

AFFILIATION U BULLETIN

APRIL 1980

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A REPORT FROM THE SPECIAL PROVINCIAL CONVENTION ON AFFILIATION

A motion was passed at the Special Provincial Convention on Affiliation to produce a bulletin in order that all points of view are heard. A majority and several minority reports on the various options in the referendum are included. Your referendum ballot will arrive soon.

PLEASE VOTE!!

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Majority Report:

I. BACKGROUND

Since the last regular Provincial Convention of AUCE in the spring of 1979, the focus of our union has been increasingly on our relationship to the rest of the trade union movement. The immediate cause of this is, of course, the decision taken at that convention to apply to the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) for membership, and, in the event that we were not accepted intact, to establish an Affiliation Committee to research our options and then have a Special Provincial Convention to deal with those options. The culmination of all this is to be a series of referenda on affiliation.

In fact, the actual background of all this goes back to the early 1970's when AUCE was being formed. At that time there was a growing interest in unionization on the part of clerical workers at universities and colleges. Initial attempts at organizing through one or the other of the existing CLC unions (CUPE and OTEU) who represented public sector clerical workers were disappointing for several reasons:

- (i) There was a lack of enthusiasm on the part of these CLC unions for organizing "that sort of worker".
- (ii) There was interference on the part of business agents, international representatives, and the like with the work of local organizers.
- (iii) Generally, these unions were out of touch with the issues of a growing feminist movement, and in particular,

the specific concerns of women clerical workers- equality of pay for men and women doing similar work, maternity leave, flexible work hours, etc.

Hence, the decision was made to organize an independent union which would be suited to the organizing task at hand, and thus AUCE was born.

Since that time, AUCE has been successful at meeting the needs of its members, and its contracts have, to a large extent, set the standards for pay and working conditions, at least locally, for women clerical workers. This was all accomplished without the benefit of large financial resources and technical expertise- the advantages, supposedly, of membership in the large CLC unions. Instead, we relied on the energy, intelligence, and dedication of our members.

As our union has grown, and as the overall economic and political climate of Canada has evolved since the early 1970's, a number of our members have grown uncomfortable with AUCE's independent status in the labour movement. There began to be more talk about AUCE joining the "house of labour" by affiliating with either the CLC or the CCU (Confederation of Canadian Unions). When we applied, in 1979, to the CLC, the president, Dennis McDermott, replied that we could join only by merging with CUPE, OTEU, or BCGEU. Thus, given the mandate of the 1979 regular Provincial Convention, an Affiliation Committee was struck, and it spent months researching the various affiliation options. When its work was completed, a Special Provincial Convention was called for April 12-13, 1980. This convention

would decide how to proceed.

II. THE SPECIAL CONVENTION

Debate on the first day of the Convention dealt with resolutions advocating future courses of action for AUCE vis-a-vis affiliation. The resolutions submitted, from the Provincial Executive and from Locals 4 and 5, were similar, in that they advocated that AUCE preserve its structure rather than submerging its identity in that of another union.

The Provincial Executive resolution was the first to come on the floor for discussion. Concern was expressed from Locals 1 and 2 that passage of this resolution would preempt the membership's right to vote on the future of AUCE. Speakers pointed out that the wording of the resolution, "that AUCE shall remain constitutionally intact with its current decision-making structure" did not provide for referendum and would, if carried, decide the affiliation question in possibly less than a day of Convention.

The resolution was consequently amended by Hester Vair of the Provincial Executive so that the motion became a recommendation from Convention to accompany a referendum on the issue. The wording became:

Be it resolved that AUCE Convention's recommendation to the AUCE membership which will be sent out with a referendum ballot which will include a variety of options, be that AUCE remain constitu-

tionally intact with its current decision-making structure.

This amended resolution passed with 31 delegates in favour, 8 opposed and 1 abstaining.

Convention followed its approval of the above by amending the Local 4 resolution to read:

Be it resolved that this Convention of AUCE shall recommend to our membership that we shall work towards affiliation with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) intact as AUCE, and that this recommendation shall be sent out with the previously passed Resolution #1.

