

"Thus, the ILO became my responsibility. Its annual conference in Geneva was beginning in June, and Jodoin was a member of its Governing Body and the workers' delegate from Canada. I accompanied him as an adviser. The agenda included an item, which became Convention No. 111—Discrimination (Employment and Occupation). After a few days he told me that the workers' group had to have a chairman in committee to speak for them. But I said, 'Go on, I don't know anything about the ILO.' He said, 'You're the only one in the workers' group who knows anything about the subject matter, as a result of the 10 years' involvement in Canada.'"

This important but controversial convention had started off in 1953 in the United Nations Human Rights Commission, in its Subcommittee on Discrimination and Minorities.

"They had a proposal before them to develop an international convention on discrimination in employment but they said, 'The ILO is in this field and probably has a lot of material on this subject, while we don't know very much about it.' So they asked the ILO to prepare a *Law and Practice Report*, a world overview of where we stand on this issue. The ILO prepared that report and then said, 'We are also going to draft a convention, because it is within our jurisdiction.'

"There were some big arguments over it. The ILO had to deal with the Soviet Union, but the United States was also very touchy about this subject. After all, desegregation was just beginning for the blacks, and Gunnar Myrdal had just written *The American Dilemma* [in which] he for the first time put in an organized form how discrimination not only affects the people who suffer from it but also the society in which they live. We took advantage of that argument, for the idea behind the convention was not to represent discrimination as an isolated thing, as only a problem of the people being discriminated against, but of society as a whole. I have a poster here which I brought back from the United States at that time, with a good slogan: 'Don't be a jerk. Race and religious hate hurts you!'

"A basic characteristic of the ILO [that] makes it different from all the other UN agencies is that it is tripartite. Each delegation to the annual conference consists of representatives of government, employers and workers. In plenary the governments have two votes, and employers and workers one each, while in committee it is one-one-one. If a delegation is not tripartite, the government representative cannot vote—you can challenge the government's voting right. At the start, all the workers' delegates get together and elect their officers (as do the other two groups). They were all there—from the Soviet Union, Spain, South Africa, Third World countries, everywhere—and I was elected unanimously in 1957 and 1958 to be the workers' chairman of the conference committee, which drafted Convention No. 111. And every year after, until 1967, I was elected workers' chairman, and thus a vice-chairman on the resolutions committee, which is the main political committee in the ILO annual conferences.

"The CLC never imposed any restrictions on me or asked me to consult them; on the spot I could make up my mind. It was a fantastic experience. Here was a kid like me, coming out of Jewish Montreal with that limited