Building bargaining power through inter-union collaboration: the case of two industry union federations

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Strategies for union renewal and revitalization

Context: union renewal and revitalization

• debates and developments

Inter-union collaboration

• Historical patterns

• Theoretical interest
  – power and peak unions
  – power resources: external solidarity/network embeddedness

• Australian practice
  – A new or renewed focus on the industry scale
    – industry federations/alliances formed in 2000s
A question of scale

Global Unions

Global Union Federations

International Transport Federation

International Trade Union Congress

Australian Council of Trade Unions

Canadian Labour Council/Congrès du Travail du Canada

National peak unions

Victorian Trades Hall Council

FTQ

Local peak unions

Geelong Trades & Labour Council

Metropolitan Montreal FTQ

Regional peak unions

Industry Federations

Transport Unions Federation

Aviation Unions Federation

Union

Union

Union

Union
The federations

Australian Transport Unions Federation (TUF)
• MOU signed in 2009 by
  - Maritime Union of Australia (MUA),
  - Australian Rail, Tram and Bus Industry Union (RTBU)
  - Transport Workers Union (TWU)

Australian Aviation Unions Federation (AUF)
• formed in May 2010 by
  - TWU
  - Australian Licensed Aircraft Engineers Association (ALAEA)
  - Flight Attendants Association of Australia - Domestic and Regional (FAAA)
• August 2011 - The Australian and International Pilots Association (AIPA) joined
• August 2012 - FAAA left the AUF
TUF and AUF Campaigns

AUF Safe Skies Darwin
2012

2010 UPS Global Action day

Labor Day
2007

“Touch One Touch All”
Queensland Transport Unions Federation

TUF campaign: Shame BHP Shame
- Work Choices Revisited
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EaUzc83sTn00
Issues facing the federations

- Translating solidarity
- Role of leadership
- Fragility and durability
  - internal and external pressures
  - managing conflict

The federation has opened doors for us that we would not necessarily have been able to have the door even ajar in terms of lobbying and stuff. (FAAA)

Companies now have seamless modes of transport. We have to move on from past divisions and develop ways to work together on issues that affect us all. (RTBU)

[Through the AUF] ... we will have a real say in determining the future of our industry with real power.” (ALAEA)

it’s about time we did this. We’re all fighting for the same thing. I’ve been at the airport 30 years and the environment has changed a lot from when I first started. The way companies hire labour now means it’s more of a challenge to get strength in numbers. (NSW airport delegate)

Regardless of our differences on this issue [privatisation] we’re not going to have this hurt what is important to our membership, which is [TUF]. (TWU)

What boss would be tame enough to try and take any one of our unions on when they know their entire precinct is dominated by TUF members, effectively? (RTBU)

building if you like …[a TUF] approach to supply chain capacity building (MUA)