

AUCE LOCAL 3 - A HISTORY ***

In February of 1974 the Staff Association of Notre Dame University came to the realization that a union was essential if they were to be able to work towards solutions for problems they were facing. In a nutshell, that management did not have to even listen to their wants, let alone try to deal with them.

The Association of University and College Employees was at that time organizing the clerical workers at UBC and SFU and expressed an interest in the Notre Dame Staff Association. In turn the staff association was attracted to AUCE as it seemed to exemplify all the aspects of unionism they wanted without control from the outside or set thinking about what unions should negotiate for or how they should act. Signing up of 90% of the workers was accomplished in three weeks and certification followed quickly thereafter.

The struggle for the first contract was long and arduous - it was not until a 98% strike vote was taken and a mediator called in that they settled for a contract with a large across-the-board raise and many added benefits. A second impressive contract followed the first.

But, not only did Local 3 of AUCE have to face all of the normal union problems of contract negotiations and grievances but there was a constant and ever-pervasive threat - that of the university ceasing to exist. When the Social Credit party returned to power in 1975 after a three-year break, the university ceased to exist for all intents and purposes, despite political promises to the contrary. First and second year courses were taken away from NDU, then third and fourth year courses. What the staff managed to salvage out of all this was a good severance package for people being let off and a settlement in lieu of pension for persons with three years or more seniority regardless of whether they were laid off or not. There was also the promise of continuing existence of the union for the jobs that remained at the new entity, DTUC.

Selkirk College was talked into managing DTUC for a year while the government decided what to do with it. As soon as Selkirk entered the picture CUPE moved in to take over and decertify Local 3. A long and hard fought dispute in front of the Labour Relations Board finally resulted in AUCE losing one of its first and most dedicated locals.

*** Condensed from a lengthier article in AUCE Provincial News, March 1979, Volume 4 Number 1, Pages 20-27