

----- Original Message -----

Subject: On the recent UCCA election in Chicago and its impact on UCCA  
Date: Sun, 22 May 2005 18:34:00 -0500  
From: Bohdan Bodnar <bohdan.bodnar@worldnet.att.net>  
Reply-To: bohdan.bodnar@worldnet.att.net  
To: Michael Sawkiw <unis.sawkiw@verizon.net>  
CC: askold@rcn.com, kyj@rowan.edu

Dear Mr. President,

As a concerned UCCA member of the Ukrainian-American community in Chicago and a long-time, former active member of the local UCCA board, I am compelled to bring to your attention a few far-reaching issues that came to the fore as a result of recent Illinois Branch UCCA activities, some at which you were present, in Chicago. I believe that it is important to explore these issues in some detail, because they affect not only our local UCCA branch, but other branches, and the UCCA at the national level. These issues involve internal, legal UCCA matters as well as questionable ethical and professional behaviors on the part of the UCCA leadership. Clearly, our nation's Ukrainian-American community is undergoing a time of change, which can be confusing and problematic. As a result, our community needs leaders that are flexible, innovative, and principled in their approach to dealing with this change so that our community grows and flourishes. In no other time in recent memory have the leadership abilities of our community leaders been more important.

So, what are some of the far-reaching issues that were raised in Chicago on March 20, 2005 and May 18, 2005 during Branch efforts in selecting a new board? They pivot around 1) the Statyt of 20 October 1996, 2) the Pravylnyk of 1998 (Ukrainian versions enclosed as attachments), 3) who has the legal authority to interpret these documents and render a binding decision, and 4) the arbitrary nature of adherence to these documents by the local and national leadership, which I propose threatens the very existence of the UCCA.

According to the Statyt, Chapter VIII, paragraph 7, only the current Statytova Komicija has the legal authority to interpret the Statyt. Also, according to Chapter VIII, paragraph 1, the Statytova Komicija must consist of seven individuals. According to the meeting notes from the Executive (enclosed as an attachment) the Komicija consists of only six people. Furthermore, neither Mr. J. Kulas, Mr. O. Baranyk, nor you are part of the Komicija. Based on the Statyt, it is unclear what authority any of the aforementioned individuals have to interpret the Statyt for the membership. You may be aware that the Illinois Branch received a letter allegedly from you (enclosed as an attachment) rendering an interpretation of the Statyt about "postijni platnyky." This letter does not use UCCA stationery, it is not signed, and the persons listed do not appear to have the legal authority to interpret the Statyt. Therefore, the letter is of no consequence and clearly did not come from your office. Of concern is who wrote the letter using your name? I urge you to launch an immediate investigation into this matter and at a minimum withdraw UCCA membership from the person(s) who undermined your authority as national President by writing the letter. Addition legal action certainly would be justified. Now, returning back to the issue of the Staytova Komicija: once it renders a binding

interpretation of the Statyt, it would seem logical to disseminate the information to all UCCA branches on official UCCA letterhead for implementation. Selecting only one branch to implement a point in the Statyt that applies to all branches is unethical and questionable from a legal perspective. Let's look at an example.

You were present in Chicago during the "Zahalni Zbory" on March 20, 2005. At this meeting, Mr. J. Kulas, Mr. O. Baranyk, and you stated that only postijni platnyky were allowed to vote. You determined that postijni platnyky constituted individuals who paid the correct amount of dues according to the Statyt and who had paid for at least two years in a row. Notwithstanding the fact that you apparently did not have the authority to make such a determination without consulting the Statytova Komicija, do you not think that such a deviation from what is standard practice in UCCA branches concerning voting and dues amounts merits notifying all branch chairs in your organization? If you had sent out such a notification, then would have been the consequences? I surmise that many of your branches would have had to dismiss board members for non-payment of proper dues (e.g., in Arizona, Illinois) or others would have had no choice but to fold (e.g., in Georgia). This course of action contradicts your apparent goal of maintaining high activity in active branches, renewing or reviving inactive branches, and creating new ones. I know of no other professionally-run organization that forces its members to wait two years before they can vote. I believe that you will have great difficulty in achieving your goal of reinvigorating branches and creating new ones if you subscribe to such a policy. Organizations as a rule strive to be all inclusive, not all exclusive as appears to be the case in Chicago.

