

REPORTS SUBMITTED TO 1982 AUCE PROVINCIAL CONVENTION ON LOBBYING:

Part One

IN THE LOBBY OF THE HOUSE OF LABOUR - The report of the Lobbying Sub-committee of the Provincial Executive

I. Some Background: How the sub-committee sees its tasks.

Some months ago, the members of AUCE decided that they that wanted to "lobby the CLC affiliates to admit AUCE to the CLC intact as AUCE." At convention, the Provincial Executive was given the responsibility for carrying out this decision and reporting back to the membership. A Lobby Sub-committee of the Executive was set up which presented a report to the last Provincial Convention.

The first thing the Sub-committee had to consider was how to go about the lobbying process. We were fortunate in that AUCE had previously been given some expert advice on lobbying by Jack Nichols, head of the United Fisherman and Allied Workers Union (UFAWU). Nichols was involved in the struggle of UFAWU to be re-admitted to the CLC. In a situation similar in many respects to AUCE's, the CLC executive refused, at first, to re-admit the UFAWU since there was at the time a CLC affiliate which represented fish workers, and demanded instead that the UFAWU merge with that affiliate. The UFAWU managed to affiliate intact to the CLC by gaining the support of other unions and forcing the CLC executive to change its decision.

The lesson to be learned from the example of the UFAWU is that we must lobby the CLC affiliates, not the CLC executive. It is the CLC executive who has refused our requests to affiliate. The member unions and federations have never voted on our request, nor has any union, to our knowledge, formally objected to our joining or formally claimed jurisdiction over university and college employees - which is just as well, since there would be at least four CLC unions fighting over this "exclusive" jurisdiction! We can continue to send our request to the CLC executive, reminding them of our presence, as long as we understand that if it is left up to these entrenched labour bureaucrats, AUCE will never get into the CLC as AUCE. The purpose of lobbying is to ensure that it is not left up to the men at the top, but that it is heard and decided by the member unions, labour councils, and provincial federations of the CLC.

The Lobbying Sub-committee is talking to people in those CLC unions which we feel would be sympathetic to our cause. These unions could present resolutions to District Labour Council, the B.C. Federation of Labour, and the CLC urging the admission of AUCE to the CLC.

The 26th Annual Convention of the B.C. Federation of Labour, which was held in Vancouver on November 30, 1981, provided us with an excellent opportunity to lobby a large number of potentially sympathetic trade-unionists. AUCE lobbyists attended the convention as well as social functions held for the delegates.

II. Lobbying at the B.C. Federation of Labour Convention

At the convention, we attempted to make delegates aware of our desire to join the CLC, and to engage their support. To accomplish this, we distributed a leaflet and talked to delegates from a variety of unions. Hundreds of our leaflets were taken, and some delegates sought us out after reading it in order to discuss the issues we raised. A delegate from the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Transport and General Workers (CBRTGW), while addressing the convention from the floor, discussed some of the issues mentioned in our leaflet, and called upon the B.C. Federation of Labour to support the admission of AUCE and other non-affiliated unions to the CLC.

We had conversations with members of both industrial and public sector unions. Most of those people were supportive, and urged us to continue our fight to get into the CLC. Many made some concrete tactical suggestions, and these are included in the end of this report.

We observed the proceedings of the convention from the visitors gallery. Several of the resolutions considered could have an effect on our attempt to join the CLC, and upon our participation in that organization if we do get in.

One resolution, which came from a local of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), called upon the B.C. Federation of Labour and the District Labour Councils to "begin an affirmative action program to affiliate all public sector unions which are not in the CLC." This was passed unanimously, with no discussion. It would seem that the effect of this resolution is to enlist the support of the B.C. Fed in our affiliation campaign. We will certainly pursue this further.

The Vancouver local of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) submitted a resolution, which was passed unanimously, which called upon the B.C. Fed to "continue to support morally, organizationally, and financially any union fighting for equal pay for work of equal value." As this issue is fundamental to us, we should find out what sort of support the B.C. Fed would give those of our locals who will be entering negotiations soon.

One of the more hotly debated resolutions called for the B.C. Fed and the CLC to "immediately adopt a merger policy of one industry, one union." It was supported by the largest, most aggressive unions - for example, the IWA, BCGEU, and the United Steelworkers - and opposed by small and medium sized unions - UFAWU, CUPW, etc. Many of the speakers opposing the resolution spoke of workers having the right to the union of their choice. This, in fact, has been one of our arguments to the CLC. The resolution passed, though with widespread opposition, and its ramifications are unclear at this time. We were assured later by various delegates that this policy was unimplementable.

The main issue was the attempt to change delegate representation at convention so as to give more power to the large unions. Since this would be a change in the constitution, it required a two-thirds majority to pass. The first attempt failed, but a "compromise" resolution was eventually passed. The latter effectively doubled the representation of each union at convention, without changing the percentage distribution of delegates. Given the high cost of sending delegates to convention (lost wages and \$75 registration fee for each delegate) this change works to the advantage of the large unions.

III. Conclusion and Future Lobbying Activities

If we were an affiliate of the CLC, AUCE would be the nineth largest in the B.C. Federation of Labour - about the same size as the international Longshoremen and Warehouse Union (ILWU) - with a large representation at convention. So much for the "poor little AUCE" myth.

The next convention of the CLC is being held in Winnipeg in May 1982. Delegates have offered to submit resolutions calling for AUCE's admission to the CLC to this convention. This is contingent upon our ability to meet with them and draft resolutions in the short time remaining before the deadline for submission of resolutions. Sending an AUCE lobbyist/observer to the CLC convention is also under consideration by the Lobby Sub-committee. In the meantime, we are keeping up our contacts with sympathetic trade-unionists.

Submitted by J. Gegenberg
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