

AFFILIATION BULLETIN

AUCE

Tuesday, October 7, 1980

AUCE PROVINCIAL OFFICE
#901 - 207 West Hastings
Vancouver 684-2457

TO THE AUCE MEMBERSHIP:

"THERE AND BACK AGAIN"

The AUCE Provincial Executive met on Friday the 19th and Saturday the 20th of September for its regular monthly meeting: the regular Friday agenda, however, had been set aside in order to discuss the result of the second affiliation ballot. Considerable general concern was expressed at the result of the ballot. The specific concerns raised were as follows:

1. The participation rate in this ballot was exceptionally low - only 30% of the membership had returned ballots.
2. The number of abstentions was alarming - of the ballots returned, fully 32% were abstentions.
3. The locals were split: the CCU and the CLC had each won the greatest number of votes in two locals and in a fifth local, more members voted to abstain than to join the CCU, the CLC or any other labour organization.
4. The status of abstentions was unclear. The Constitution requires that "abstain" be offered on any referendum ballot, but does not stipulate whether abstentions are included in the total number of ballots of which the successful option must obtain a majority. Bourinot's rules of order are also mute on this subject.
5. The form of the ballots is not conducive to obtaining a '50% + 1' majority vote for any option, whether abstentions are included in the total or not. If we are to proceed to the fourth ballot in this affiliation referendum ballot series, the most obvious difficulty then presents itself - it is possible that none of the options will obtain a majority in that case. (REFER TO THE TEXT OF THE MOST RECENT BALLOT MAIL-OUT CONTENTS TO OBTAIN THE WORDING OF FUTURE REFERENDUM(S).)

Advice from AUCE Provincial's lawyer, when asked for a legal opinion on the interpretation of the results, was that, in spite of the low participation rate (which cannot invalidate the ballot, no matter the question under consideration), the result of the ballot itself, considered with the opinions of the Provincial Executive and direction of the Constitution, could be taken either as a 'win' for the CLC option, or as a lack of majority for any option, depending on the interpretation of the formalised abstention option. The result did not appear to either the Provincial Executive or the Provincial Association's lawyer, to give a clear indication of the wishes of the membership. Neither does the Executive have the authority to alter the form of the coming ballot(s) to facilitate a majority vote being obtained. Only a Convention, as the highest decision-making body of AUCE, could consider altering the form or the course of the ballot(s).

During a lengthy discussion, numerous and varied opinions emerged among the entire Provincial Executive:

- 1) that the Executive had to decide the status of the abstentions and proceed to the next ballot;
- 2) that the Executive could not assume the authority to interpret the ballot result;
- 3) that the ballot result did/did not give the Executive a mandate to proceed;
- 4) that abstentions indicated apathy/ignorance/protest;
- 5) that it was undemocratic to stop/proceed with the balloting process;
- 6) that the ballot result was/wasn't a mandate to affiliate with the CLC.

As you can see, we covered a range of opinions which in all probability was a reflection of the varying opinions among the General Membership.

The discussion concluded with a decision to call a Special Convention in order to obtain greater membership input into consideration of the following: 1) Should there be a minimum level of participation required in order that the results be considered valid? (in future referendum(s)). If so, what happens if the minimum participation level is not achieved? If there is to be a minimum participation level, should that reflect the B.C. Labour Code requirements in order to be able to use the results in a particularly legal way? 2) Should we conduct a 'Yes/No' confirmation ballot on affiliation with the CLC, the option that obtained the highest number of votes, although only approximately 15% of the membership? 3) Shall ballots marked 'abstain' be included in the total count? Are they votes or non-votes? Is a majority a '50% + 1', or, is it a plurality?

An AUCE Provincial Affiliation Bulletin was to have been issued by Wednesday, the 24th of September, informing the membership that a Special Convention had been called. However, by Monday afternoon, 2 days later, the phone was ringing off the wall with members inquiring about the validity of the results, and then, the calls turned to protests against what some members had assumed was an Executive 'edict' to halt the balloting process. Somewhere along the line, the Provincial Executive's decision to call a Special Convention to deal with a very serious interpretation problem, had been misunderstood by some as a 'Provincial attempt to tamper with the balloting process'. This was not the case! A few days later, on September 24th, the Executives of Locals 1 and 6 submitted formal, written requests for the Provincial Executive to reconsider the decision to call a Special Convention.

In light of the requests by the Executives of the two locals, and the apparent broad opposition to a Special Convention at this time, the Provincial Executive met again that evening to further discuss the issue. At the meeting, it became obvious that the specific questions which were to have been directed to Convention would perhaps not be answered in a constructive manner by a Convention. In fact, the level of criticism about the decision to call a Special Convention indicated that that avenue might be obstructive to the decision-making process. THE MOTIONS REGARDING THE SPECIAL CONVENTION WERE RESCINDED.

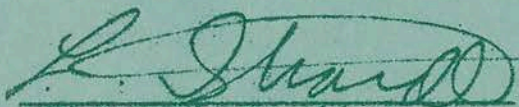
The Provincial Executive has decided that the affiliation ballot process shall proceed as soon as possible to the third in the series. The following motion was passed by the Provincial Executive and reflects the decision to proceed as the result of the returns on the second in the series:

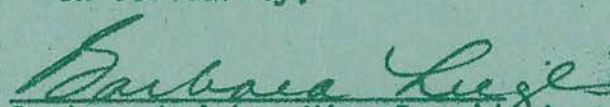
'In concluding the fact that the option on the second referendum ballot on affiliation with the highest number of votes was the 'CLC', the Provincial Executive will proceed in conducting the third ballot in the series of Affiliation referenda.'

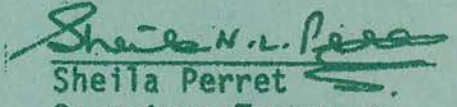
The third ballot will be distributed in late-November/early December so as not to conflict with Local referendums concerning Executive elections, local membership dues increase questions, and also, the Provincial by-elections for Provincial Co-ordinator and Provincial Trustees.

This issue is no less important now than when the Special Convention on Affiliation took place in April, or when the first ballot was conducted. The low participation rate is alarming. Between now and the arrival of the third ballot, INVESTIGATE the possibilities. The Local and Provincial offices have plenty of material, simple and in-depth varieties, to help you acquaint yourself with the options. Decide. And then VOTE!

In Solidarity,


Lid Strand, President


Barbara Leighs, Vice-President


Sheila Perret
Secretary-Treasurer