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The Right Flier

Newsletter of the WSU-AAUP

Volume 3, Number 2, January 2003

On the Desirability of AFL-CIO Affiliation: A Report from the Collective Bargaining Congress Meetings in Washington, DC

By Paulette Olson,
Vice President WSU-AAUP

In December, Rudy Fichtenbaum and I attended the meetings of the Collective Bargaining Congress (CBC) in Washington, D.C. as representatives of the AAUP-WSU Chapter. The CBC is the assembly of all AAUP collective bargaining chapters. Currently, there are over 70 chapters nationwide. The CBC meets twice a year in D.C. to discuss matters of importance to collective bargaining members. In December, the discussion centered on the desirability of direct affiliation with the AFL-CIO.

The question of affiliation with the AFL-CIO was initiated by the CBC's Executive Committee. In particular, the AFL-CIO was invited to attend the December CBC meeting as part of an information-gathering process. Accordingly, at the meeting, representatives from the AFL-CIO presented information about their organization and CBC members asked questions from the floor. After lunch, the CBC reassembled to discuss the pros and cons of affiliation. Because this was only an information-gathering process, no decision on affiliation was made. Instead, members of the CBC were instructed by the Executive Committee to poll their membership, and to inform them if there is interest in pursuing a direct affiliation with AFL-CIO.

Accordingly, the AAUP-WSU Executive Committee requests that you read the information provided in this newsletter, attend the Chapter meeting on Friday, February 7th (Chapter members only) for clarification of the issues, and give us your feedback to the questions posed at the end of this newsletter by Thursday, FEBRUARY 13, 2003. We will forward the response to the first question to the CBC on February 14, 2003.

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WSU-AAUP Supports Faculty at LeMoyne-Owen College

On September 4th of this year, the faculty at LeMoyne-Owen College (a private university) voted overwhelmingly, in an election run by the National Labor Relations Board, to elect their Faculty Organization as their collective bargaining representative. The administration refuses to recognize the results of this election, claiming that the Yeshiva ruling exempts the faculty from union rights.

The Faculty Organization at LeMoyne-Owen College has successfully fended off four legal challenges to their right to bargain collectively, but at a high monetary cost. To date the 55 member faculty have collectively paid \$20,000 in legal fees, and owe \$23,000 more. The National AAUP sent this information to all of the collective bargaining chapters and asked each of us for our support.

The WSU-AAUP Executive Committee voted unanimously to send \$1,000.00 to the Faculty Organization at LeMoyne-Owen College, in support of their efforts to bargain collectively!

Winter Quarter Chapter Meetings:

February 7th, 163 E Student Union, 12:00 pm, Regular Winter Quarter Chapter meeting, with special report on possible AFL-CIO affiliation (Lake Campus location likely to be 151 Dwyer)

March 14th, location to be announced later, 12:00 pm, Special Winter Quarter Chapter meeting for revision of Chapter's Constitution and Bylaws.

Brief summary of the AFL-CIO presentation

By Paulette Olson, Vice President WSU-AAUP

The AFL-CIO is a federation of 65 national unions with 35 million members. One of their major goals is to create a strong voice for their membership in the political arena. Increasingly, these voices are the voices of white-collar professionals. Thus, strengthening the voice of higher educational professionals through the AAUP is important to them.

Of particular note is the AFL-CIO's Department for Professional Employees (DPE) which consists of 24 national unions that are professional in nature. Currently, it represents over 300 distinct occupations including health care, education, journalism, science, technology, engineering, psychology, public administration, arts and entertainment, among others. It was chartered in 1977 in recognition of the dramatic increase in professional and technical employees among union members. Some of the DPE's goals include: uniting professionals around similar issues and objectives; providing research, education, training and other assistance to affiliated unions; advancing a public policy agenda in federal and state government that ensures the well-being and status of professionals; educating the public and media about the role of professionals; building alliances with non-union organizations that promote the interest of professionals; and advocating for professionals within the decision-making councils of the AFL-CIO. (Their web site can be found at www.dpeaflcio.org).

Finally, the AFL-CIO encouraged the AAUP to affiliate by arguing that the larger the organization, the stronger the political voice in fighting for social justice, in general, and for issues of concern to university faculty, in particular.

Questions from the floor by CBC members

Q: How would our membership size (25,000) fit within the AFL-CIO?