This was also passed by Convention, with 27 voting for and 10 against the resolution.

With the passing of these two resolutions, the Convention provided the AUCE membership with a strong recommendation that AUCE reaffirm its belief in its own structure and ideals and in its importance to the trade union movement.

The remainder of the convention was devoted to deciding on the form of the referendum ballot. Initially there were two proposed resolutions on this, one from the Provincial Executive and one from Local 1. However, as debate opened, it became clear that other people had yet other points of view. After some discussion on just how to proceed with debate, the Provincial Executive's resolution was put on the floor

Differences among delegates on the form of the ballot seemed to lie in two areas:

(i) The number of separate ballots to be sent out. The Provincial Executive's proposal had up to four separate ballots, while Local 1's proposal called for only one ballot. Opposition to multiple ballots was based on the expense of such a procedure and on the possibility of members losing interest after the first ballot. On the other hand, proponents of the multiple ballot felt that having up to four questions on one ballot could be confusing and, besides, since questions appearing later on the ballot depended on how earlier questions were resolved, the whole thing becomes more of an opinion poll than a referendum. Also, it should be noted that Local 2 delegates were mandated to support a one-ballot referendum.

(ii) The nature of the first question on the ballot (or ballots). The first question on the Provincial Executive's and on Local 1's (as later amended) proposals would ask members to choose between affiliating or not affiliating, in general. Local 2 wanted the first choice to be whether or not to merge with an existing CLC affiliate (CUPE, OTEU, or BCGEU).



Debate on the Provincial Executive's proposal was ended without a vote when the Convention voted to table it until after consideration of Local 1's proposal. The latter was amended so that while the ordering and nature of the questions on the ballot was substantially the same as the former, there was to be only one ballot. Convention narrowly approved (20-16-3) the amended Local 1 proposal, but after it was discovered that there was no provision for abstentions on the proposed ballot, it was ruled out of order on constitutional grounds. All the other resolutions on the form of the ballot were subsequently ruled out of order because they had the same defect.

A new series of proposals, with provision for abstention on the ballots, but otherwise similar to those just ruled out of order, were submitted as emergency resolutions. When the revised, amended Local 1 proposal was re-submitted to the Convention it was narrowly defeated, with the Provincial President casting the deciding vote against it.

Debate was resumed on the Provincial Executive ballot proposal, and this was passed (22-14-0). The remainder of the Convention dealt primarily with the question of just what information was to be included with the referendum ballot. The Convention decided to include with the ballot only those resolutions on affiliation passed the previous day. Statements from the minorities were to be put in the Special Convention Bulletin.

III. THE MAJORITY: AUCE SHOULD REMAIN INTACT!

The AUCE Special Provincial Convention on Affiliation has recommended to our membership that the union remain constitutionally intact. This resolution, though approved by a substantial majority of delegates, does not mean that the question of affiliation has been decided- for the Special Convention also set into motion a series of referenda in which the membership will make the final decision about affiliation.

Among the delegates who voted in favour of AUCE retaining its organizational and constitutional integrity, were several distinct points of view about the ultimate form of our relationship to the trade union movement. These points of view include:

- (i) That AUCE remain as it is with no ties to any other existing labour federation or union;
- (ii) That AUCE continue the attempt to join the CLC intact, by lobbying;
- (iii) That AUCE affiliate to the Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU);
- (iv) That AUCE seek a closer relationship with the Service, Office and Retail Workers Union of Canada (SORWUC). (Note: there was no discussion of this option at Convention.)

None of these alternatives would compromise our union's constitu-



tional or organizational integrity.

The proponents of these various alternatives were united in the conviction that the specific strengths of AUCE- our democratic structures, control of local affairs by the local membership, safeguards against the domination of the union by self-serving bureaucracies, our commitment to womens' issues, etc.- would be seriously comprised if our union were to merge with any of the existing CLC unions (CUPE, OTEU, or BCGEU) which represent public sector clerical workers.

