



The Kerf: North American Edition

AFL-CIO Pullout Update

Rumors of a UBC pullout from the AFL-CIO have been confirmed by the actions of General President McCarron. The President of the AFL-CIO, George Sweeney responded to the news with the following :

" We are disappointed at the decision of the Carpenters. I expressed to the Carpenters executive board this week my belief that disaffiliation would be a loss for the Carpenters and a loss for the American labor movement.... I believe that we have an important and mutually beneficial relationship, and that today's unions need to be unified to provide a strong voice for (the) Carpenters' members, other union members and all working families, who face serious and challenging issues."

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

The AFL- CIO is an organization that does not appear, on the surface, to directly affect the working members of the construction trades. All of the trades send representatives to the umbrella group, and very few regular working members understand what the larger group does. Our General President McCarron shares some doubts about the mission of the larger group, and has said "It might interest you to know and over the course of our history, we have been in and out of the AFL-CIO several times. Why did we leave the AFL-CIO most recently? It's a matter of principle. It now costs \$4 million a year of your dues money to belong to that association. Yet no one, including the President of that organization, could answer one important question: "How does belonging to this association directly benefit a UBC member on the job? What real benefit do they get for \$4 million a year?"

WHAT DO WE GET? by Chuck Canon

The AFL-CIO deserves plenty of criticism for its lack of vision and leadership. Its officials have been self-serving political power brokers actively perpetuating the same environment that made Douglas McCarron's dictatorship possible. The AFL-CIO had a unique opportunity to publicly oppose McCarron when he first began to establish his dictatorship. Indeed, Pile Drivers Local 34 published ads in the New York Times addressed to John Sweeney and the AFL-CIO asking for help in exposing and stopping McCarron's attack on that union and the Brotherhood. The reply was silence. Sweeney and the AFL-CIO did nothing. Now, McCarron's target is the entire building trades. True to historical practice, as if genetically programmed, top officials of some building trades unions are responding to McCarron's treachery by issuing their own intentions of raiding Carpenter jurisdictions. In an enthusiastic display of self-cannibalism, these officials continue to demonstrate a lack of vision, and a lack of ability to effectively counter McCarron and his employer bosses. They only seem able to perform in such a way to benefit themselves, and eventually, the employers, and not the union member.

We Need A UNION

The Working people of this country NEED organizations to represent them, to protect their rights, and to serve them as agents in the process of collective bargaining. The ideal solution, if starting from scratch, might be to create one large union. Much of the institutional duplication existing today, and hopefully the wasted energy and money, would be transformed into a powerful force, working in the best interests of the working people.

The reality, is that we are experiencing the remnants of 100 years of craft oriented factionalism, where slices of the construction pie have been fought over by nearly twenty organizations, climaxing

in an era where 80% of the construction is being built by non union workers. The indictment is clear, our leaders have allowed their personal power trips to predominate over the best interest of the members, and now we are being told to be the good soldiers, and fight our brothers and sisters again!

The McCarron solution is reactive. Instead of seeking a new understanding with the other trades and working towards a new day of solidarity and a resurgence of pride in the unionism that the working people of this society desperately need; he has set course for easy pickings, like a pirate, or a vulture.

Construction Unions Face Dilemma As Carpenters Bolt from AFL-CIO
By Harry Kelber

from LABOREDUCATOR.ORG : Inside the AFL-CIO Issued Every Tuesday Column #3 April 3, 2001

"While McCarron said very little to Sweeney about his organizing plans, he was more forthcoming in a March 23 address to the National Erectors Assn. convention in Hawaii. He told the contractors: "You need the freedom to assign the work based on what makes sense, what makes all of us competitive on the job. If there's a dispute, let the owner settle it. It's his money and his job. Surely, we've learned that much." "While industry was demanding more for its construction dollar," McCarron said, "our answer was to shut down your job while we argued over whether an iron worker or a millwright did your rigging. We not only refused to help solve the problem, but we refused to admit there was a problem." He concluded: "We're serious about reorganizing the industry. We're serious about customer service."

Maybe that's why there's an AFL-CIO

McCarron wants to underbid the other unions, who in practice wait for the carpenters to sign contracts, and then add a quarter or fifty cents to their wage demands. Like the three stooges, who punch and gouge each other on their way through life, accomplishing little save for amusing their devotees, our trade union leaders are self destructing. Unlike with Mo, Larry, and Curly, however, real people are going to get hurt, and the effort that will be required to straighten out this disaster will be huge. NO WORKING MEMBER asked for this course of action.