A: Our culture understands that there are both large and small organizations. For example, the professional and technical engineers have a union of under 100,000 members. We make an effort to make sure all voices are heard.

Q: How does the AFL-CIO work on the state level?

A: Every state has an AFL-CIO whose role it is to focus on areas of concern at the state level. These "state federations" are led by officers and boards elected by delegates from local unions. Unions choose to affiliate. Once affiliated, local unions set the agendas for the state federations. The AFL-CIO also charters nearly 570 central labor councils to provide a voice at the local level; in cities, towns and counties.

Q: What is a charter?

A: A charter is an official recognition that you are an affiliate. It is given by majority vote of the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO. It allows you to have rights and responsibilities listed in the constitution. It cannot be taken away except by a 2/3rds vote of the Council.

Q: How are you using terms "white collar" and "blue collar?"

A: We don't mean to be divisive. Despite numbers, when people think of the labor movement they tend to think of an auto or construction worker. We refer to working in professions and in the public sector as "white collar" work. Examples of "white collar" issues include the loss over the control of work or the loss of professional autonomy to corporate bureaucracy.

Q: In view of the goal to increase membership, is there any likelihood that you would turn us down if we decided to affiliate?

A: We would not get into a situation where we would turn you down. That answer goes to process. We feel it is important to reach out to strong independent organizations like the AAUP.

Q: I am skeptical about the benefits of double affiliation. Will chapters already affiliated with the AFL-CIO through the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), for instance, pay double dues?

A: There are many AAUP chapters who already belong to AFL-CIO affiliates such as the AFT or the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Consequently, this will be best addressed in a dialogue with the unions involved.

CBC Open Forum:

The open forum of the CBC began with a presentation by Mike Mauer, the Director of AAUP's Department of Organizing and Services in the national office. He provided a brief overview of the structure and cost considerations, as well as the process of affiliation.

Considerations of Structure: Under consideration is whether to become a direct affiliate of the AFL-CIO. If direct affiliation is chosen, the CBC, not the AAUP, would receive an AFL-CIO charter. Direct affiliation also raises another question. Would the CBC also affiliate with the DPE? This is a separate affiliation. Regardless of what affiliation the CBC decides to pursue, AAUP would be restructured, because the CBC would become a separate organization. AAUP would also have to make changes to its constitution to accommodate the restructuring. In addition, the remaining AAUP sans CBC would lose its tax exempt or 501c(3) status. However, a charitable arm of the AAUP could be set up as a separate entity for favorable tax treatment.

Cost Considerations: If the CBC affiliates, there are several financial levels to be considered, each with its own dues. The breakdown per member is as follows:

AFL-CIO national level	\$0.57 per month
Dept Professional Employees	\$0.11 per month
Ohio State Federation	\$0.55 per month
Dayton Labor Council	\$0.36 per month
	(plus \$10 to join)

Process of Affiliation: The process began when the CBC Executive Committee met with the AFL-CIO in November of 2001 and expressed an interest in exploring the issue of affiliation. The process continues. The CBC Executive Committee will make its final decision based on feedback from members of the CBC.

Arguments against affiliation:

Direct affiliation with the AFL-CIO would have deleterious effects on AAUP chapters that are already affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and it would have a destabilizing influence on the AFT. (Argument put forward by the AFT)

The only real advantage that we see is having a strong voice. But it sounds as if we are going to be the smallest and quietest voice in shaping the policy objectives of the AFL-CIO.

Maybe individual chapters can be more effective in supporting AAUP's agenda through other

means such as local affiliation with the AFT or with other affiliates of the AFL-CIO. Many of our members do not want to admit they are employees. They are "professionals" with professional interests and see AAUP as representing their special interest. Thus they fear losing their professionalism by joining up with the AFL-CIO.

We are afraid of losing our credibility. All unions on campus are affiliates of the AFL-CIO, except the faculty union. We believe we got the best contract because we are not viewed as a traditional union and are hence treated differently by the Administration.

The benefits do not outweigh the costs of what we will lose. CBC is not the union; the AAUP is. CBC gets its funding from the larger AAUP. Would AAUP be able to support the CBC chapters that chose not to affiliate?

We already have close relations with other unions. For instance, we have supported the struggles of the nurses union, the prison guard union, etc. This support occurred without official affiliation. We see no need to affiliate.

