"COMMUNISM AND THE CANADIAN WORKING CLASS DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION: THE WORKERS' UNITY LEAGUE, 1930 - 1936."

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ABSTRACT

The Communist Party of Canada's (CPC) attempts to operate the United Front tactics laid down by Lenin and the Comintern in 1920-22 foundered on the CPC's failure to come to terms with the profound character of labour's post-war defeat or with its own marginality. The task of creating a mass party capable of leading, in the not-too-distant future, a revolutionary struggle for power encouraged the CPC to ignore the laborious and modest process of building support around small workplace issues and to prefer working through a spurious united front organization, the Trade Union Educational League, which was little more than a mouthpiece for a succession of abstract propaganda campaigns. When none of these propelled the party to mass status, but rather drove a wedge between it and the Trades and Labour Congress, the ground was prepared for acceptance of the diametrically opposite tactics of the "Third Period", which with much justice have been criticised for their political stupidity. The tardiness with which the CPC applied them underlined the fact that, however much the leaders of the labour movement might have "betrayed" the rank and file, it was hard to see them as "social fascists" who had to be combatted with even more vigour than that usually reserved for the bosses. From the beginning, when they terminated an interesting alliance between the CPC and national unionism, to the end, when they retarded the CPC's recognition of the possibilities opened up by the emergence of the CIO, these tactics had negative

consequences. Yet they also helped bring limited political gains for the CPC, which entered the latter half of the 1930s stronger than it had ever been, and organizational advances for the Canadian working class, in the shape of at least the first few bricks in the foundations of mass industrial unionism. In addition, the complementary unemployed movement mobilized tens of thousands of workers and their families against the asperities of the depression. By 1936 the CPC had undeniably carved out for itself a decent niche in the labour movement.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACCL	All-Canadian Congress of Labour
ACC	Amalgamated Carpenters Union of Canada
ACW	Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Union
AMW	Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia
AWIU	Auto Workers' Industrial Union
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organizations
FCWIU	Fishermen's and Cannery Workers' Industrial Union
FIU	Foodworkers' Industrial Union
FSU	Friends of the Soviet Union
CCF	Cooperative Commonwealth Federation
CLDL	Canadian Labour Defence League
CPC	Communist Party of Canada
FWIU	Furniture Workers' Industrial Union
IAM	International Association of Machinists
ILA	International Longshoremen's Association
ILGWU	International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union
ILO	International Left Opposition
IUNTW	Industrial Union of Needle Trades' Workers
LWIU	Lumber Workers' Industrial Union
LWTWC	Longshore and Water Transport Workers of Canada
MWIU	Mine Workers' Industrial Union
MWUC	Mine Workers' Union of Canada
NCUC	National Council of Unemployed Councils
NUWA	National Unemployed Workers' Association
OBU	One Big Union
RILU	Red International of Labour Unions
SLWIU	Shoe and Leather Workers' Industrial Union

SMWIU	Steel and Metal Workers' Industrial Union
SPC	Socialist Party of Canada
SPNA	Socialist Party of North America
TDLC	Toronto District Labour Council
TLC	Trades and Labour Congress
TWIU	Textile Workers' Industrial Union
UBCJ	United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners
VDWWA	Vancouver and District Waterfront Workers' Association
VTLC	Vancouver Trades and Labour Council
WLL	Women's Labour League
WPC	Workers' Party of Canada
WUL	Workers' Unity League
YCL	Young Communist League

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INTRODUCTION

Posterity has not been kind to the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). A tiny organization with an aging membership, it remains one of the few CP's in the advanced capitalist countries to hold loyally to the "Moscow line" - despite all the strains imposed by events since 1956. As the Soviet system has been discredited, so the CPC has been pushed further out to the periphery of Canadian politics. Judging from the historiography of Canadian communism, it seems that the present irrelevance of the CPC has been written into the past. Despite recent indications of sympathetic interest, Canadian historians of communism have been for the most part unimpressed by the contribution of "the Party" to working class life or openly hostile to the tradition it once represented. Even as fairminded a historian as Ross McCormack could write off its contribution in the 1920s with a single dismissive footnote.[1] It could be argued that three histories (four, if we count the "official" version) of an organization that at its peak never had more than 20,000 members are more than enough.[2] The existing studies, however, all have definite limitations, not least of which is a failure to examine systematically the primary activity of the CPC for the period examined here: trade union and industrial work.