Those delegates who opposed the resolution to keep AUCE intact did so because they favoured a merger of AUCE with one of the above CLC unions. Most of their arguments were of a "carrot and stick" sort. The "carrot" was the fat strike funds, armies of paid organizers, flocks of lawyers on retainer, and even libraries of the CLC unions. The "stick" is that being wielded by a government bent on smashing collective bar-

gaining and the unions in the public sector- so we had better throw in our lot with some larger, more powerful union.

These pro-merger arguments moved few of the delegates at the Convention. It was realized that the bountiful resources of, say, CUPE, are not quite freely dispensed to locals. There is a trade-off. For example, even though all the CLC unions "guarantee" strike pay, in return the locals of these unions, to some degree, lose the power to freely negotiate or take job action, and must endure some scrutiny in the former and ask permission from some higher (regional, national, or even international) body in order to do the latter.

Similarly for the prospects of a united militant defence on the part of CLC unions against attacks on collective bargaining by the government: the record is not good. For example, when the postal workers were under attack in 1978, other public sector CLC unions like CUPE offered no help, even though there was considerable support within those unions for the postal workers.

In spite of the defects of the CLC, and in spite of the fact that, initially, at least, we would have little influence on the policies of that labour federation, it would be to everyone's advantage for us to affiliate intact with them. If the CLC is ever to overcome the problems it now faces, it must become more like AUCE- i.e., more democratic, less centralized, less dependent on bureaucracy. By lobbying for affiliation intact as AUCE, and upon eventually succeeding, we will contribute to that process. And AUCE will no longer be isolated in the labour movement. Compiled by:

Jack Gegenberg



Minority Reports:

CLC MINORITY REPORT

This CLC minority report is prompted by the inadequate discussion at the Special Affiliation Convention which resulted in a ballot that does not clearly reflect the choices which will affect AUCE's future. The process at convention did not allow for an informed discussion of the primary question of whether or not AUCE should affiliate to the CLC. The time spent during the two-day convention actually discussing the options and issues (maybe 2 hours) was negligible compared with the hours of research done by the Affiliation Committee.

The ballot selected at convention on the Provincial Executive's recommendation is badly designed and fails to offer AUCE members the most clear and democratic possible choice of options. The ballot is confusing. It will be expensive and will take months to complete. It tends to favour the CCU because it combines both the pro-CCU and pro-stay the way we are groups against those favouring the CLC.

The first question on the ballot should have been whether or not to affiliate to the CLC, not some unspecified "any labour organization". The 1979 AUCE convention motion on affiliation clearly stated:

That AUCE attempt to affiliate with the CLC, and that if we are not successful in attaining affiliation intact as AUCE, then a Special Convention shall be called to further discuss terms of affiliation WITH THE CLC.

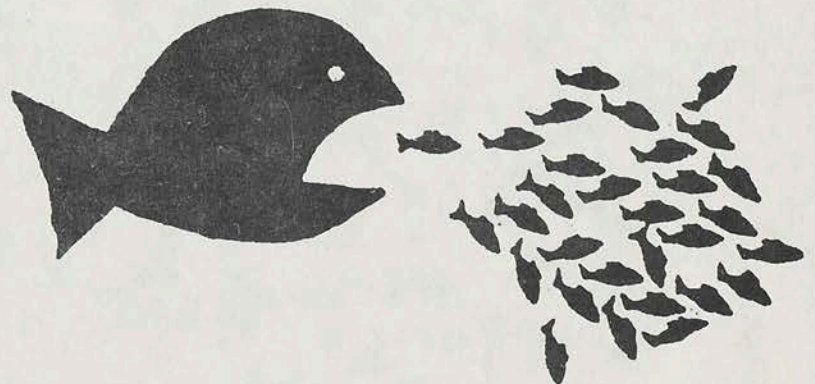
At that convention, an amendment to expand the research mandate of the affiliation committee to include the CCU and Working Women Unite was ruled out of order by the chair. Her decision, when challenged, was sustained.

We feel that the issues of affiliation represented by the ballot selected have been confused. The first ballot mailed will ask, "Do you want to affiliate with 'any' labour

organization?". We are not in favour of affiliating with 'any' labour organization ---we are in favour of affiliating with the CLC. The "Yes" vote on this question will combine the CLC lobby vote, the CLC merger vote and the CCU and SORWUC votes. It will probably pass.

