

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) affiliate in the central American nation. CUS had since been subjected to threats and harassment because of its refusal to disband and become part of the Sandinista sponsored central trade union body. The CLC feels this intimidation campaign raises serious questions about the right of the Nicaraguan workers to freedom of association. Yet some supporters of Nicaragua in Canada have suggested the CLC forget its concern about what is happening to CUS and continue pouring in aid. It is a suggestion labour will not accept.

The CLC works to develop workers' organizations abroad through such efforts as development of the Commonwealth Trade Union Council (CTUC) which employed its first secretary general earlier this year. The formation of the council required roughly two years of hard work and confounded those people who believed the CLC did not have the ability to deliver on its promise. CLC President McDermott is also the first president of the CTUC which he describes as "being a common meeting place for people with a common affinity." It is an alternative organization for Third World members of the Commonwealth who otherwise might be forced to choose between the Soviet and American camps. McDermott believes Canada has an affinity with the Third World because "we are unique in the sense that we are considered to be a developed nation, but we aren't." He bases that belief on the large degree of foreign control of Canada's economy which makes us "in many ways as exploited as a number of the Third World countries."

Occasionally, the CLC's international involvement can pose the threat of physical injury. In September 1980, International Affairs Director Harker and representative Javier Sandoval avoided imprisonment and beating by only a few hours in La Paz, Bolivia. The two had been part of a ten member official mission from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) which visited Bolivia to render assistance to the families of trade unionists detained as political prisoners in the country. Their purpose was also to visit government and church officials to learn about the effects of the July 17 military coup on Bolivian human and trade union rights. For much of the visit, Bolivian authorities maintained their distance from the group. However, several members of the ICFTU delegation who stayed behind to confer with Interior minister General D'Arce, head of the secret police, were arrested and forced to turn over \$30,000 raised to aid prisoners' families. Two of them were beaten and tortured. Harker and Sandoval escaped these events since they had flown out of La Paz hours earlier.

If projects such as the CTUC lead many to believe the CLC has developed a higher profile internationally, the message may be escaping a large proportion of the organization's 2.3 million members. Many union members are troubled because their congress is in-



President Dennis McDermott.

CLC photo

involved in the international arena. They believe their union leaders would be better occupied protecting their interests at home. Criticism of the strong international ties maintained by former CLC president Joe Morris reached a level where he was often disparagingly called 'Geneva Joe'. Relatively few CLC members cared or even knew that Morris was so well regarded internationally that he was chosen, after his retirement, as the only North American member of the Brandt Commission on North-South issues.

Harker said the CLC has not been as effective in communicating its international affairs message to its constituents as he would like. To overcome that problem, a new member was added to his department to handle education and communications. The CLC might enhance that role if it can demonstrate to its members the practicality of what it is doing. Ringing declarations of lofty principles have little impact on workers whose immediate concern is the continued existence of their jobs and the rising cost of living.

The CLC is doing practical things internationally, such as providing a tractor and dairy equipment to a group of cooperative villages started on former ICFTU land in India. Harker sees labour's 'basic needs' strategy as a means of adequately distributing the resources of developing nations, making them less vulnerable to totalitarian economic philosophies. He also makes the economic argument that exploitation of workers in developing nations will eventually lead to reduced employment opportunities in Canada. Both arguments need to be made more forcefully if the CLC is to truly have the full support of its members. It would also be helpful to Canadian workers if they were shown what they stand to lose if such international efforts are abandoned.