

# In Memoriam - Nancy Riche

Saturday October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011



The labour movement is mourning the loss of a prominent, long-time advocate for workers rights. Nancy Riche died Saturday in Newfoundland at the age of 66 from heart problems. She had been in hospital since last Friday.

Riche held prominent positions with a number of national and provincial labour groups, and was well known for her involvement with the New Democratic Party. The St. John's native served as secretary-treasurer for the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and vice-president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour.

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers has lost a good friend in Nancy Riche. She bravely fought to uphold workers' rights against all forms of discrimination, including racism and sexism.

Nancy Riche recently spoke up to defend CUPW's right to free collective bargaining. On CBC's Sunday Edition on September 25th, she asked: ***"Why would a government, a prime minister who, on the international stage, likes to talk about freedom and freeing countries... want to take away this basic freedom from his own citizens? I think it's really, really important that we look at what this government is up to when it comes to workers."***

Nancy Riche's life was filled with courageous acts of resistance as a worker, as a feminist and as an activist. She was a great inspiration to all of us and CUPW will miss her.

I've seen the glass ceiling and it's made out of golf balls," Nancy Riche told a women's conference of the Canadian Labour Congress in the 1990s when she was secretary-treasurer. That combination of wry Newfoundland humour and telling it like it is was Nancy's trademark.

"We are all saddened by Nancy's death. Workers everywhere have lost a fighter," says Ken Georgetti, president of the CLC. "She never backed down from a challenge, and never stopped working for everyday working people."

Lana Payne, president of Newfoundland and Labrador's Federation of Labour says the union movement has lost a giant with the death of Nancy Riche. "Riche's commitment to labour, feminism and to progressive politics never waned. For Nancy it was the work, it was the activism, it was about trying to make the world a better place and that's what she did right up to the end," said Payne Sunday.

Newfoundland and Labrador New Democratic Party Leader Lorraine Michael said Riche's contributions would be missed. "This is a really hard day for all of us. Nancy Riche was an extremely important person in this country, not just in Newfoundland and Labrador but in this country and internationally when it came to the struggle for workers, women's rights, for social justice. We're going to miss her terribly."

Provincial NDP leader Lorraine Michael called Riche an inspiring feminist and a strong promoter of human rights. "Nancy worked unstintingly to help the vulnerable and she believed in a better future for all of us in Newfoundland and Labrador," she said in a prepared statement.

Liberal leader Kevin Aylward also commented on Riche's passing in a news release. "She was a tireless advocate for social and labour rights and made Newfoundland and Labrador a better place," he said.

Riche was the recipient of several awards over the years, including the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) Woman of Courage Award, the Governor-General's Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case, and the AFL-CIO George Meary-Lane Kirkland Human Rights Award.

In 2009 she received the Elijah Barayi award from the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) for her contribution to the struggle against apartheid. She was awarded the Order of Canada in 2003.

**She will be missed!**