William Rodney's thorough study of the CPC in the 1920s is particularly useful in laying bare the party's relationship with the Communist International (Comintern) and the impact of

that relationship on the emergence of CPC tactics. Conversely, it is at its weakest in locating the CPC in its class and national contexts: the rest of the labour movement and the working class scarcely appear in Soldiers of the Revolution. Moreover, the book's sombre, dispassionate tone not only fails to convey the feel of the period, but continuously gives the impression that its subjects are being judged rather than analysed or understood. Nevertheless, it remains a valuable account.[3]

Ivan Avakumovic's The Communist Party in Canada has the virtues of assembling a mass of useful information and covering the entire history of the party in less than 300 pages, and the corollary vice impressionism.[3] In some respects, Avakumovic's hostility to the CPC, which comes out most clearly in his use of innuendo and anecdote, is shared by Ian Angus, author of the most recent CPC history. A Trotskyist, Angus draws a neat dividing line in his study of the CPC up to 1932 at 1927. Pre-1927 the party, free from the factional wrangles that bedevilled political life in the Russian party after 1923-24, was on the upgrade; post-1927, with the party marshalled into the Stalin camp by Tim Buck, it sank into the morass of blind obedience to the Stalinized Comintern, its downward trajectory culminating in the sectarian fiasco of the "third period". Angus very correctly slates the "ultra-leftism" of the Workers' Unity League, but goes well beyond his evidence to argue that the WUL's sectarianism continued unchanged throughout its lifetime, which was not the case. "Red Unionism"

was by no means the total disaster he suggests. Although some of Angus's judgments (of which there are many) bear a closer relationship to his politics than to his evidence, Canadian Bolsheviks is a lively and useful work, and his demolition of Tim Buck's revolutionary myth is a major contribution.[5]

My main intention here is to examine the industrial politics of the CPC between 1922 and 1936, paying special attention to the Workers' Unity League period. In doing so, I will attempt to fulfil methodological requirements set out by Perry Anderson and E. J. Hobsbawm in separate essays on the writing of communist history. For Hobsbawm the essential pre-requisite of an adequate history of any CP is to "recapture the unique and, among secular movements, unprecedented temper of bolshevism, equally remote from the liberalism of most historians and the permissive and self-indulgent activism of most contemporary ultras." Both historians accept as a given the study of the international nexus; both also insist that while paying due attention to the role of the Comintern, a role that most CPs - and certainly the CPC - now find embarrassing, historians should not "bend the stick too far" in the direction of standard anti-communist works "which tend to present each national communist party as if it were just a puppet whose limbs were manipulated mechanically by strings pulled in Moscow." To counterbalance this tendency, Anderson argues, historians must take into account the "national balance of forces", showing in detail the

relationship between the CP, the working class, and other classes and social groups which go to make up a "national political culture".[6] Obviously, my particular monographic perspective will limit the extent to which I can meet these requirements, but the attempt will be made.

The dissertation is divided into three parts, each having three chapters. Part One covers the development of the party's industrial politics from its foundation to the eve of the Great Depression, a period which falls into three distinct but overlapping phases: first, the classic period of the united front, 1921-27, during which the CPC operated almost exclusively as a left wing faction inside Canada's dominant trade union federation, the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC); secondly, the "national unionism" period, 1926-29, when the party attempted unsuccessfully to combine work in the TLC with a major intervention in the All-Canadian Congress of Labour (ACCL); and thirdly, the transitional phase in 1928-29 when the party slowly came to terms with what was known as the "New Line".

Part Two is also chronological, covering the lifespan of the WUL from its rather murky beginnings in 1930 to its "liquidation" in the early months of 1936. As with the study of the 1920s, an attempt is made to reveal local and regional variations within Canadian communism, or in other words to show it as a national phenomenon in all its variety. Simply to keep the study manageable, however, certain issues and

events which might have been examined are dealt with only in passing. Again, this period falls into three phases: the first, 1930 to early 1933, is defined by economic slump and political repression; the second, 1933 to early 1935, by economic upturn, the growing confidence of the working class and the growing maturity of communist organizers; and the third, 1935 to early 1936, primarily by changes in the international situation.

Part Three contains thematic chapters on three particularly significant areas of communist intervention. Chapter 7 examines the communist contribution to pre-CIO attempts to organize an industrial union of automobile workers. This was chosen in order to examine the WUL's mode of operation in one of the major mass production industries; to scrutinize the view that communists contributed more than any other group to laying the foundations of industrial unionism in the auto industry; and to challenge Irving Abella's treatment of the coming of the United Automobile Workers (UAW) to Canada.[7] Chapter 8 looks at communists as factionalists and organizers in the garment trades, specifically in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) and Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Union (ACW), and in their own "third period" creation, the Industrial Union of Needle Trades' Workers (IUNTW). This was chosen partly because of the contrast offered by the experiences of communists in the garment unions in the United States and Canada, and partly because of the availability of a substantial body of relatively untapped

information. Chapter 9 deals with the CPC's role in organizing the urban unemployed in the early depression years. Two historians of Canadian labour have recently argued that in the early 1930s "Unemployed associations sprang up, almost all of them carefully controlled by their Communist fraction, affiliated to the Workers' Unity League. Their [various activities], gave members a sense of dignity and a feeling that they were not helpless victims."[8] This chapter examines the quality and extent of communist "control" in a movement that was of seminal importance in preparing Canadian workers for the industrial union struggles that ensued in the late 1930s and 1940s.

