

FACTS ON UNIFOR'S DISAFFILIATION FROM THE CLC

January 18, 2018

Why did Unifor leave the CLC?

This dispute is about the governance of the Canadian Labour Congress and its failure to prevent attacks on workers from their U.S.-based unions. The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) has rules in place to ensure workers have democratic rights, and that Canadian members of U.S. unions have clear autonomy. Unfortunately, this is not being followed or respected. Unifor is gravely concerned with U.S.-based unions trampling on the rights of workers and has made the decision to disaffiliate.

This exact issue was raised in 2017 when Unifor was vocal about the trusteeship of Local 113 of the ATU. Our union's opposition is simple: we are opposed to any union that threatens, harasses, intimidates, or silences workers for simply asserting their democratic rights and autonomy. When workers turned to the CLC for support, they have been met by silence, despite Article 26 of the CLC constitution that is suppose to protect the rights of workers in Canada who are members of U.S.-based unions.

In addition to the lack of action to defend the democratic rights of workers in Canada, there has been an ineffective application of Article 4 of the CLC constitution. Article 4 outlines a democratic process for workers to change unions, but it is not enforced. Affiliates agreed to it, but, in practice, do not grant workers those rights. When members apply for justification (to change their union) under this process, their rights are not protected and affiliates have worked to shut down any investigation. Subsequently, virtually no members have been granted justification in recent memory. In two recent cases, ATU Local 113 and UNITE HERE Local 75, we have seen local unions put under trusteeship by their U.S.-based union to quell dissent. Trusteeship has meant that offices have been taken over, democratically-elected officers were removed, staff fired and property or membership funds have been seized. The constitution of the CLC should protect workers, but this has not happened and Unifor is at odds with many CLC affiliates. We will no longer stand by and be silent or to allow this to continue.

Given all of this and our desire for immediate change to defend workers in Canada from U.S.-based bullies, our union made a decision it will no longer participate in the CLC.

This decision is a principled one. It's about holding others accountable for not putting principles into practice. Unifor's leadership believes strongly that in order to make things better for workers there is a need to advance this issue now in the hopes that there will be a stronger labour movement in Canada.