The second question asks, "CCU, CLC, or ANY OTHER LABOUR ORGANIZATION". In the first place, there are no other labour organizations than the CLC and the CCU. (SORWUC is a union and Working Women Unite is a committee of the B.C. Federation of Women.) This not only confuses the mandate from the last convention, it is undemocratic. If the CLC wins this vote, there are two more ballots to determine what is our choice. If the CCU wins the ballot, that's it. It means that we will have voted to join the CCU, although mathematically as few as 30% of our members could actually be in favour of doing so. And we will have voted NOT to affiliate with the CLC--- a decision with serious implications.

We believe that AUCE would be best off in a CLC union for a number of reasons. In the first place, the CLC represents approximately 2.5 million private and public sector workers in Canada. We, as public sector unions must align ourselves with other public sector unions. It is only through this means that we can hope to continue to fight for those founding principles which we are increasingly unable to do from our position of relative weakness.

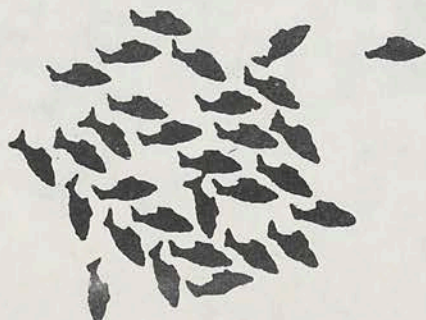


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As public sector workers, we have to fight an increasing trend towards cutbacks in public spending. In the colleges and universities, we face inadequate provincial government funding which results in workers receiving smaller portions of Employer Council of B.C.-controlled budgets. The federal government is preparing legislation which is designed to calculate public sector wages (largely unionized) on the basis of private sector wages (largely nonunionized). As a union of mostly women workers, we are committed to fighting for equal pay for work of equal value and non-discriminatory women's issues. We cannot accomplish this enormous task alone. We need the strength of all other workers in the country, especially in the public sector.

Inflation concerns us all. The settlements that AUCE locals have signed have left us far behind inflation rates. With our scant strike funds, we lack the strength to back our convictions. The support of CLC affiliation will enable us to draw on financial reserves and communications systems that a union needs to avoid strikes, and if necessary, to win strikes.

The CCU, with 30,000 members, cannot offer the same organizational links with the mainstream of Canadian labour. Unions affiliated with the CCU represent primarily male industrial workers and, in B.C., represent very few women workers. In addition, the CCU represents private sector rather than public sector workers. Its only public sector affiliate is at York University in Toronto. Since there is no love lost between CCU and CLC unions, affiliation to the CCU would change AUCE's position from one of isolation to one of antagonism. We work on campuses with CLC, not CCU unions.



The best way to defend ourselves against the kinds of attacks that are being waged against us; to fight for better wages and working conditions; and, to affirm and extend our principles, is to join the 2.5 million workers in the mainstream of labour---the CLC.

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The Confederation of Canadian Unions:
Building a Canadian Labour Movement

When AUCE was formed we felt that the established CLC unions, with their top heavy, stratified structure, would not be able to represent us effectively. We wanted to be able to develop, and bargain for our own contracts. And we have done this effectively.

During the June 1979 Convention, a resolution was passed that AUCE apply to join the Canadian Labour Congress - and an Affiliation Committee was struck to investigate the possible forms to affiliation.

There are three options that we can choose. We could try to join the Canadian Labour Congress by trying to join as a separate union, we could join the CLC by joining one of the three affiliates, or we could join the Canadian Confederation of Unions.

Within weeks of our application, the CLC met with the Affiliation Committee and told them that if AUCE wanted to join the "mainstream" of the labour movement that we would have to join one of their affiliates: BCGEU, CUPE or OTEU. Although it was technically possible to join the CLC as a separate union, it would be virtually impossible to do so because the CLC does not admit new affiliates when there are affiliates that cover that jurisdiction. There are three unions (BCGEU, CUPE and OTEU) in our jurisdiction.