HERE'S a WHOPPER- Other Trades Hate US!

Many of us have a special attachment to the work we do, feeling that building structures and trimming them out is a natural and honored profession. Those of us lucky enough to work with fine woods and finishes have a connection to the true artisans and crafts folk of the past, often including our own ancestors. We have our own camaraderie, flavored with sawdust and the smell of pine tar. There are few experiences like nailing a few boards together and then climbing up on them, to create a lasting structure, plumb, square, and true. Our own special sense of accomplishment is shared by most trades folk, when they build projects for themselves, or do our work on side jobs. Everyone is a carpenter!

Yet, we are the "'fucking carpenters" on the big jobs, because we have consistently accepted a role that undercuts the other trades. We have traditionally been willing to blur the boundaries of jurisdiction. We have repeatedly accepted smaller wage increases than the other trades. We have crossed picket lines, showing that our own self interest is more important than job site solidarity. In many areas, we get no show up time, we work in the rain, we have members working piecemeal, and too many of us bring our own power tools to the job.

Standard practice on many sites has carpenters tying a few rods, or finishing a little cement, when members of those trades are not present. This activity is presented as a service for the good of the job, or the contractor. This practice needs to stop. We can not afford to do other trades peoples' work, for less pay, and expect them to like it. We must make the change, in our own practices, as a precondition to developing new relations with the other trades.

McCarron's concept of "wall to wall", one stop shopping for contractors has been tried in the Midwest on a smaller scale. Some of the architects of the larger initiative experimented in the 80's and 90's with individual contractors, allowing lower pay, special benefit rates, and "one union for all work"

understandings. A metal buildings contract had carpenters erecting structural steel, and finishing cement, along with their traditional duties. Carpenter helpers replaced laborers, and journeymen did the work of several trades at a rate lower than even our commercial rate! Efforts were made to organize non union companies that already used this system, by promising them that they could continue to use "carpenters" for all of their work.

The UMBRELLA

The AFL-CIO provides a forum through the Building Trades Councils for the differences between the unions to be worked out. While far from a perfect system, and loaded with beaurocracy, the organization fulfills a vital role.

McCarron's efforts have not been designed to simply detach the UBC, and operate independently. He is actually attempting to destroy the fundamental agreements that have maintained a semblance of stability in the construction industry. **WE ARE HIS SOLDIERS!**

None of us were asked if we wanted this role. None of us has been asked to help brainstorm the possible outcomes of this move. We are all being told that this is in our best interest .

The COUNTER PUNCH

The AFL-CIO President, George Sweeney, has offered a 45 day cooling off period to give our leaders a chance to reconsider this move. After the beginning of June, he has stated that all carpenters on local councils will be removed, and that all relations with the UBC will be ended.

The Boilermakers decided not to wait. They have decided to go beyond skirmishes around the edges of jurisdiction, and have declared all millwright work to be their own. They are in need of new turf, with the change over from boilers to other technologies; and the new gas turbines that millwrights work on are prime targets. Individual members are invited to switch cards, and entire locals are invited to switch charters.

Charles Jones, head of the Boilermakers wrote: "Edward C. Sullivan, President of the Building and Construction Department, AFL-CIO, has advised me that the United Brotherhood of Carpenters has disaffiliated with the AFL-CIO. This action by the United Brotherhood of Carpenters severs their relationship with the Building and Construction Trades Department and its affiliated International Unions. Consequently, the Jurisdictional trade agreements between the Boilermakers and the Carpenter/Millwright are hereby null and void.

All equipment outlined in any trade agreement between the Boilermakers and the Carpenter/ Millwright immediately becomes the jurisdiction of the Boilermakers. Any work which has been assigned to the Carpenter/Millwright in accordance with any such trade agreement must immediately be reassigned to the Boilermakers. All future work involving equipment outlined in any such trade agreement must also be assigned to the Boilermakers. Additionally, any work, which has been assigned to the Carpenter/Millwright based on an agreement with any other craft, must be reevaluated in the light of the craft's trade agreements with the Boilermakers. By copy of this letter to our construction lodge Business Managers; I am requesting them to assist you in the transition of work assignments to the Boilermakers.

