



BIOGRAPHY

GUY JACOB

**Union of Canadian Transportation Employees
National President - 1972-1978**

Guy Jacob became president of UCTE at the 1972 convention; he was twice re-elected to the office, in 1975 and 1978. Before the union was founded in 1966 Guy was already active in the labour movement.

He was involved with the International Brotherhood of Electrical workers for 10 years before starting to work at the Dorval airport. He was a delegate at the first Component convention in 1966. From 1966 to 1972 he was local President at the Dorval Airport.

Six months into his third term Jacob ran for the position of third vice-president during the PSAC's 1979 convention. Days before his election, the [Ottawa Citizen had pointed](#) to the "veteran boss of UCTE" as the favourite among several contenders to replace the incumbent. Brother Jacob always took pride in his union. It wasn't a radical union, he contended, but it was a militant one – and one that the government should think twice before challenging.

By the time PSAC held its 1982 convention, Canada was grappling with a recession; 426,000 Canadians had lost their jobs through layoffs in public-sector industries. The federal government was looking to impose a public sector wage restraint program as an option to curb inflation. It was within that political climate that delegates elected several new "[younger, more radical](#)" union leaders. It included PSAC President Pierre Samson, who wanted PSAC to become "a more activist, more progressive union to defend the rights of public servants." He was one of only two high-ranking officials who managed to get re-elected that year. Following convention, the [Calgary Herald's editorial team opined](#) that PSAC's new "radical" leadership had "ominous implications for labour peace in the federal public sector."

"Militancy on the part of the federal public service would be totally out of place in the current economic context. The public, which will wind up the inevitable scapegoat, is unlikely to accept such an attitude on the part of civil servants."

Guy Jacob [fired back in a scathing letter to the editor](#), decrying their portrayal of PSAC's leadership and its prospects for labour peace as "sensational journalism". But brother Jacob didn't mince words: "My goal is to promote a more aggressive image for our union."



“It is our hope that the future for labour relations in the federal public service will be based on mutual respect and understanding,” he wrote. “We sincerely believe that such an atmosphere can be fostered provided that the federal government is prepared to enter negotiations in a professional way and that the politics of economic scapegoating are left outside the bargaining table.

“Our view is that federal public service employees are honest, decent, hard-working men and women who pay their full share of taxes and should not be forced to subsidize the Government of Canada with either low wages or sub-standard working conditions.”

If that was a militant position to have, Jacob added, then maybe public servants were the true scapegoats. Brother Guy Jacob was a fierce and undaunted union leader. He retired in 1985 and continued to advocate for public servants as part of the National Association of Federal Retirees. He passed away on March 28, 2019 at the age of 91.