Many AUCE members feel that AUCE cannot survive as a separate union. They argue that the best way for us to continue to fight for the principals that AUCE has fought for would be to join a larger and stronger union where we could directly influence the kind of policies that these unions develop. They also argue that we would have direct access to the resources - both educational and financial - that these unions have and that this would give us more clout at the bargaining table.

These are attractive arguments. But, unfortunately, when you look at the structures of these unions, these arguments lose a lot of their impact.

The history of the CLC and its predecessors, has been a pattern of a powerful leadership undermining the strength of the rank-and-file in their unions. The most recent example of this was the INCO strike at Sudbury. When the local decided to go out on strike the United Steelworkers of America told them that if they went out that they would get no support from the union. As the strike continued, and the strike became an issue, the Steelworkers gave some grudging support. When the strike finally ended, the strikers had won all their demands. Interestingly, the Steelworkers signed a contract with another INCO mine in Manitoba instead of using those contract



negotiations as a lever to improve the bargaining position of the strikers.

Another example of this pattern is the reprehensible position that the CLC leadership took in regards to the Postal Workers strike where they refused to support the Postal Workers and in fact worked actively to undermine the strike.

This pattern is inherent in the structure of the CLC. 74 out of 96 affiliates in the CLC are American based unions. The leadership of most of these unions have consistently opposed any form of Canadian autonomy. In 1974 the CLC passed a resolution outlining minimum standards of Canadian Autonomy. A large number of the American based unions immediately refused to pay their per capita until this resolution was revoked. Joe Morris, then President of the CLC, went to the United States to talk to these affiliates. The resolution has never been implemented.

The leadership of these unions believe that unions should be structured from the top down. That allows them to negotiate with Government and Industry for a share of the pie. When this is decided, then contract are negotiated. But, this only works when the rank-and-file are passive and accepting.

Although the membership of the CLC has repeatedly rejected Tri-partism, the leadership of the CLC has continued to try to implent it.

The leadership of the CLC is afraid of unions like AUCE. By being able to retain our democratic structure and ideals, and by being able to negotiate good contracts, unions like AUCE are able to show that you don't have to be bureaucratic to be effective.

If we join one of the CLC affiliates we would be playing into the hands of the CLC leadership. It would be simple for them to isolate us. They would be able to apply political and economic pressure on us to prevent us from rocking the boat too much.

We could continue to lobby the CLC until they allow us to join as a separate union. Unfortunately, the chances of success are minimal, and even if we did succeed our impact would be minimal. We would still be small and isolated.

If we want to have impact on the labour movement in Canada, our **only** choice would be to join the Canadian Confederation of Unions.

If size was the only criteria, then the CLC would be our only choice. What we should look at is the type of organization the CCU is and the kind of impact that it has.

The CCU has 14 affiliates with 31,000 members. All of the affiliates, with the exception of the York University Staff Association, are private sector industrial unions. The majority of the affiliates to the CCU are unions that broke away from CLC unions that they felt were not representing them effectively.

The policies and structures of the CCU are similar to those of AUCE. The major principal of the CCU is "that the Canadian Labour Movement must be democratically controlled by Canadian workers." They feel

that the way to win good contracts is to have an active committed membership - not a big strike fund. CCU affiliates have an enviable record of winning good contracts.

By joining the CCU, AUCE would have an important role in the development and implementation of policy in the CCU. We would be the largest public sector clerical union. We would have a representative from AUCE on the CCU National Executive. We would be in a position to assist other workers in building a democratic Canadian Labour movement.

There are three main arguments against joining the CCU:

1) We would be placed in opposition to the CLC. The CLC already sees us as a threat. By remaining unaffiliated we remain vulnerable and isolated.

2) The other public sector unions are affiliated to the CLC - they would refuse to support common issues with us. The CLC unions already have as little to do with us as possible. If an issue is important they will work with us.

3) They will try to undermine us in every way possible, including crossing our picket lines. Some of the most vicious inter-union struggles have been between affiliates. Being in the CLC does not guarantee support.

Joining the CCU would be an affirmation of AUCE's history and ideals. By joining the CCU we can help to build a Canadian and Democratic Labour Movement.

