

Canadian unions for Canadian workers

There have been two principal voices of organized labour in Canada: the giant coalition of two million workers in the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and the Quebec based Confederation of National Trade Unions. Within the CLC most of the numerical strength comes from the Canadian locals of unions chartered by the AFL-CIO in the United States.

The upsurge of nationalism and the strivings toward sovereignty by Canadians in all walks of life such as

found expression in a succession of voices from Walter Gordon to Mel Watkins, from academics to the Waffle of the NDP, has had its effects on the trade union movement. While within the NDP pressure from the union leaders is credited with forcing the show downs which resulted in the ousting of the Waffle; the antagonism between the union bosses and the nationalists was also a source of conflict within the unions themselves - conflict which was muffled

by the structure of these bodies.

The bulk of organized labour in this country belongs to the ninety three "International Unions", which are a unique phenomena in the world - not even in the European Common Market do unions based in one country have locals in another - indicating the closeness of the integration of Canadian and United States economies. These unions came to Canada at least in part to prevent American companies from establishing "runaway shops" in Canada to undermine any gains made by the American workers as a result of union efforts - that is they were intended as a way of defending the gains of American workers.

Very few (six) of the Internationals have established separate Canadian districts within which Canadian workers can elect Canadian leaders to work on Canadian issues in Canada. The structure of most internationals integrates the Canadian workers into a confining relationship with a sector of the American market. In most of the unions it seems that decisions at the national level are made by officials appointed by the head office.

Thus the rank and file members of many of the unions feels that his need for "a union that will do a good job for him, that will help him improve his working conditions and be responsive to his needs as an employee" is not being met because his union is ill designed to work effectively in a Canadian environment. Workers are not prepared to repudiate international unions simply on the basis of an alternative "national" union being presented to them. However, the struggle for reform and increased democracy within the union leads

them to confront obstacles that force them to look at secession as a serious alternative.

At the local level the international unions are well protected against the possibility of their membership throwing them out since 1) members are locked into union benefit plans and pensions funds 2) paid staff owe allegiance and higher salaries to affiliation with International unions 3) there are certification and recognition problems which would jeopardize their workers bargaining rights if they succeeded 4) they can deny the new union CLC affiliation 5) property such as union halls reverts to the international's head-quarter 6) the lack of autonomy in Canadian locals results in a lack of alternative Canadian leadership and finally 7) the international's leaders have the right to impose trusteeship - taking away all the right to internal democracy that the members previously held. In short the local members have much to lose through attempting to break away.

The issue behind "Canadian Unions for Canadian Workers" the slogan of the recently formed Congress of Canadian Unions is whether reformed democratic trade unions can only be obtained by severing links with the international. Tactically the problem is whether one should reform the internal working of the international to make eventual Canadian autonomy possible or should one proceed by creating pure unions untainted by the malodorous characteristics of the internationals and devote ones energies to raiding the existing unions. All of this of course is against the backdrop of hostile forces that would exploit

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Public drinking

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the Liquor Control Act. The Board said that it would take at least two years before the proposals could be implemented, and for faster service the plan should be submitted to the Attorney-General and the minister of Health and Welfare who could see it in effect in a year.

This group of four would like to see a person taken to a detoxication center (when there would be located one in every major area of N.S.) for medical appraisal. The patient would then be subjected to

involuntary treatment, once a medical board of three, in conjunction with the law, had deemed the patient sick. Until this time however the four Law students to see a system such as the one in Sydney put into effect.

Everyone describes alcoholism as an illness yet they are punished as criminals, says Ms. Kaleva.

To date however, there is not one province in Canada with enforced detoxication centers and change may be slow in coming.

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