I began by suggesting that the Canadian historical profession has lacked basic sympathy with the Communist tradition, but that there have been recent signs of willingness to take seriously its achievements and shortcomings: I place myself in the latter tendency. Like every responsible historian I search for the grail of objectivity. I do not, therefore, proceed from the prior judgment that communism was as irrelevant to the Canadian working class in the 1920s and 1930s as the CPC is today. Its failure to build a revolutionary movement and its supercession by another form of class politics proves neither that the original project was doomed from the start nor that the ascendancy of parliamentary socialism was preordained. Such assumptions may allow social democratic historians to dismiss the CPC as a roadblock delaying the

emergence of the CCF-NDP tradition, but they are fatal to a valid reconsideration of Canadian left wing politics in the decade after the CPC's formation, when for good or ill the CPC was the national left.[9] When the CPC was being launched, it was by no means clear that the revolutionary path would prove so difficult.

Although it was the CPC's misfortune to emerge after the postwar tide of working class insurgency had ebbed, Canadian revolutionaries still had every reason to expect that the political and economic stabilization of capital would prove temporary and that there would be fresh opportunities to complete the work left undone in 1919-20. During those two years, when every major capitalist country was shaken by class struggle and when revolutionaries took an international perspective as naturally as breathing, events in Canada were among the most impressive anywhere. In two of the better-known flashpoints of the international upsurge, Glasgow and Turin, there was expectant admiration for the Canadian struggle. John MacLean saw "the great Canadian strike" as a major step towards a working class bid for "political supremacy" throughout North America. Antonio Gramsci went further. "In Canada", he asserted, "the industrial strikes have taken on the character of an overt bid to install a Soviet regime." And the bolsheviks themselves saw 1919 as a major turning-point for Canadian labour, a moment when it became "not only formally independent of the American unions, but also

intellectually independent of the bourgeoisie."[10]

By 1921 the hopes contained in these assessments had been dashed - a fact the Comintern recognized when it formulated its United Front strategy in 1921. But 1919 had happened - and it could happen again. Having seen Canadian workers embrace the mass strike, the CPC accepted the Bolsheviks' insistence on the centrality of politically directed industrial intervention in the expectation that when its time came, it would prove more resolute and effective than the Socialist Party of Canada in 1919.[11] The communists' task, therefore, was to build as rapidly as possible the kind of party - the "party of a new type" - that would neither shrink from nor fail to exploit a new wave of mass strikes. They were not privy to Hobsbawm's historical insight that the problem of the revolutionary left in "stable industrial societies is not that its opportunities never came, but that the normal conditions in which it must operate prevent it from developing the movements likely to seize the rare moments when they are called upon to behave as revolutionaries."[12] Part One will now examine the CPC's attempts to cope with this dilemma.

Introduction: Footnotes

1. A. Ross McCormack, Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement 1899-1919 (Toronto, 1977) 209. For recent work more favourably disposed to the CPC, see John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager, "Workers, Growers and Monopolists: The 'Labour Problem' in the Alberta Beet Sugar Industry During the 1930s", Labour/Le Travailleur, 3 (1978), 153-74; Jerry Lembcke, "The International Woodworkers of America in British Columbia, 1942-1951", ibid., 6 (Autumn 1980), 113-48. Against these we have to note Lita-Rose Betcherman, The Little Band: The Clashes between the Communists and the Political and Legal Establishment in Canada, 1928-32 (Ottawa, 1982), which can't make its mind up whether to laugh or preach at the CPC. Betcherman's two concluding paragraphs should be read with Eric Hobsbawm's dictum that "the historian's business is not praise and blame, but analysis" kept firmly in mind.

