

## MERGER COMMITTEE

The Merger Committee got off to a slow start, it being summer...But we have met fairly regularly, and we have done a considerable amount of research, and held discussions with several unions. We should be able to come to the executive, and then to the membership, with a recommendation in the near future.

First of all, we engaged in general discussion of the options open to us. The 'larger unions' we discussed merging with were the BCGEU, CUPE, VMREU, OTEU and the HEU. Members of the Committee were then assigned various options to investigate. After informal discussions with the various unions, the Committee decided not to recommend the BCGEU or the VMREU. There was a consensus among the Committee members that the BCGEU could not accommodate our structure, and that merging with that union would mean too complete a change of our current organization. The Committee feels that AUCE should maintain as much autonomy as possible, and that what is essentially a healthy organization should be augmented, not dismantled. The VMREU, on the other hand, was a much more hotly debated option. The decision to not recommend this union turned on its 'independence', ie. its non-affiliation to the Canadian Labour Congress and the BC Federation of Labour. Some members of the Committee consider such 'independence' essential to maintaining AUCE as the kind of union they wish it to be. Others feel that the whole purpose of this exercise is to abandon such 'independence', and become part of the 'main-stream' labour movement. The vote on the question of recommending the VMREU was very close. The Committee decided to pursue formal discussions with the OTEU and with CUPE, and to have informal discussions with the HEU (this had not yet been done).

We have now had further discussions with both CUPE and the OTEU. The essential difference between these two options is the cost, and the services offered. CUPE is a large, highly organized Canadian union, with a whole range of services available: legal, educational, research, public relations, and various other forms of expertise. We would essentially retain our autonomy as a local, but the cost would probably necessitate some scaling down on our part. We are in the process of negotiating with CUPE. They have offered us a two-year service contract — ie. we will have all the benefits of membership for two-years, and then decide if we want to continue as an official CUPE local. The OTEU, on the other hand, is a large international union, but not very large, or highly organized, in BC. We would retain almost total local autonomy, the cost would be much lower than CUPE, but the same level of services would not be available. We would be part of a developing organization, and would presumably have a role in that development. In both cases we would be affiliated to the CLC, and have the option of joining the BC Fed and the Labour Councils. We would also have access to a large strike fund.

The Committee will be presenting a full report, with reasons for all of our decisions. The issue will, of course, have to go to referendum ballot.

Ted Byrne