

Comment

C.L.C. has hampered position

by Brian P. Duggan

Recent developments in the relations between Canadian Labour and the Government bring about the following humble comments on the new position of the C.L.C.

It is my opinion that the Canadian Labour Congress has hampered its position while trying to improve it.

The mass rally of Labour Union Brothers and Sisters on Parliament Hill on March 22, 1976, was a sign of protest against the Federal Government's anti-inflation program. The C.L.C. called for Trudeau to remove his legislation controlling wages.

The case of the C.L.C. is that the controls policy will only control wages but not prices. In the early stages of this program that does seem quite evident. Many economists are saying that the controls cannot work effectively against prices. This in turn means that the cost of living will continue to rise while the wages of the workers will be subject to restraint. Canada's problem of poverty, especially among the working poor, will get worse.

Indeed, many noted economists hold the opinion that the controls program will effectively control prices, but that there will be a time lag before price restraint will take hold. The position of the C.L.C. is that while this lag is in progress the workers will be under great economic pressure--without a 'living wage'.

The mass rally was a sign of how the C.L.C. feels about the program. The fact that it was held on a working day, left some factories

and shops without workers. There were reports of clashes between police and the workers who were on their way to Ottawa. This brings to mind what one reads about a gem in Canadian Labour history, namely the "On To Ottawa Trek". As well, it can be seen that the relations between Government and Labour have come a long way since 1935. Labour has been allowed to sit on Government decision-making boards and has become accepted by most Canadians as the voice of the worker.

C.L.C. President, Joe Morris, and Prime Minister Trudeau could not come to an agreement on March 22. Morris wanted the controls program withdrawn, Trudeau said, no. The Executive Committee of the C.L.C. decided to withdraw its membership from two Government boards. By withdrawing from the Canadian Labour Relations Council and the Economic Council of Canada the C.L.C. has drastically cut its input into the decision-making process, thus hampering its cause.

The boards being made up of representatives from Government, Business and Labour, were designed to assist the Cabinet in developing policy. One could argue that these bodies had very little impact on policy matters because of the fantastic structure of the Trudeau bureaucracy. It could also be argued that Labour had a very weak voice on the bodies. But the bodies were set up as vehicles for three pronged input into the decision-making process, which is now two pronged: Business and

Government.

I feel that the development and position of the C.L.C. has been stymied by the withdrawals. Labour has never had a strong position in Canada due to the lack of political support and an effective central body. The controls program certainly gave Labour something to unite against. But they have hurt the effectiveness of this move by withdrawing from the Government bodies. They no longer have any voice in Government policy, thus it is highly unlikely that any policy will take Labour's interests sincerely. Policies will have their main influence from Business and Government.

The arguments against Price and Wage Controls concerning the effect that they will have on the Collective Bargaining rights of the workers are certainly valid. I certainly do not accept the controls policy as a policy for the people.

Granted we must give Trudeau a chance to show us if it will work. One is foolish to demand that he withdraw the legislation for this is his life and death policy. I like to think that Trudeau will sink with the policy in 1977 when everyone is convinced that it will not work.

As for the C.L.C. they have very few avenues to follow; they no longer have their foot in the door of the decision-making process. They now stand as an interest group. A one day protest strike could be called but, as one reporter put it, what could they do next? They could resort to tactics such as the massive 'Winnipeg General Strike' but that would only ruin their creditability with the public. I do not condemn the C.L.C. for its unifying efforts, but I do condemn them for withdrawing from the decision-making process. That was the move that will make them the lesser of 'Two Solitudes'.

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Council sacks matches!

To the Gazette:

A special message for all you smokers. Congratulations. If you attended the last council meeting, you are aware that the union lost \$600.00 this year on matches, that right the unique Dalhousie matches on display at the enquiry desk. A loss of \$600.00 is the equivalent of 60,000 books of matches - disap-

pearing at the rate of 165 per day over a 12 month period. In a budget cutting session the council has decided they can no longer afford to support petty thievery. Too bad, for some like myself appreciated this service.

Heather MacQuarrie

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**"For me, good food
and a good beer go together.
That's why I ask for Heineken.
It's all a matter of taste."**

Heineken
It's all a matter of taste.