2. Desmond Morton argues this very point in a review of Ian Angus's Canadian Bolsheviks. See Histoire Sociale/Social History, XV (May 1982), 288

3. William Rodney, Soldiers of the Revolution: A History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1919-1929 (Toronto, 1968)

4. Ivan Avakumovic, The Communist Party in Canada: A History (Toronto, 1975)

5. Ian Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks: 'The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada (Montreal, 1981)

6. E. J. Hobsbawm, "Problems of Communist History", in Revolutionaries (London, 1977), 3-9; Perry Anderson, "Communist Party History", in Raphael Samuel, ed., People's History and Socialist Theory (London, 1981), 145-56.

7. Irving Martin Abella, Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist Party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour (Toronto, 1973). Although I take issue with Abella's nationalism, his book remains a landmark study.

8. Desmond Morton with Terry Copp, Working People: An Illustrated History of Canadian Labour (Ottawa, 1980), 147

9. See, for example, Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour 1880-1930 (Kingston, Ont., 1968), passim, but in particular his conclusion; and also Morton, Working People, 135, 212

10. Nan Milton, ed., John MacLean, In the Rapids of Revolution: Essays, articles and letters 1902-1923 (London, 1978), 190; Quintin Hoare, ed., Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Political Writings 1910-1920 (New York, 1977), 61; A. S. Lozovsky, The International Council of Trade and Industrial Unions (New York, 1920), 26-7

11. Gerald Friesen, "'Yours in Revolt': Regionalism Socialism and the Western Canadian Labour Movement", Labour/Le Travailleur 1 (1976). 139-57 provides a useful account of the SPC's role in the 1919 upsurge. However, he deals too kindly with its leaders' lack of stomach for the fight when it arrived. Gregory S. Kealey provides a sharper picture of their nervous caution in a forthcoming article, "1919: The Canadian Labour Revolt", Labour/Le Travail, 13 (1984) 11-44.

12. Hobsbawm, "Radicalism and Revolution in Britain", in Revolutionaries, 14-15.

CHAPTER ONE

THE UNITED FRONT

"Comrades, in an article which was written immediately after the founding Congress of the Communist International and bears the title 'The Prospects of the International Revolution', I said with some over-enthusiasm that perhaps only a year would pass before we forgot that in Europe a struggle had been waged about Soviet power, since this struggle would already have ended in Europe and been transferred to the remaining countries ... it will probably take not one year, but two or three for the whole of Europe to become the Soviet Republic."

G. E. Zinoviev, opening speech to the Second World Congress of the Communist International, July 1920

"The first period of post-war revolutionary development ... seems in essentials to be over. The self-confidence of the bourgeoisie as a class and the outward stability of their state organs have undeniably been strengthened ... The leaders of the bourgeoisie ... have gone over to an offensive against the workers in all countries both on the economic and on the political front."

Theses on the World Situation, Third World Congress of the Communist International, June-July 1921

"... it would appear that a state of widespread unemployment has as its corollary an indisposition on the part of workers to use the strike weapon."
Report of the Deputy Minister of Labour, Province of British Columbia, 1921

"We are, as a matter of principle, against the creation of new trade unions. In all capitalist countries, the trade-union movement developed in a particular way, resulting in the creation and progressive development of a specific great organization which embodied the history, the traditions, the customs and the ways of thinking of the great majority of the proletarian masses. Every attempt made to organize revolutionary union members separately has failed in itself, and has served only to reinforce the hegemonic positions of the reformists in the major organization."
Antonio Gramsci, "Our Trade Union Strategy", October 1923 (emphasis in the original).

Conditions could scarcely have been less propitious for the launching of the Communist Party of Canada in 1921. The massive upsurge of class struggle that had peaked in 1919 was now all but over. As early as September of that year, at the National Industrial Conference in Ottawa, Canadian capital gave a strong hint that its defeat of the Winnipeg General Strike would only be the first blow struck against the organizational gains made by the trade unions during the World War.[1] The next four years saw union membership suffer a sharp decline as several well-established organizations were picked off one by one. Between 1920 and 1924 the International Association of Machinists (IAM) and United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners (UBCJ), two of Canada's most influential unions, lost respectively 38 per cent and 54 per cent of their members. Nationally, the affiliated membership of the international union centre, the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC), fell by 30 per cent, from 173,463 to 121,842.[2] This slump was mirrored in the strike level and the general mood of the working class. With the unique exception of the coal industry, which contributed no less than 52.5 per cent of strike days in the 1920s, no important sector of capitalism was seriously troubled by industrial conflict.[3] In industries other than coal mining the number of workers involved in strikes fell from the 1919 peak of 139,000 to 48,000 in 1920, then fell

in each succeeding year to 10,000 in 1925.[3]

