

## LOBBYING REPORTS: Part Two

### On the Road to Winnipeg or Lobbying the CLC

The Provincial Executive authorised Kathy Chopik and myself to attend the CLC Convention. The Mission: to investigate and report on the CLC Convention and to weedle an invite to join the CLC.

Armed with a suitcase full of 9 by 12 glossies of the Provincial Executive, Provincial Constitutions, Local Contracts with the "good clauses" underlined in red, and thousands of leaflets, I arrived in Winnipeg.

On Monday morning I registered as a guest and ran into Michele Pujol, one of the founding members of Local 6 who was covering the Convention for Canadian Dimensions Magazine. She was extremely helpful in our Lobbying and deserves our wholehearted thanks.

At noon that day I handed out the first leaflet on affiliation. There was a very positive response from the delegates. The majority seemed to be in favour of accepting AUCE as an affiliate. Michele and I talked to Marion Pollack of CUPW who told us that she strongly supported our admission to the CLC and who promised that she would introduce us to delegates who would actively support us.

That evening, Michele and I attended a meeting of the "Open Rank and File Caucus". When we explained who we were, what AUCE's history was, and the kind of union that we were, they agreed to support any motion that would come to the floor on admission of non-affiliates to the CLC. The "Open Rank and File Caucus" broke down into small organising groups to develop action and strategy around the topics that Resolutions were grouped in.

To explain, all affiliates and locals of affiliates, plus provincial federations and local trade councils would submit motions to the Convention. Committees would be set up to discuss and group the resolutions. These committees have the power to rewrite and amalgamate motions and they make a recommendation of concurrence or non-concurrence to the Convention. The Convention only votes on the concurrence or non-concurrence of the committees - the resolution cannot be amended. If the Convention desires to change a resolution they must refer the motion back to the Committee with the suggested changes. Referred motions rarely make it back to the floor. There were over 500 resolutions submitted of which perhaps 75 were debated at the Convention. It is highly unlikely a resolution not favoured by the Committee would make the floor and if it does make the floor, that it would pass. The two resolutions dealing with admitting non-affiliates did not make it to the floor and one of them was rewritten to authorise "an affirmative action program to admit non-affiliates through the affiliate in their jurisdiction (amendment underlined) to the CLC."

The Lobbying was quite successful in spite of that. Both of the opposition caucuses - the "Open Rank and File Caucus" and the "Action Caucus" told us that they would support us if a motion came to the floor. A fair number of delegates indicated support for our admission and many others were interested. However, the issue of admission of non-affiliates was a very minor issue at the Convention, even to those who supported us.

continued next page...



The Convention was very interesting. It is quite clear that the CLC is being politicised. The majority of motions passed authorised the Executive to take strong stands against attacks against labour. Concessions were condemned and all unions agreed to hold firm against any concessions. The Executive was empowered to initiate discussions around developing a general strike if wage controls are implemented. A comprehensive Economic Paper was approved (the "crown jewel" of the approach developed by the CLC Executive). All in all, a significant improvement over previous Conventions.

However, it must be recognised that the Executive is free to implement or not implement these resolutions. With the exception of Jean Claude Parrot, the previous Executive was reelected. The economic policy is a moderate analysis of the economic situation of Canada that even the Liberal Government could largely implement. It is at odds with some of the other policy adopted by the CLC.

The two opposition caucuses were quite effective in pushing the CLC Executive to take a more hard nosed, political position. On a number of instances they almost overturned recommendations of the CLC leadership. The most embarrassing instance was when a lengthy and effective debate on changing the CLC's long standing policy of unilateral support for the NDP was almost changed. It took an emotional speech by Dennis McDermot who was chairing the Convention at the time, and who then cut off debate immediately after he spoke, to swing the vote behind the policy of supporting the NDP.

Various delegates who supported our bid for entry to the CLC, and some of whom were members of CUPE, told us bluntly that we would not be admitted to the CLC, regardless of how effective our Lobby was, because of the adamant opposition of CUPE to the admission of affiliates in their jurisdiction. We were informed that the union that CUPE wanted to keep out was the Hospital Employees Union - a union that had broken away from CUPE.

To sum up: If we wish to Lobby to join the CLC we would have to use all of our resources for at least two years, and even then we would probably fail. If we were admitted, it would open the door for other non-affiliates, and current affiliates would have their exclusive jurisdiction. It is possible that we might get in, but it would entail a fundamental change in the structure and policies of the CLC. This just ain't very likely.

I strongly recommend that we cease our efforts to Lobby CLC affiliates for admission to the CLC. I recommend this for three main reasons: 1) I don't think that we can put enough resources into lobbying to make it effective; 2) I don't think that we would be successful in the foreseeable future even if we did a first rate job of lobbying; 3) I don't think that we have the resources and energy to spare. We must spend the next year rebuilding AUCE and that will be a full time job in itself.

Attending the CLC Convention was valuable. It enabled us to learn more about the CLC and the issues that are affecting it. It made me more aware of the common interests that all union and all workers have. However, I feel that at this time it is important that we concentrate on the important task of building AUCE and making it into a strong, effective and principled union.

Submitted: Lid Strand