skagit County to include Whatcom and Snohomish Counties. With a population approaching 1,000,000, the 3 counties cover much of Western Washington from the northern boundary of Sound Alliance clusters to the Canadian border, and will add eight state legislative districts to IAF in Washington State. The Alliance adopted the tentative name of North Sound Alliance in order to express more clearly its range.

By June of 2008, Alliance leaders had raised the \$10,000 necessary to sign a contract with the IAF, and by summer 2009 intends to secure a sufficient number of sponsoring institutions to hire professional staff for the organizing phase. Among others, institutions representing migrant farm workers and tribal communities are exploring the Alliance. The second round of local Leadership Institutes will be held February 7 and 14, 2009.



Photo: Ed Chambers, IAF Executive Director, signs IAF contract with Skagit leader Christie Stewart Stein as Skagit leader Stoney Bird looks on.



Photo: MACG leaders at the IAF Northwest Regional Institute in November

MACG'S TRIPLE-BOTTOM LINE APPROACH POISED TO ADDRESS TRIPLE THREAT

The threat of further job cuts, increasing climate-related challenges, and rising energy costs looms large in the Portland area; the expansion of SustainableWorks to Oregon promises to tackle all three. This plan to **create jobs, reduce emissions, and cut energy costs** through energy efficiency retrofits was laid out at the MACG Action Assembly in early December.

"Last time we talked about a new economy we saw mills close down," argued a union apprentice. "That's why it's critical that any plans for a "new economy" and "green stimulus" mean family wages and jobs for carpenters, 'cuz it isn't enough to have a job if you're only making McDonald's wages."

Delegates listened intently as a single mom told how

her family took a vote last winter on which three months to heat the house — they could not afford heating oil through the whole season.

At the Assembly, **Multnomah County Commissioner Jeff Cogen** committed to locating county resources, both technical and financial, to bring SustainableWorks to scale (city or county bonding authority may be critical to funding this effort). Michael Armstrong of Portland's Office of Sustainable Development and Steve Lacey of Energy Trust of Oregon (the entity responsible for utilities' energy efficiency efforts) pledged to work with MACG on their triple-bottom line approach. This signals a win for working people, the environment and the economy.

Policy makers across the region are now seeing SustainableWorks as a viable "shovel-ready" economic stimulus option with benefits for workers, the environment, and consumers. The effort - a joint project of the IAF Northwest affiliated organizations and their allies to create jobs through large scale energy efficiency retrofits in residential and light commercial buildings - has gained the support of Washington State Senate Majority Leader Lisa Brown and formed **the basis of the Senate's jobs stimulus package** proposed January 13, 2009.

Read the Senate's [Our First Job is Creating Jobs](#), an outline of the "three-pronged framework of investment, talent and infrastructure" and see a full description of the [pilot project](#) and [funding mechanism](#).

The next Sustainable Jobs team meeting (for MACG, Sound Alliance, and Spokane Alliance leaders) will be held Saturday, January 31 from 9am-3pm at Dumas Bay Centre in Federal Way, WA.



Spokane Apprentices Terry Douglas & Trish Matthews watch a proportioning valve modulate during systems training.

SPOKANE ALLIANCE PROTECTS ASBESTOS WORKERS THROUGH DEMAND FOR TRANSPARENCY

On December 4, forty Spokane Alliance leaders pressed the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency to begin posting the history of safety protocol violations by asbestos abatement contractors on the Agency's website. These violations, which can include actions such as depositing materials into wastebaskets and failing to provide appropriate protective gear, put workers and those around them at risk.

[Justin Bell](#), a leader with Westminster CUCC and Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane, testified to the importance of protecting workers' safety: His brother died of **mesothelioma**, a form of lung cancer associated primarily with asbestos poisoning. Bell's brother had worked with asbestos in Navy shipyards and in building construction jobs.

Tom Robinson (pictured), from Covenant UMC, as-



serted that innocent customers (such as school districts) are frequently held legally responsible for damage incurred when contractors violate asbestos abatement regulations; access to violation history will enable customers to choose safe contractors.

The Agency's Board of Directors voted unanimously to begin publishing violations on their website. **County Commissioner Bonnie Mager** thanked the Alliance, who faced opposition from area developers, for their persistence in **protecting public health**.

The Alliance's next [Action Assembly](#) will celebrate the Agency's commitment. Their website will begin offering a search function to

look up offending companies at the start of the next construction season.

The **Spokesman-Review** published an [article](#) about the negotiations.

GEA GUIDES EMERGING REGIONAL FOOD SECURITY PLAN

GEA's **This Land is Our Land Campaign** was launched in early Fall 2008 to protect prime agricultural land in Northeast Edmonton in order to maintain local control over food supplies, open access to quality food for all residents, promote environmental stewardship, and support local farmers, thereby **ensuring the region's future health and security**.

The Campaign has progressed considerably since the launch. On November 12th, over 500 leaders from across Alberta gathered to urge Edmonton's City Council to provide leadership on this issue. Since the public hearing, the City Council has begun to pursue information on the preservation of agricultural land, on the number of hectares needed to feed the population today and in

2040, and on **how to initiate a comprehensive regional and multi-generational food security plan**.

On December 3rd, Debbie Hubbard, Co-Chair of GEA's Local Foods Team, presented an outline of the Alliance's study (to precede the development of a food security plan) to the Capital Region Board, a key decision-making body. She asserted, "We are not looking to establish limits on economic development, but rather limits on the *impact* of this development."

Linda Robinson, a leader at Ebenezer United Church and a First Nations person, spoke about the **Great Law of the Iroquois**, which implores us to consider the implications of our decisions for the generations to come.

Watch GEA leaders in [Condos or Veggies?](#)

"In every deliberation, we must consider the impact on the next 7 generations."

IAF AFFILIATE IN LONDON WINS MAJOR LIVING WAGE VICTORY

The East London Communities Organisation (TELCO) recently secured a commitment from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Council to establish Tower Hamlets as a Living Wage Borough. This follows on the success of similar campaigns by London Citizens affiliates across the capital, a city in which the cost of living puts basic goods and services out of reach for many families.

The first group to get a living wage – £7.45/hour (US\$10.40), £1.72 above the national minimum wage – will be temporary Council staff (all of the agency’s full-time staff are paid at least this amount already). TELCO will continue to apply pressure to the Council to contract only with companies that provide a living wage (for janitors, etc.) as well as keep up their commitment to encourage other employers in the borough to pay a living wage.

The victory, critical to the goal of establishing a **city-wide London Living Wage**, and a model for Canadian and Australian IAF Northwest affiliates (under parliamentary governments), will bring **thousands of local families**, particularly those in the Bangladeshi and Somali communities, out of working poverty.

Read more about the negotiations in [East End Life](#).



Hotel worker garlands Council Leader Lutfur Rahman for his commitment to support the living wage.

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