

Real Unions make a Real Difference in People's Lives

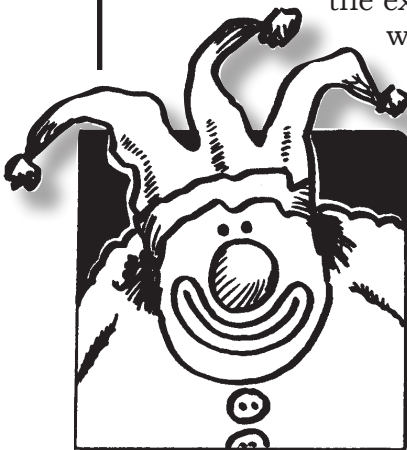
Over the past couple of decades, the hard won gains of working people have come under attack from anti-worker governments and big business. In fighting to protect these gains and reverse the drive to gut social programs and labour rights, workers are also confronting phony unions whose practices further weaken the collective and individual rights of all workers.

Beware of Phony Unions!

As far as company unions go, the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) is not new or unique. CLAC was formed in 1952 by Dutch immigrants affiliated with the Christian Reformed Church (CRC). CLAC rejects basic trade union principles in favour of the worst type of business unionism, which is often done at the expense of workers. Employers favour CLAC in order to keep their workplaces union-free, leaving employees without the input and respect they deserve.

CLAC claims that it is a legitimate union but their track record speaks for itself. CLAC's growth coincided with the election of anti-union governments which gutted our social support system in favour of corporate interests and changed the landscape governing labour relations. Weakened labour rights made it harder for legitimate unions to organize and bargain freely, while it made it easier for unrepresentative unions to gain a foothold.

CLAC's overall ideals are in line with conservative and business philosophy. CLAC's research arm, the Work Research Foundation (WRF) actively lobby governments on issues related to labour relations, and support policies that harm the interests of workers. The WRF and CLAC support back-to-work legislation; oppose anti-scab legislation; and promote union busting through their support for "open shop" with employers.



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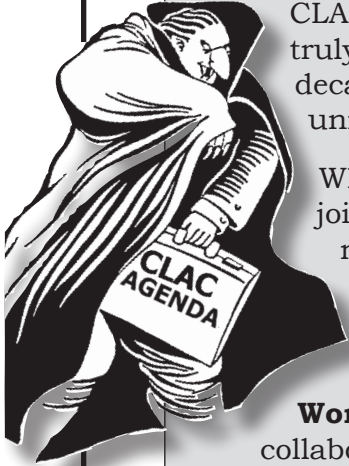


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The CLAC Agenda



CLAC's primary goal is to undercut the work of legitimate, democratic and truly representative unions and to roll back the clock on gains made over decades. All this in the name of creating a positive relationship with anti-union employers, who are eager to keep real unions out.

Where workers are given a real opportunity to consider the benefits of joining a representative union or going with CLAC, more often than not, members choose legitimate unions. That is why we need to reach out to our fellow workers and expose the true nature of CLAC. We must begin by informing our activists, membership, workers at large, politicians and the general public of the negative effects of this phony union.

Workers deserve better than to be in a company union looking to collaborate with employers at the expense of workers' basic rights, wages, benefits, working conditions and health and safety. Workers deserve to be members of real unions that are not afraid to go to the wall to defend their members' interests and those of their families and communities.

Real Union Democracy vs CLAC's "smiley face"

Contrary to the democratic structures that define our movement, CLAC's members cannot question, let alone change, the very essence of this company union. The fact that 25% to 40% of CLAC's collective agreements are voluntary recognitions, means that these workers find themselves stuck in an organization that bargains away their rights, and does not respect their personal beliefs and cultural and ethnic diversity.

Real trade unions pride themselves on the fact that union democracy is not a hollow concept, but a living reality that members experience and practice at the work-site, union office and at the convention floor. Democracy in CLAC, however, is certainly in short supply. The CLAC Constitution is so preoccupied with controlling what members can and cannot do that it even contains articles restricting the rights of members to run for office. Other constitutional mechanisms are in place so as to discourage dissent.

The CLAC staff control the day-to-day running of the organization. It has been argued that the Staff Council is a parallel power structure to CLAC's elected National Board and wields much greater control of CLAC than its elected leaders. This is the case in the bargaining process where collective agreements are struck behind closed doors between CLAC staff and employers, often without the membership's input or involvement.



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