Thousands of trade unionists participated in a mass migration to the United States in the early 1920s: in 1924 200,000 Canadians moved south.[4] Some were responding to the effects of the prolonged depression that followed the Union government's deflationary policy of 1920. Others were driven out by victimization. Several hundred militant steelworkers and miners were forced by the blacklist to leave Cape Breton after the unsuccessful attempt to unionize the Sydney steel plant in 1923.[5] In the same year, but on the other side of the country, the smashing of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) by the British Columbia Shipping Federation had a similar impact.[6]

Tradition and experience had taught Canadian trade unionists that when labour market conditions were as adverse as in the 1920 to 1925 period, it was a time for consolidation. When Samuel Gompers suggested to delegates at the American Federation of Labor Annual Convention in Montreal in 1920 that labour should "hold itself in leash", he found a ready response among Canadian followers.[7] Through the 1920s Canadian labour emphasized its faith in conservative trade unionism by rallying round its established leadership. Of the 50 executive positions

on the TLC open for election, no fewer than 40 were filled by three unions, the IAM, UBCJ and International Typographical Union (ITU). For the entire decade Tom Moore (UBCJ) and Paddy Draper (ITU) were returned as President and Secretary-Treasurer, and between 1926 and 1929 they were joined by the same three Vice Presidents, Jimmy Simpson (ITU) and R. J. Tallon and J. T. Foster (IAM).[8] At the practical level, it was a period of collaboration rather than confrontation. The Union Label, apprenticeship schemes, legislative petitioning and union-management cooperation were the preferred alternatives to the strike weapon.[9] As one Carpenters' business agent put it, to strike for wage increases "before we have built up the organization" was to invite "the disruption of the organization." The test of a true trade unionist was to stick with the union through the inevitable bad times, just as the "Old Guard" had always done. "We might", he stressed, "be somewhat bruised and broken from past experiences, but we are still in the ring."[10] Many unionists, however, reacted to their organizations' unwillingness or incapacity to resist attacks by simply throwing in the towel, exhibiting, in the words of a Calgary railway worker, "a sort of fatalism ... a chronic apathy for organization work."[11] In short, Communists turned "To The Masses" in a period of acute working class

demoralization; their call for the "renovation" of the trade union movement came not a moment too soon.[12]

According to Ivan Avakumovic, "the decision to work in the international unions had already been taken in Moscow" when the Workers' Party of Canada held its founding convention in February 1922.[13] Although this is true, it was not the case that this decision was simply "Made in Moscow". There is no doubt that Lenin's treatise on revolutionary strategy and tactics '<u>Left Wing' Communism: An Infantile Disorder</u> had a major impact on its Canadian audience from the moment it began to appear in serialized form in the <u>B.C. Federationist</u> early in 1921.[14] But well before its arrival and forceful declamation of the view that a refusal to work in "reactionary trade unions" was "so unpardonable a blunder that it is tantamount to the greatest service Communists could render to the bourgeoisie", the native Canadian left had already articulated a similar policy.[15]

Here we could point to the disproportionate influence in the early CPC of former members of the tiny Socialist Party of North America (SPNA), which had actually broken from the Socialist Party of Canada during the World War specifically over the issue of the necessity of carrying out political work inside the unions. The SPNA insisted

"that any member joining our party must also join the trade union movement if he was not already a member, provided he worked in an industry or trade which made it possible."[16] SPNA members Tim Buck, Tom Bell and Florence Custance took this unconsciously Leninist approach into the leadership of the fledgling Communist movement. Support for political unionism, however, extended well beyond the narrow ranks of the SPNA. Although the vast majority of Eastern Canadian trade unionists kept One Big Unionism at arms length during the 1919-1920 upsurge, a substantial number of them were sufficiently inspired by the militancy of the period to demand that the TLC, which they still considered the dominant trade union centre, pursue a radical, interventionist course of action in the ongoing class struggle. This group was particularly influential in Toronto (much less so in Hamilton), where in 1920, led by future CPC Chairman and General Secretary Jack MacDonald, they succeeded in having the District Labour Council endorse a far-reaching platform of demands for presentation at the forthcoming TLC Annual Convention in Windsor. Among its planks were demands for Irish self-determination and the withdrawal of Canadian troops from the Allied armies of intervention in Russia, as well as demands of more immediate relevance to the Canadian working class: acceptance of the industrial union principle as

the basis of future trade union growth; and the convening at the earliest possible date of a unity conference embracing the international unions, the One Big Union (OBU) and the tiny Canadian Federation of Labour (CFL), with a view to creating a single, new trade union centre, free of American influence and committed to industrial unionism.[17]

As events transpired, the Toronto platform died at Windsor, partly because of a shameless bureaucratic manoeuvre by the TLC Executive, but primarily because the Convention was as usual stacked with die-hard moderates who heartily endorsed the Executive's repudiation of <u>any</u> kind of working class political action.[18] The fate of the platform, however, is for present purposes less important than the fact that some of the basic elements of what would become communist industrial politics - industrial unionism and Canadian autonomy - were already current in the native movement when the international movement was just beginning to consider them. In fact, when the Communist International (Comintern) examined the Canadian situation for the first time, its resultant recommendations were no more than a restatement of the Toronto platform. The speed with which the CPC duly applied the tactics of the "united front" and "boring from within" was thus based no less on Canadian experience than on the awe in which it held Moscow's pronouncements.