Equipment outlined in our trade agreements with the Carpenter/Millwright includes, but is not limited to, ALL WORK (unloading, handling, rigging, setting, installing, leveling, aligning, fitting, bolting, welding, burning, etc.) in conjunction with gas turbines, air pre-heaters, induced draft fans, bailey meters, agitators, oxygen converters, sintering machines, palletizing machines, along with applicable work in fossil fuel, nuclear & hydro electric power plants, paper mills, breweries, distilleries, steel mills, oil refineries, chemical plants and any other installations where trade agreements between Boilermakers and the Carpenter/Millwright have been used as a basis for assignment. All such work is to be performed in its entirety by Boilermakers.

The Boilermakers are currently in the process of recruiting members of the Millwrights trade into our union. We are in contact with individual Millwright locals in hopes of having them affiliate, as a whole, with the International Union. Our commitment, to our signatory contractors, remains as it has always

been, to provide the best skilled craftsmen in the industry. "

The millwrights have always been a sore spot in the larger UBC, feeling that they are overlooked and under represented in the larger organization. Their disaffection makes them a ripe target for ironworkers also. The boundaries between these unions are arbitrary and often end up in dispute even in the good times.

Whether the Boilermakers move is a carefully crafted plan to pick off an exposed edge of the UBC, with approval of the AFL-CIO, or is an opportunistic grab by a Machavellian rogue regime is irrelevant. This move is an opening shot in the upcoming battle to take the easy pickings.

McCarron's RETREAT

The first information regarding the AFL pullout was released on the Sunday preceding the August 2,000 convention in Chicago. Delegates were handed a thousand pages of information as they registered. A few diligent representatives of their peers read through the proposed amendments to the constitution and were shocked to see the language of the pullout proposal. On Monday (check and insert text) the matter was history.

Current word from the General President is that we should stay in local BCT councils and CLCs if they're working well for us. He listed a number of big city BTCs that have agreed to let the carpenters stay in. (New York, Milwaukee,..) He said he was granting affiliates "special dispensation" to stay in the councils. This action is against the constitutional amendment that McCarron himself rammed through, showing that our leaders can openly violate their own rules. While this is not a surprise for us, it gives our leaders no authority to enforce their rules on us, and greatly reduces their ethical standing, already at an all time low.

Follow the Leader (sic)

Just when we started hearing that new meetings are scheduled between the warring generals, another shoe has dropped.

from the ENGINEERING NEWS-RECORD :

"Operating Engineers Union Withdraws From BCTD's Heavy and Highway Division (5/8/01)
By Sheire Winston

The operating engineers union has dropped out of the Heavy and Highway Division of the AFL-CIO's Building and Construction Trades Dept. The May 7 announcement was critical of BCTD operations, and follows the carpenters union withdrawal in March from the AFL-CIO.

The disaffiliation of the carpenters union "will restrict or stymie any efforts to maximize the potential of the heavy & highway operation," Frank Hanley, president of the operating engineers union wrote in a letter to building trades President Edward C. Sullivan. Without the carpenters participation, "the heavy & highway operation has no chance of succeeding," Hanley asserts. The carpenters are not allowed to participate in any BCTD activities since they withdrew from the AFL.

Hanley says he will explore "several options" for the union relating to the heavy and highway work its members perform. "

We can only wonder what the options include for accomplishing the carpenters' work.

NEWS FROM ATLANTA

Many of you know that the CDUI-SER had a victory in elections for their UBC officers.

The repercussions of a few of them being involved as candidates for UBCJA International officer positions in August as part of the rebel slate, and in reaction to their success in organizing rank and file members to recognize their ownership of their union, the international is playing its Hole card; TRUSTEESHIP. All interested members should take out their copy of the UBC Constitution and read

about Trusteeship. Further interesting reading can be found at the ranknfile.net web site in the form of the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA). (The site also has the constitution).

the last few months

"Monday, January 15th 2001, I dropped by the Hall .My brother, John Reynolds, and I were invited to take part in the Martin Luther King Parade by organizers from the SERC(UBC)....

Before the parade I was told without explanation there would be no outward display of CDU. Shortly after one o'clock the parade started. John pulled his blue jean shirt off, and revealed his CDU T-shirt. It was quickly brought to everyone's attention, someone saying " We have the CDU with us ". I pulled my T-shirt off and said" Make that two!"

The Director of the organizers rolled up his banner, saying he would not be seen with us, that the CDU was going to destroy the Union.

Undeterred , my brother and I joined other workers singing "We are the Union, the mighty mighty Union, everywhere we go people want to know who we are, So We tell them, We are the Union, the MIGHTY, MIGHTY UNION!!