The AFT has 1.2 million members. Many AAUP chapters have already allied themselves with the AFT to gain more influence at the local level. We should think about affiliation with the AFT rather than with the AFL-CIO directly.

We should think about using the principles of the AAUP and the political clout of the AFT. We share similar values with the AFT and it is clear that the future is with the AFT.

The professional goals, standards and mission of the AAUP are identical to those of the AFT. I would like to see a merger of the CBC with the AFT if affiliation occurs.

We have to be careful because the nature of management has changed. Administrators no longer come from academia. They are less interested in protecting our "intellectual craft" than the AAUP. The AAUP gives us the autonomy we need. The AAUP needs to focus on recruiting more members rather than affiliation.

If we affiliate with the AFT rather than with the AFL-CIO directly, we can speak with one voice which will give us a much bigger voice at the local level than we have now because the AFT is already tied into the AFL-CIO apparatus.

If the CBC affiliates, what happens to the AAUP? What happens to individual members who vote with their check books? What happens to chapters that do not belong to the CBC? What happens if we lose our 501c(3) status? We should work with the AFL-CIO in other ways at the local and state levels.

We fear that many chapters will no longer belong to the CBC if it affiliates. It will split out the CBC into only those who will be willing to join the AFL-CIO.

It's not the principle of the thing, it is the money. We already work closely with other unions.

The advantages to joining appear to be largely symbolic. We already have strong local connections with other unions on our campus and they work just fine.

Affiliation does not help us grow more membership.

The timing is just not right. I can't get another dime out of my members for any affiliation whether AFL-CIO or AFT. Maybe in a better economy.

Arguments in favor of affiliation

We ought to separate our decision from the problems of joint affiliates. The AFL-CIO has stated that they are willing to work with us on this.

We need the protection and muscle of AFL-CIO. We could use their political clout to make the case for higher education at the state and federal levels. They also need us to come in and to agitate for real workplace freedom and control.

We have no voice within the organized labor movement and we should have.

About time we grow up and think of ourselves as a union. If we want to be influential we should ally ourselves with organized labor. It is time for a reassessment. Mary Burgan (National AAUP General Secretary) is retiring and the next leader ought to think about how we can cooperate. We could still use the principles of the AAUP, but in addition, use the clout and resources of a larger union.

We need the clout of a large major union. We have common cause. We need to educate our faculty about what a union really means. We need decent wages, respect, fair benefits, protection from unjust treatment, and control over our work. And the way to guarantee our needs is to unionize as many faculty as possible into one big union.

The nature of universities has changed.

Administrators are managers, they have often never been in a classroom. To deal with them, we must have muscle. The bigger you are the more clout you have.

In Conclusion

The general theme by the end of the meeting was this. How do we build a "bigger and better union"?

Do we accomplish this by a) directly affiliating with AFL-CIO, b) indirectly affiliating with the AFL-CIO via the AFT, or c) growing membership within the AAUP?

Judging from the discussion, a number of chapters have already made the decision that multiple affiliations are the route to building a "bigger and better" union. At present, of the nearly 70 faculty unions affiliated with the AAUP, there are six that have joint AAUP/AFT affiliation. Also exploring the possibility of AFT affiliation is the University of Cincinnati. As they reported, they "...want to get the attention of their administration." In addition, some of the AAUP chapters within the California State University system have joint affiliation with the California Faculty Association (CFA). There are also a number of AAUP chapters that have joint affiliations with the Service Employee International Union (SEIU) or the National Education Association (NEA).

Many more members of the CBC reported working closely with unions in their area without any official affiliation. Many expressed how rewarding it was to work with other unions and to be able to generate the support they needed during faculty contract negotiations.

All agreed that the main goal is to gain a stronger voice in support of higher education issues in general, and faculty in particular, in an era of declining financial support at the state and federal level.

Where do we go from here?

As stated above, the AAUP-WSU Executive Committee requests that you address the following questions and send your comments to paulette.olson@wright.edu by THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2003. Our deadline for responding to the national office is February 14, 2003. ***A follow-up email will be sent to all bargaining unit members the first week of February.***

SHOULD THE CBC AFFILIATE WITH THE AFL-CIO? WHY OR WHY NOT?

SHOULD OUR CHAPTER EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF AFFILIATION WITH THE AFT? WHY OR WHY NOT?

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