

The difference between CLAC and Real Unions

REAL UNIONS	The Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC)
Real Unions conduct open and transparent organizing drives.	25% to 40% “Voluntary Recognitions” (behind closed door deals between employers and CLAC staff).
Members of Real Unions vote to ratify their collective agreements.	CLAC staff has authority to “conclude, execute, or administer collective agreements” without having to go back for a membership vote.
Real Unions lobby governments to strengthen labour rights (anti-scab, minimum wage, employment standards, etc.).	CLAC lobbies governments against anti-scab legislation, supports back-to-work legislation, promotes open shop and opposes the Rand formula, thus encouraging free riders.
Real Unions are independent, democratic, and representative organizations.	CLAC is employer-accommodating, unrepresentative, and staff-controlled.
Real Unions negotiate agreements with higher provisions and increased protections than the law.	CLAC commonly negotiates agreements with sub-standard provisions that are below minimum standards, as in the case of BC.

Some FAQ on CLAC

Is CLAC affiliated to any religious organization?

Not officially or legally. CLAC maintains very close ties (arms length) with the Christian Reformed Church and reformed church inspired organizations.

The Christian Reformed Church in North America takes pride in the creation of the American Christian Labour Association in 1931. The founders of CLAC were members of the Christian Reformed Church and built CLAC as one of a number of societal organizations that were part of the church’s overall mission.

Some adherents and sympathizers have described CLAC’s leaders as the Lord’s dedicated “band of CLAC’ers” who have been busy “erecting signposts for the Kingdom of God in the socio-economic arena”.



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Some more FAQ on CLAC

Is CLAC a real union?

A number of Labour Relations Boards across the country say they are. Other Labour Relations Boards do not recognize CLAC as a legitimate union in the construction industry. However, we believe that **a union should be judged on what they do, not whether or not they are officially considered one.**

The CLAC was founded in 1952 but did not get its first certification until 1963 because it was deemed to have a Christian-bias as far as its principles and practices were concerned.

Between 25%-40% of CLAC's certifications are Voluntary Recognitions, where workers have no say in who represents them since these agreements are struck behind closed doors between employers and CLAC reps.

Unions should represent their members' interests, and in order to do this they have to be independent of employer influence. Does CLAC pass the test? We'll leave that decision up to you...

CLAC says that unions are only upset with them because they're so successful. How do you respond?

There's no doubt that CLAC has been growing for the last 10 years or so. What we're worried about is not that they are growing, but rather what is behind the growth: it is because employers are often "choosing" CLAC to keep legitimate unions out and because workers are often not given the choice about whether they want to join or when they can leave CLAC.

If workers had all the information about CLAC and were given a real opportunity to consider the benefits of joining a real, representative union, it is likely that fewer workers would choose CLAC.



Do real unions oppose CLAC because it is a Christian union?

Absolutely not! Real unions include Christian unions, such as the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA).

Our issue with CLAC is that they negotiate sub-standard agreements that are below industry standards (on wages, overtime pay, vacation, holiday pay, etc.) often without the input or involvement of members.

In the political and legislative arenas, CLAC acts in opposition to the interest of workers (as witnessed by their opposition to the anti-scab legislation).

CLAC's collaborative approach has a simplistic appeal to those who value so-called "harmony" in the workplace. In reality, such an approach is undertaken at the expense of workers and their rights. That's the real truth behind CLAC's "smiley-face" version of the workplace.



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