John G. Morris (condensed)

March

Brothers and Sisters: Some of you may already know that local 225 is in the process of being put in trusteeship by the UBC. I feel the case is unlawful and a lot of the membership feels the same way. The all rank and file E-Board is about to be removed. We have retained an attorney and fees are piling up. CDUI has endorsed this cause and at this time we ask for your help. Any donation would be greatly appreciated. Make checks payable to; Mazursky and Dunaway and mail to CDUI-SER PO box 93218 Atlanta, Ga. 30377
Thank you very much, Phil Lavallee local 225

April

Brothers and Sisters:

Local 225 has been put under supervision by the UBC.The supervisor is Vice-president Collado. His staff are the assistant supervisors. The all rank and file Executive Board has been removed. An appeal is being filed with the DOL. The way the removal occurred was classless. They had all the full-time staffers watch as we were removed. Like it was a show of force. I feel that they are the future board members. Will keep you posted. Still accepting donations for our legal defense fund. We at local 225 would like to add a special thanks to John Reiman for his generous donation.

Phil Lavallee local 225 Lead by Example

May

The US DOL has invaded local 225. An appeal has been filed of the trusteeship and the investigation is under way. The investigation should move along rather swiftly due to the fact the someone told the investigator right were to look. That person does not want his name posted so I will keep the name out of it.

The international reps were dismayed and stuttering when the investigator walked in. It was very different from their usual cocky attitude.

Phil Lavallee Local 225 Lead by Example

An Editorial

The Sisters and Brothers of Georgia are attempting to control their destiny and are under attack for it. That attack is only a more intense version of the attack we are all under. The Georgians differ from

many of us by the fact that they are fighting back. They are using every method available to them under the law of the USA, and the Constitution of the UBC. For those who question the need to change our organization, please examine why we belong in the first place.

Our union exists to help us improve the level of our wages, benefits, and working conditions, to shorten our workweek, to act as our agent and lobbyist, and to help build connections to other working people, so that we might have a greater effect on the society at large collectively.

Our leadership has remodeled our organization to intentionally and specifically reduce the involvement of the membership in all tactical and strategic planning, reducing us to ,at best, an unwilling gaggle of demoralized troops in the trenches. We have little say in contracts, and the weapon of striking has been removed from our arsenal. We are hardly involved in our deciding wage packages, nor in dividing them up. We have lost the respect of other trades over the years, and are now thumbing our noses at them.

We are working a lot of hours, but the average pay is not keeping up with inflation (380 % increase wages, 580% increase in prices since 1970). The members are treated as pawns, the camaraderie in our union is one of the political machine; the mentality is "what can I get?", "what do I have to do to get on full-time?" Our lobbyists are giving our money to the parties that are selling us down the road. The dream of the 35 hour week, FOR THE SAME PAY, has somehow been lost, as have the absolute restrictions on piecework, and supplying power tools to the job.

We do have one way to turn things around. We need to follow the example of our southern friends. The Georgians are playing their hand with all their might. They participated in the game, by the rules, won some battles, retreated a little, came back and fought another day, and are still in the game.

We all need to participate in the deciding the direction we heading. We don't have to be the soldiers who are hurt in a jurisdictional war. We can try to build our own bridges to our fellow trades folk,, even asking to speak at their local meetings. We can ask to speak at local Building Trades Council Meetings, as concerned members of the working population of this country. We don't need to feel restricted by those whose goals are so different than ours. Every local can be won for the members, if those who care bring an extra 100 people to the meetings. The locals elect delegates to their councils. Those councils need to hear the voices of those who work with the tools. They can be reformed into bodies where the wishes of the members are researched, and information provided by experts is brought back to the floors of the locals for discussion and approval. Term limits for all officer and staff positions, salary caps equal to the regular wages provided for in local contracts, and requirements of returning to the rank and file before filling other staff jobs; would all contribute to a Union of the MEMBERS, by the MEMBERS, and for the MEMBERS. MAY THE MEMBERS' WILL BE DONE!

Tom Crofton

KEEP THE KERF COMING

*The Kerf needs you to dig into your pocket!
Send money or stamps to 16005 Crofton Dr., Richland Center, WI 53581.*

READ THE KERF ONLI

<http://www.carpentersunionbc.com/Pages/SWCC.html>

<http://forthemembers.tripod.com>

DEADLINE for submissions to the next Kerf is June 15th!
Send to above address, e-mail to crofton@mwt.net, or fax to 801 858-6240.