The essence of the united front line in industry was the struggle for immediate working class demands and a clean break from both anarcho-syndicalism and "ultra-left abstentionism" - the view that partial demands were on principle reformist and had to be shunned. As the "Theses on Tactics" proposed by the Third World Congress of the Comintern put it: "The task of the communist parties is to extend, to deepen, and to unify this struggle for concrete demands ... These partial demands, anchored in the needs of the broadest masses, must be put forward by the communist parties in a way which not only leads the masses to struggle, but by its very nature organizes them."[19] For the pursuit of these goals it was necessary for communists to reenter the mass reformist unions, to work in the words of Lenin's 'Left Wing' Communism "systematically, perseveringly, persistently and patiently ... [wherever] the proletarian or semi-proletarian masses are to be found."[20]

For the CPC, the immediate significance of the united front tactic lay in its relationship with the One Big Union (OBU). By early 1922 that relationship was one of open warfare. The process leading to that state of affairs reveals again the interaction of international and national forces in moulding CPC practice. One thing is

certain: the decision to attack the OBU was not taken wholly, or even mainly, by the Russian communists. Moscow, in fact, held a rather high opinion of the OBU, or more precisely of the revolutionary moment it was thought to represent.[21] This view prevailed through the First Congress of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) in July 1921, and was reflected in the Congress's Resolutions and Decisions. These explicitly distinguished Canadian needs from those prevailing in the United States. Thus while the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) delegates were unambiguously urged to return to the AFL, OBU delegate Joe Knight (who joined the CPC immediately on his return from Moscow) found the Congress willing to concede legitimacy to his organization. While making no direct mention of the OBU, the Canadian resolution called on all forces sympathetic to the RILU to build a "general organization of Canadian labour unions, and ... at all costs free themselves from the influence of the American Federation of Labour."[22] Although not altogether clear, this formulation seemed to leave the door open to cooperation between the OBU and CPC. Why, then, were the two organizations at each other's throats within six months?

The answer seems to be that the Canadian communists -

with a little help from their American comrades - decided that the RILU resolution was simply unworkable. As yet, in the autumn of 1921, the CPC was still almost wholly an Eastern Canadian organization. Its members lacked any real political or emotional commitment to the OBU and already had a habit of discussing it in arrogantly dismissive terms.[23] Since, moreover, the OBU had manifestly passed its peak both in terms of influence and militancy, and since, which was even more important, the absolute impossibility of working with both the TLC and OBU had been established at the 1920 TLC Convention, Communists had every practical reason to consider the OBU dispensable.[24] By October 1921 Joe Knight, touring Western Canada as a representative of the Soviet Famine Relief Committee, was privately informing selected OBU members that the correct revolutionary line was to rejoin the international unions, while publicly maintaining that the RILU recognized the OBU as the legitimate representative of organized labour in the West.[25] To those who wanted proof of the RILU's position Knight suggested they wait for the publication of the First Congress proceedings. When this finally became available, however, it did not contain the resolution on Canada.[26] Where had it gone?

The edition of the RILU Resolutions and Decisions which came into Canadian hands was published in Chicago by

the Voice of Labor press. The Voice of Labor was the mouthpiece of William Z. Foster's Trade Union Educational League (TUEL). And Foster was the leading trade union militant in the CPUSA, an established protagonist of "boring-from-within" the international unions, and the tactical mentor of the emerging Canadian leader, Tim Buck.[27] It takes little imagination to infer that the omission of the resolution on Canada owed more than a little to a collaborative decision to side-step an embarrassing debate on an issue that had already been decided.[28] A number of sources did in fact reveal the discrepancy, but by then the CPC, which maintained a diplomatic silence throughout, was steadily working to pull OBU militants back into the international unions. When OBU spokesman Bob Russell attended the founding convention of the Workers' Party of Canada in February 1922, only to be roundly abused as an obstacle to working class advance, the last slender possibility of an amicable coalescence of the two organizations evaporated.[29]

