

REPORT ON AFFILIATION COMMITTEE

Last year, at the 6th Annual Convention of AUCE Provincial (June 2 & 3, 1979), a number of resolutions were passed directing the union to investigate ways of affiliating to the Canadian Labour Congress. A committee (named the "Affiliation Committee") was struck; made up of at least one representative from each of the five locals, plus the entire Provincial Executive. The Committee was to determine whether or not AUCE could affiliate "in tact" (i.e., without changing structure, constitution, etc.) to the CLC or, if this was found to be impossible, to investigate and document alternative ways of affiliating. The committee was directed to report to AUCE Provincial and to the membership of each local. If it was indeed found to be impossible to join the CLC in tact, then AUCE would conduct a Special Convention to discuss the alternatives which had been documented by the committee. After a comprehensive report, and after thorough discussion among the entire AUCE membership, a referendum ballot would be conducted to determine the future of the Union.

Since that important Convention last June, Local 4 has been almost exclusively preoccupied with negotiations for a new contract with our employer. Affiliation to the CLC, the pros and cons of affiliation or merger to another union, the future of AUCE as a provincial organization, and the future of Local 4 itself... these things have not, quite naturally, been uppermost in our minds.

But, now we DO have to think about these things and we have to think about them seriously, maturely and realistically.

In August I began attending Affiliation Committee meetings on behalf of Local 4. I was appointed by the Executive to act as Local 4's delegate, and this was subsequently ratified by the membership at a general meeting. This paper is aimed at bringing Local 4 members up to date, and to initiate some discussion about the whole issue. Because the matter can be easily misunderstood, and because it is a complicated, many-sided issue, I urge Local 4 members to ask questions. A decision on affiliation will be made, one way or another: one way, the best way, is with an understanding of what it means.

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There are basically two decisions that Local 4 is faced with. First, we have to decide whether or not we want to be in the Canadian Labour Congress: the last time there was any clear indication of what people wanted was at Convention, where there was expressed a desire or interest to affiliate. If this is still the case, the second decision has to do with how.

In June a letter was sent from AUCE Provincial to the Executive of the Canadian Labour Congress, asking them to consider an application from our union to affiliate as a "Provincial Organization". In August, we received a reply from Dennis McDermott, C.L.C. President, advising us that our application would be turned down, unless and until we were "prepared to adjust to the Congress structure". To find out what that meant, and what the options and alternatives were, we asked Mr. William Smalley, Regional Director of Organization in B.C. (CLC) to speak to the Affiliation Committee on September 14.

Among the things we talked about was the structure of the CLC and the importance of jurisdiction. The Canadian Labour Congress is labour's largest umbrella

organization. It is charged with the responsibility of ensuring decisions made at Convention are implemented and adhered to. One particularly important responsibility given to the CLC is to prevent excessive duplication of unions in the same field. Jurisdictional issues are thus very important to the labour movement.

In our field - university and college employees - three CLC affiliates have jurisdiction already. They are: the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE); the Office and Technical Employees' Union (OTEU); and the B.C. Government Employees' Union (BCGEU). This overlapping jurisdiction has been agreed to by Convention and by the three unions concerned. To maximize unity and strength within organized labour, the CLC encourages applicants for affiliation to merge with a CLC union holding jurisdiction in the applicant's area.

Therefore, at our meeting, Smalley told us that AUCE could not enter the CLC unless it merged with another, existing, affiliate which held present jurisdiction among university and college employees, i.e. CUPE, OTEU, or BCGEU.

Thus, the first task of the Affiliation Committee had been accomplished, namely, to find out if AUCE could affiliate to the CLC in tact. The answer was "no". Since that time, the Committee has been researching and "documenting" the various options open to us. These have included: merging with one of the three CLC affiliates in whose jurisdiction we fall; remaining independent of any larger labour body; affiliation with the Canadian Confederation of Unions (similar to the CLC, much smaller, made up of industrial - i.e. steel and smelter workers); affiliating to Working Women Unite.

To date, the Affiliation Committee has met with representatives from the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the B.C. Government Employees' Union (BCGEU) on separate occasions. On January 17 the Affiliation Committee will be meeting with the Office and Technical Employees' Union (OTEU). Prior to each meeting, a sub-committee has researched and compiled information pertaining to that particular union, and presented this to the Affiliation Committee as a whole. This system has proven to work fairly well.

The research, and consequently the meetings with the unions, have covered a wide range of questions concentrating on size and structure, member participation (conventions, negotiations, etc.), educational services, constitution and by-laws, union democracy, strike funds, dues structure, degree of local autonomy (in collective bargaining, election of local executive and committees, independence from union, etc.), and the process of decision making.

The areas where research efforts have been weak, and have thus created "information gaps", involve the following:

- steward system at the local level
- grievance procedure at the local level
- arbitration process
- job security clauses won where the union in question is certified
- working conditions, wages and benefits where the union in question is certified
- employer-employee relations where the union in question is certified
- strike policy (if one local goes on strike, must all other locals go on strike as well?)

These questions are very important and should be addressed if we wish to consider seriously any proposal on the future of our union membership.

* Respectfully Submitted by

Colleen Bostwick

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Local 4 representative to the Affiliation Committee
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