The next issue is that of dues. It is unfortunate that the UCCA does not adhere to its own Statyt as indicated by the membership form page on your website. It states that student dues are \$30. This is in direct violation of the Statyt, which states they are a minimum of \$25. What are the legal ramifications, if any, of this? Also, it was propagated in Chicago that UNIS donors have the right to vote at membership meetings. Where does it state this in the Statyt? As a long-time UNIS donor, I have never received a receipt identical to the one I receive for my payment to the National Fund. The Pravylnyk clearly states that UCCA membership is based on payment to the National Fund. Has there been an addendum to the Statyt that no one other than you, Mr. J. Kulas, and Mr. O. Baranyk know about? Certainly, no one I have spoken to, including other branch chairs, is aware of such an addendum.

Earlier I mentioned ethics and professionalism. It was obvious to all early on during the March 20, 2005 meeting, that the meeting had gotten out of control. It is my opinion and the opinion of many others that Mr. O. Baranyk behaved in a dictatorial and unprofessional manner worthy of a Soviet upbringing. As national President and a leader, you should have stepped up to the plate and intervened. But it was only after Mr. O. Baranyk asked you to address the issue of postijni platnyky, being unable to deal with the issue himself, that you stepped up. One of your first words was that you were ashamed ("meni soromno") to be present at such a meeting. That is a very strong word to use and is not a word a diplomat would use to attempt to defuse a situation. However it soon became apparent that you were not interested in defusing anything. I firmly believe that your actions and statements contributed to the ugly

mood and lack of professionalism that ensued and culminated in the “Nadzvychayni Zahalni Zbory” on May 18, 2005.

I would like to point out several things about these “Nadzvychayni Zahalni Zbory”:

- (1) The meeting was held on a weekday, a time not convenient for all members particularly new immigrants, however, obviously convenient for the majority of the board;
- (2) Certain board members were not permitted to vote because they had not paid appropriate dues. It was deemed fit to disregard the fact that their participation was critical to the success of Ukrainian Fest in Chicago for the past several years, that one of them was the outgoing branch secretary, and that they were never informed by the Chair as to what the appropriate dues were;
- (3) I received e-mail notification one day in advance of this CRITICAL meeting. I would think that in such great matters of consequence, a written notification on official local stationery with signatures from key board members, received at least one week in advance, would be mandatory;
- (4) The e-mailed meeting notice I received, as did you and Mrs. Gallo, contained incorrect information regarding who could vote and who could not vote (violations of the Pravylnyk, Chapter VI paragraphs 1b and c);
- (5) People who were denied the right to vote were never informed during the National Fund collection drive as to what payment was expected from them so that they could vote. In fact, this matter has been conveniently ignored for at least the past 20 years – people gave what they could and no questions were asked. Now, some of the people who were denied the right to vote are demanding their money back. Will you return their money?
- (6) Mr. O. Baranyk told people who disagreed with him to shut up (“zadkajteciya”), attempted to arbitrarily limit their discussions, and on a few occasions told people he would throw them out of the room; and as a result,
- (7) Many people, including outgoing board members, walked out of the meeting in disgust. I fear many have walked out forever.

What does all of the above indicate? In my opinion, it shows an organization in serious trouble: an organization that arbitrarily adheres to its outdated by-laws when it so pleases, an organization that blatantly violates its own outdated by-laws, an organization that is all exclusive rather than all inclusive, and an organization whose leadership demonstrates a decided lack of professionalism and leadership skill. What is needed is clear and decisive leadership to right the wrongs that have been done in Chicago which have succeeded in alienating the overwhelming majority of new immigrants and many in the third wave who either were very active or were increasingly become more and more active. Our community has experienced an enormous setback in its development. It will take years to set things back on track.

I see before you three paths: 1) pretend that nothing happened and continue operating as you have, 2) address the real issues in Chicago in a just and equitable manner by perhaps declaring all the zbory invalid and have the old board continue its functions until a new one can be selected next year once all the “rules of the game” are clearly spelled out for everyone, or 3) inform all your branches of your

decisions regarding interpretation of the Statyt and watch them start to disintegrate. I do not envy your position Mr. President, because the path of a leader is never easy, but consider this: although Mr. J. Kulas' "Heritage Foundation" and others may provide you with short-term funds for UNIS, how have the long-term prospects for the UCCA's financial stability been impacted? I fear that you have contributed to the downward national trend regarding collection of funds. Lastly please answer this: why should I, as a long-time financial supporter of the UCCA, as an active member of the UCCA Illinois Branch for over 15 years and former board member, and as a financial supporter of UNIS, continue supporting your organization given all of the issues I have outlined?

Should you require any additional documentation, including a video of the meeting held on March 20, 2005, I would be happy to provide it to you, provided that you are serious in addressing my concerns. I wait to hear your thoughts and answers to the many troubling issues I have raised.

Sincerely,  
Bohdan L. Bodnar, PhD