One consequence of the CPC-OBU split was a lasting residue of bitterness. Forty years after the event, Bob Russell described the return of OBU members to the AFL unions as "just like a dog going back to his vomit."[30] Several of the OBU's front line leaders, including Russell, Carl Berg, William Pritchard, Victor Midgley and Dick

Johns, although remaining for the most part committed socialists, remained outside the CPC. In general, however, the CPC had considerable success in stripping away an impressive group of propagandists and organizers: Beckie Buhay and Alex Gauld in Montreal, Hugh Bartholomew and Max Dolgoy in Winnipeg, Tom Ewan in Saskatoon, Jan Lakeman in Edmonton, and Jack Kavanagh in Vancouver, to name only a few of the most prominent. All were experienced trade union militants, and some, such as Bartholomew and Kavanagh, were "much more widely known than any ... who were in the existing leadership of the Party up to that time."[31] Collectively, they gave the new party national visibility - especially important in the West - and the groundworks of a national organization rooted in the trade unions.

Ideally, the CPC's orientation on workplace and union struggles would have been accompanied by an organizational shift to workplace branches or "cells". As the Third World Congress's theses on "The Organization and Construction of Communist Parties" made clear, this key feature of bolshevik organization was considered of general application throughout the communist movement.[32] But it was not, as yet, a practical proposition in Canada, partly because of the CPC's relatively small size and scattered membership and partly because of an inherited federal

structure within which the large Finnish and Ukrainian "language sections" had a preponderant influence. Party membership, as reported at the Second WPC Convention in February 1923, stood at 4808, including 2028 Finns and 880 Ukrainians. The two groups thus made up 60 per cent of the entire membership.[33] Until 1925 the party leadership made no real attempt either to challenge federalism or to build workplace branches, choosing instead the easier options of intervening through the Trade Union Educational League (TUEL) and the Trades and Labour Councils.

In June 1922 Tim Buck, Canadian director of the TUEL, offered an explanation of its structure and goals:

> Imagine a group of active spirits, in every local lodge, sinking all their political differences in their trade union activities, working to only one end, the consolidation of the movement as a whole and their own union in particular, all the local groups in a town or city connected, all the groups in certain industries connected, then a central office supported by voluntary donations, sales of literature, etc.... No initiation, no dues.

Just give us, he asked, "mutual cooperation among all who realize that it is necessary, and the TUEL is bound to grow."[34] The TUEL, therefore, was apparently a non-partisan trade union auxiliary, interested only in the "renovation" of a declining trade union movement. Even Tom Moore would have experienced difficulty in finding fault with this kind of united front. On closer inspection,

however, the TUEL appeared rather more abrasive. In its "Principles and Program", drawn up by its founder William Z. Foster in March 1922, Buck's "group of active spirits" became "a minute minority of clear-sighted, enthusiastic militants scattered throughout the great organized mass of sluggish workers." The TUEL was, to be sure, "an auxiliary of the labor movement, not a substitute for it." But its members were no ordinary trade unionists; they were "the brain and backbone of the organized masses ... the ones who furnish inspiration and guidance ... do the bulk of the thinking, working and fighting of the labor struggle" and, by building up "rudimentary class consciousness in the masses", demonstrate that "the only solution of the labor struggle is the abolition of capitalism."[35] Concerned trade unionists who might have been tempted to join Buck's TUEL would have had to think a lot harder before joining Foster's.

Although Buck's attempt to mask the TUEL's underlying politics was doomed to failure, for a time there did appear some possibility that the TUEL would integrate "progressive" elements around its first propaganda campaign: for trade union amalgamation. This was another of the CPC's main themes. Communists generally believed that one of the main hindrances to the development of political class consciousness was the "craft mentality" of

the skilled worker, which not only built sectional barriers inside the class but seriously hampered workers' fighting capacities. Amalgamation, Jack MacDonald explained in 1920, "simply meant ... that all the crafts in one trade should be organized and governed by one central body to ensure united action in a crisis."[36] It was considered appropriate in all industries where there was a multiplicity of unions with contending jurisdictions, such as clothing, building and metal working. Above all, however, the case for amalgamation was considered most compelling on the railroads where no fewer than 17 unions had sizeable memberships.[37]

A strong case for railway union amalgamation was made by Foster in his 1921 pamphlet The Railroaders' Next Step. Foster argued that the existence of so many unions in the industry (where he had spent 10 years of his working life) perpetuated the "craft point of view" at a time when monopoly capitalism was fast making crafts redundant. Only mass industrial unions, with their "enormous increase in economic power coming from the greater scope of activity, intensified solidarity and clearer vision" could resist capitalist encroachments on workers' control. Arguments to the contrary, he maintained, were the "bewhiskered" special pleas of union bureaucrats, whose fear of losing privileged positions was "the most serious

hindrance" to the implementation of amalgamation proposals.[38]

