

Canadian Confederation of Unions-B.C. Council Convention
(Plaza 500, Vancouver, 22 February 1976)

I arrived at the Convention at 2:30 pm during a discussion of the mechanics of setting up a Labour College (the principal of which had been endorsed at a previous convention). The following is a brief summary of events and then some reactions:

- Jess Succamore and a man named Rowley (from Ontario) seemed to be dominating the discussion
- Jack Ainsworth told me that Jess had just recently appointed 4 union organizers, and that Rowley was a 20 year employee of a CCU affiliate in Ontario, and shouldn't be voting at this convention (he was indeed voting).
- PPWC representatives were arguing that the proposed set-up of the college would exclude them because their strike had drained them financially, and could not afford to send people down to Vancouver. They maintained that this was a school for (as he termed it) "future porkchoppers of Canada". They wanted a correspondence course or roving school that rank and file from isolated unions could easily attend, and a night school course in Vancouver for poor unions who could not reimburse workers for time lost to attend courses.
- Jess did say that the intent of the course was indeed to "train the future leaders of the Canadian labour movement".
- PPWC recommendations were not adopted.
- One of the members of the committee setting up the college came to Jackie and asked us if we would like him to ask the convention if AUCE and SORWUC could be invited to attend the labour college. We said yes and he moved this on the floor.
- Cathy Walker (secretary of the CCU) said that it wasn't that she had anything against AUCE or SORWUC, but that we have been invited to all their conventions, and that it was time we stopped getting a free ride from the CCU. She said that the CCU had guided us for 2 years now, and it was time that we affiliated with them if we wanted the benefits.
- Jess said that if we were invited, next thing you know they'd have to invite the B.C. Employers' Association, and then the CLC, and if those groups planned the course, the whole purpose of it was defeated.
- What people wound up voting on was not really whether or not AUCE and SORWUC be invited to attend, but whether any group in B.C. should be permitted to participate and decide the direction the course would take. It was, of course, defeated.
- During a coffee break, Jess taked to me and expressed his sadness that the question of AUCE had to come up on the floor of the convention. He said that of course AUCE would have been invited if only it hadn't become an issue of all nonaffiliated groups attending the college. He then carefully moved to the question of our joining. I backed off.
- At this point I left the convention to join Jackie for some discussion.

The main reason I had attended this convention in the first place was that I am on a committee studying the question of affiliation which will report to the next convention of AUCE. I had started leaning towards possible affiliation with the CCU because it would firmly label us as part of the "respected" Canadian Labour movement. This in itself is not a reason to affiliate, but the constitution of the CCU is an attractive document, especially when compared with that of the CLC. I had felt that if our membership did want to affiliate, the CCU was the only way to go.

However, several things disturbed me a great deal at this convention of the B.C. Council of the CCU.:

1. Jess Succamore and this man Rowley from the east seemed to really control all but the votes of the PPWC, and Rowley should not even have been allowed to vote--I guess the fact that he did indeed vote is testament to his power. Also, these two were never out of order, they could speak whenever they wanted without being on the speakers' list, they were not asked to speak to the motions on the floor (and almost always twisted the motion so much that it was difficult to know what people were indeed voting on), in short the Chairman never made an attempt to control these two.
2. I was very disturbed when Jackie told me that Jess had APPOINTED four union organizers. It became clear to me that whereas the CLC constitution is stuffed with the most dictatorial rules about every facet of the organization, and formally give all the power to the top level, the CCU constitution has no rules at all which has the effect of providing no limitations on the power of the people at the top. There are no real checks on the top people as there are in AUCE. AUCE's philosophy is opposed to and would never allow any appointing of anyone for anything, and our constitution and By-laws prevent this from happening.
3. My feelings were hurt when AUCE was compared to the CLC and B.C. Employers Association, and I was disappointed when we were excluded from participating in the Labour College. I guess that they have every right to want only their own members to benefit. But the arguments about this motion were twisted so badly that one who did not know better might think that AUCE was a subversive organization who sold information. The CCU was right to an extent when they said we have been getting a free ride to some extent. We have used free of charge the services of many people in that organization. I don't think that affiliating is going to solve that problem. If we are getting a free ride then maybe we should offer trade union experts an honorarium (\$25-\$50 is paid by UBC) for their services. Gratitude for services rendered in the past is not a strong enough reason for affiliation, and neither is guilt.
4. I began to question why we might benefit from affiliation with the CCU. They cannot protect us from the CLC (who has as one of its objectives in its constitution the elimination of duplicating organizations) because the CLC continually breaks the strikes of CCU affiliates much stronger and larger than AUCE. Some have said that we would have a voice in the "House of Labour" in Canada, but the CLC is for all intents and purposes

is the House of Labour in Canada, and I would certainly never entertain decertifying just so we can join the CLC.

About the only reason I could think of for joining would be the possibility of financial help during time of strike, and a guilt free way of using their expertise.

5. If AUCE were to affiliate, one of our first tasks would have to be to work our hardest at changing the CCU to fit our philosophy and constitution, for this is one thing that AUCE has never compromised on (nor should we). I think that this would take us away from one of our main tasks--to organize the unorganized worker in British Columbia and Canada, and to strengthen ourselves internally.