Compiled by:

Lid Strand

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CUPE MINORITY REPORT

This report was prepared collectively by a group of elected delegates and alternates to the AUCE Special Affiliation Convention. We favour merger with CUPE for a variety of reasons which we will briefly outline below. We are reporting to the membership on our dissatisfaction with both the procedures and the conclusions of the convention. The convention refused to address the problems that AUCE increasingly faces and what the future holds in store. The options which were researched by the Affiliation Committee were not discussed by the convention.

The convention passed a motion from the Provincial Executive which mentions the "objectives" of our union; our history of taking "principled positions"; fighting for women's issues; organizing the unorganized; and, rank and file democracy. It states that in order to reaffirm these objectives, we must retain our constitution and current decision making structures. An amendment passed which added that we should lobby the CLC for membership as AUCE. This motion of recommendation is contradictory in regards to lobbying the CLC for acceptance as AUCE since our acceptance would involve some decision-making and constitutional constraints. It prohibits merger with a CLC affiliate. It would not prohibit remaining "independent" (read "isolated") and it would not prohibit affiliation with the CCU.

We don't have to give up our principles if we join CUPE as this motion implies. In fact, we would be in a better position to defend our principles. Our constitution is good but it is not the only weapon which is necessary to fight for our objectives. And we are going to have to fight.

Since AUCE was formed in 1974, we have made many gains and set further goals: achieving equal pay for work of equal value, bringing clerical wages up to those of technicians; parental leave; improved wages and benefits; union and job security. But our wages are not keeping up with inflation and increasingly, we do not have the economic power to strike effectively. Meanwhile, federal legislation is pending which will prohibit equal pay arguments from even reaching the bargaining table. This proposal, known as Average Comparability of Total Compensation (ACTC), would or will impose a permanent form of wage controls and ultimately, eliminate collective bargaining from the public sector. Other public sector workers, especially in CUPE, are engaged in similar struggles. AUCE cannot win this fight alone, only by joining with the whole labour movement.

We want to reaffirm our goals. We want to win them. We should put ourselves in the strongest possible position in relation to our employers and join the rest of the labour movement. We are in a position now to do that by merging with CUPE, a strong, democratic, public sector union. We do not want to end up in the CCU, isolated from other public sector unions and the rest of the labour movement.

We think that to fight for our principles effectively, we should immediately put ourselves in a stronger (rather than weaker) position. As we are frustrated and disturbed that the convention discussed the latest changes in Bourinot's Rules of Order but did not address these issues.

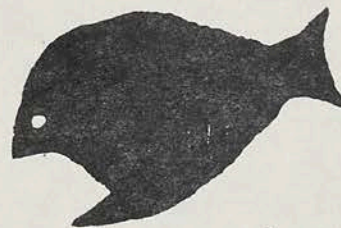
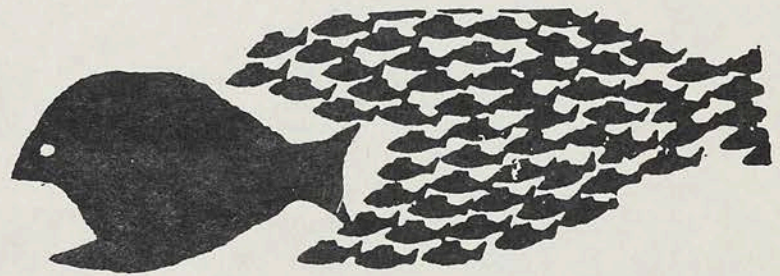
The unity of the labour movement is not an abstract issue. It is also an organizational framework which allows for people in different unions and bargaining units to talk to each other and work together. This communication is necessary if we are to create strong and united labour organizations which can defend the gains of organized workers and organize the unorganized.



I'LL SAY ONE MORE THING. I DON'T THINK THAT YOU SHOULD ASSUME THAT IF YOU JUMP INTO CUPE IT WILL BE A BED OF ROSES. YOUR JUMPING INTO A FIGHT. THERE'S A FIGHT ACROSS THE COUNTRY IN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT, AS YOU KNOW, ABOUT THE DIRECTION IT IS GOING TO GO IN, AND IF YOU JOIN CUPE YOU'RE GOING TO BE IN THAT FIGHT. AND I THINK PERSONALLY THAT WE NEED YOU TO BE IN THAT FIGHT, IN CUPE...I THINK YOU'D MAKE A VERY IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION.

