

An open letter to CSA workers

- by Leslie Malone

P.S. This was submitted to *Perspective*.

I'm taking this method of reaching the membership of the C.S.A. because I can find no other medium interested in our problems. I cannot reach you through the "*Perspective*" because it isn't interested in publishing anything that is critical of our present leadership. I am trying to reach you, because I think we have a serious problem.

During the last couple of months, since the dues were increased, a rather unsavory campaign has been waged against some other Associations by our leaders. Specifically, the Nursing Aide Association, and the Non-Academic Staff Association of the University of Alberta. There may well be others; if you know of any, spread the information around.

I attended the meeting, called by Mr. Broad, at which the C.S.A. attempted to recruit members from the U of A Association, and looked at material preserved by one of their members. Our executives have placed advertisements (half-page and quarter-page) in the *Edmonton Journal* and the U of A student newspaper (*The Gateway*) at a cost of \$200 to \$400 per ad, for weeks. I was told that C.S.A. had been holding small meetings on campus for about two months, and had been thoroughly unsuccessful. From what I saw of their attitude on the 28th of January, I'd say that I was told the truth.

In spite of the discouragement that this should have produced, and in the teeth of their obvious wish to stick with their own Association (of which they are very proud), our leaders rented the 2,700 seat Jubilee Auditorium and invited them to come. Well, about 150 of them came, and it was a shambles. The Chairmen of the U of C and U of L Branches of C.S.A. were given polite but disinterested attention, as was the Chairwoman of the University of Saskatchewan Union. However, when C.S.A. officials addressed them, they were heckled and jeered at. Serious questions were raised, such as the validity of the law which our leaders claim gives them the sole right to represent the U of A staff. As the U of A Association has been recognized by the U of A Board of Governors for several years now, surely the only place such an issue could be settled in

court. One of the U of A people made a point when he pointed out that the C.S.A. counsel, Ross McBain stated that the C.S.A.'s position was that the above-noted law was not valid - in the Supreme Court of Alberta! on January 13th, 1975. This was a point in connection with the U of C strike. He asked Mr. Broad whether the C.S.A. was lying to anyone. Pressed for an answer to the apparent contradiction, he said that he was not responsible for what the C.S.A. lawyer said in court. Well, dammit, if he isn't, who the Hell is?

The U of A people have been organized for years, after dropping out of the C.S.A. at the '68 C.S.A. Convention (by a vote of the delegates, at their own request). They tell me that they were Branch 22 of the C.S.A. for twenty-two years, and got nothing at all for their dues. What they have now they got for themselves, and several of them expressed themselves quite pungently on the idea of losing their own staff and employees in favor of the C.S.A. system of totally centralized control. Now I have serious doubts about our system. I, too have wondered sometimes whether someone so far away could really understand complex local problems as well as an official who lived and worked with the people he represented.

I've been disturbed by the strident tone of our leadership, and I think that C.S.A. has indeed moved forward a long way - but after talking to these people, I'm convinced that we have moved only as far as the 19th century. We badly need to decentralize, and to reduce the power of our executive. The waste of money (our money) that has followed the raising of our dues worries Hell out of me. The anger we have provoked by attempting such an inter-union raid is formidable, and totally unnecessary. I have a copy of a letter sent to everyone in Branch 23, and I don't like it. Branch 23 is the University Hospital in Edmonton, and the letter asks members to "Help the nursing aides to help themselves", and begins: "It appears that the C.N.A.'s are all mixed up." It details the laws which prevent (?) the Nursing Aide Association from representing the C.N.S.'s - yet this association has done so for years, and quite successfully. The letter is signed by Bill

Broad, and I'm getting tired of learning second-hand about this kind of crap being done in our name - with his name on it.

Please pass this on to other C.S.A. members - it's about time we found out what's really going on in the Edmonton office. I can't find out a thing, even simple matters like the President's salary... if you can't believe that, try asking for something - anything!

Running a Union means more than striking for higher wages once a year. It means service to the membership, policing of violations of the contract, and above all a good contract. I'm not convinced that local officials make much better contracts than a team from a central office. I've read the U of A contract, and I've read the U of C and U of L contracts. If you'd like to do the same, write to N.A.S.A., General Services Building, University of Alberta, Edmonton for a U of A contract (They have lots, and every member gets a copy). You can write to the Branch or to the C.S.A. at 10975 - 125 St. Edmonton for the other two - and I wish you luck. I don't think we should try to raid this outfit any more, because the C.S.A. leadership is likely to lose. The local papers and CBC TV presented a picture of the C.S.A. that was very damaging to us, as they covered the Jan. 28th meeting pretty well. I'm very glad they didn't choose to use the worst parts, as our leadership looked completely ridiculous.

I'm no longer in favor of the inequitable split in dues money which sees over 93% of our money going into the hands of the Edmonton office, and I don't believe that it's the best way to run a union.

I don't like the way our leaders prate about the law when it favors their position, and ignore or break it when it doesn't. We are going to get our ass in a sling if this goes on, because the 28th convinced me that our leaders aren't smart enough to keep us out of trouble while skating so close to the edge. What if we lose a court case and find that the C.S.A. does not have sole rights to

organize Provincial employees? The laws were written long ago, and Civil Liberties legislation passed since then might have something to say about laws made by our employers specifying which union we must belong to.

I don't like Bill Broad's idea of a strike vote. It came out at the meeting that unions must poll EVERY member when a strike vote is held; but our leaders, operating under laws that forbid strikes, have no rules governing what is and what is not a legal strike vote. Union men I've talked to are horrified by the procedures (or lack of them) used by our leadership.

I think we're in trouble, and I think it's our own fault. Each of us was too lazy to do the work

ourselves, so we delegated it. I'm beginning to hate the word "delegate". We are powerless in the hands of our leadership, because we don't know what in Hell they're up to, and they won't tell us.

Bill Broad claimed that the U of A Non-Academic Staff Association is a "sweetheart" union. They showed on the 28th that they're tougher than Bill Broad, and that they want no part of him, or our union. I can't say I blame them.

To The Editors: I realize this is not what your paper is primarily for, but I need to reach my fellow members; and the secondary school press is the only medium open to me. My union won't publish dissent, and we need dissent.

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