-John Calvert, CUPE,
CUPE Transcript of
December 11/79 Meeting.

We favour CUPE because it is a strong, democratic union which faces many of the same problems we do. In response to these problems, CUPE has developed policies and strategies which we think are good. For example, the 1979 CUPE Convention established a program of cutback committees across Canada to publicize the reality and implications of government cutbacks and fight them. Women's committees at every level of the union ensure that issues like sexual harrasment, equal pay, and equal job opportunities are dealt with effectively. CUPE also offers a vast array of services. These include the best union research department in North America and strike pay for everyone between \$50 and \$100 per week. And while we are struggling to keep our locals afloat, CUPE is organizing unorganized workers---mostly women---at the rate of 1,000 per month. CUPE has a very democratic structure and we could keep our basic structure and decision-making processes intact. CUPE is the best combination of autonomy with services and resources and, in our opinion, CUPE is miles ahead of any other option.



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JOIN THE CLC NOW...DON'T LOBBY FOREVER

Any recommendation from convention to the membership should be an informed position. The recommendation to lobby to try and affiliate directly to the CLC as AUCE is not. It is a rotten compromise which tries not to upset those who wish to stay as we are while offering a false hope to those who favour entering the CLC.

WHY DID THE CLC TURN DOWN OUR APPLICATION TO AFFILIATE INTACT AS AUCE?

First, one of the CLC's main purposes has been to establish union jurisdictions to end workers fighting each other instead of the bosses. Three unions are long-established in our area: BCGEU, CUPE, and OTEU. Secondly, it is CLC policy to oppose the proliferation of small, weak unions, in part because this tends to undermine organizing united actions by the labour movement. Both of these reasons are legitimate, though jurisdictions have also been used by the CLC brass as a means to control dissident unions and solidarity between organizations is as important as actual organizational unity.

A third reason is that that decision was made by the CLC executive who don't like us. They are afraid that AUCE would tend to join with the growing numbers of progressive rank and file members who are trying to regain democratic control of their unions.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE ARGUMENT FOR LOBBYING?

The convention decision suggests that it will be possible to get into the CLC by lobby because some CLC members will support this and because the UFAWU (Fishermen's Union) succeeded. Neither is a good argument. While many progressive CLC unions might support AUCE, the vast majority of the CLC, both leaders and rank and file members, generally agree with the first two reasons outlined above for insisting that we join an existing CLC union. Furthermore, the thousands and thousands of CLC members now struggling to regain control of their unions from those in control share our principles---like union democracy and

women's rights---and see no principled reasons why we should be divided into different organizations. We are isolated outside the CLC. The CLC brass use every excuse to their members to not support our struggles. By not joining our like-minded sisters and brothers in the fight going on within the CLC, we unfortunately play into their hands. Finally, those CLC unions who would in principle support our entry as AUCE into the CLC have their own struggles and priorities. Our lobby might not be at the top of their list of convention priorities.

The second argument for lobbying is that the UFAWU succeeded in doing this. However, the comparison of the UFAWU with AUCE is faulty. The UFAWU was originally in the CLC. In fact, they were leaders in the labour movement. It was a fairly large union and the only union representing the distinct group of fishermen. They were expelled in the 1950 McCarthyite hysteria for communist leadership. They finally got back in when the political climate changed and by mounting a sustained campaign through their close links with unions across the country. Even so, it took them over a decade to succeed. AUCE's circumstances are different. We do not have those kinds of resources or a decade to spare, especially in these times of all-out attacks on public sector unions.

Instead of a time-consuming, futile lobbying exercise, we need to join in a CLC union now. We need to strengthen our position against our employers. We need to join all of our sisters and brothers to direct the labour movement where it should be going. Its direction affects us whether we are inside of it or outside of it. We should do this now, while we are still relatively healthy and can carry our principles with us.

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