Although Foster did not shirk, the political conclusions of his case - namely that industrial unions were not only organs of defensive struggle but a means "to end the wages system forever and set up the long-hoped-for era of social justice" - his pamphlet was well received by Canadian unionists. In April 1921 the Western Labor News, mouthpiece of the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council, commenced a fourteen-part serialization, and Robert McCutchan, Vice President for Canada of the Boilermakers' Union, commended it to union "live wires" as "one of the best contributions ever penned" on the subject.[39] The TUEL benefited from its popularity after Foster made a personal visit to Winnipeg, under TUEL auspices, in July 1922. Speaking on the issues of amalgamation and the anti-OBU drive to an audience of railwaymen, Foster generated so much enthusiasm and discussion that the "League", until then of minimal importance, spread "like wildfire" throughout Western Canada. "The shopmen [metal craftsmen working in the repair shops], who are among the best fighters on the North American continent, have seized upon [amalgamationism] enthusiastically ... [and] are financing organization work from cost to coast."[40] Several leading union officials, including McCutchan and

Robert Hewitt of the Railway Carmen, were willing to share amalgamationist platforms with CPC members, while the journal of the federated shopmen's unions, the Bulletin, opened its pages to wide-ranging debate, including on one occasion a lead article by Edmonton communist Jan Lakeman.[41] To all appearances the united front was bearing fruit. By the spring of 1923 it had collapsed.

In assessing the popularity of amalgamationist ideas, the CPC was clearly guilty of wishful thinking. When activists took copies of The Railroaders' Next Step out to the locomotive yards and repair shops they did not discover massive rank and file support. Quite the contrary. Lakeman found that craft ideas, particularly among boilermakers and machinists, were stronger than ever, and that the existing practice among the shop crafts of bargaining as industrial groups known as "systems' federations" was already much resented.[42] The traditionally skilled crafts contended that this limited degree of united collective bargaining had been responsible for a levelling of craft privileges, detrimental to them but greatly to the advantage of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen (BRC), ironically a quasi industrial union incorporating carpenters, upholsterers, pattern-makers, painters, car checkers, cranemen and airbrakemen, which had grown massively and dramatically improved its conditions of work

during the world war, to a point where it boasted formal craft status.[43] Machinists, in particular, felt that any further surrender of autonomy was out of the question. At their Canadian convention in March 1923, Western delegates demanded almost to a man that "machinists be regarded ever and always as machinists", that the IAM consider withdrawal from the AFL Railway Employees' Department, and that at the very least its financial contribution to the shop crafts' federation be sharply reduced.[44] The following year, the IAM Grand Lodge Convention finally withdrew from the combined body in order to devote greater attention "to the interests of its own membership".[45]

Communists responded to these unpleasant developments in two ways: they attributed the revival of craft sentiment to the "failure of the leadership to lead" and issued increasingly shrill warnings to railwaymen that the choice before them was "Amalgamation or Annihilation", a slogan first proposed in The Railroaders' Next Step. They substantiated this contention by pointing to the fate of the shopmen's strike on the American railroads in 1922, when the four Running Trades' Brotherhoods scabbed on the strike, leaving the vast majority of shopmen to be starved into submission and forced back to non-union shops.[46]

Both arguments were unconvincing. Attacks on "sell-

out" labour bureaucrats were rebutted by the bureaucrats themselves, who incontrovertibly pointed out that they had supported amalgamation and pushed it at union conventions, to the accompaniment of massive rank and file apathy. One delegate at a Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council meeting, fed up with communist criticism of the bureaucracy, bluntly declared that "the most reactionary leader in the labour movement is miles ahead of the rank and file." Robert Hewitt, perhaps feeling that the CPC had "betrayed" him, confirmed his support for amalgamation but chided the CPC for an approach which seemed "too much like a holdup man saying 'your money or your life'." Communists, he stressed, had to realize that there was strong rank and file suspicion of amalgamation, that rank and file ideas tended to change slowly, and that only slow, painstaking educational work would move the amalgamationist platform forward.[47]

The erroneous nature of the "Amalgamation or Annihilation" slogan was exposed by the divergent paths of class conflict in the United States and Canada. The Canadian shopmen avoided confrontation with the railroad companies but still managed to preserve union conditions and prevent wage reductions by means of adroit manipulation of the Industrial Disputes' Investigation Act and the good offices of Prime Minister W. L. Mackenzie King.[48] King's

subsequent appointment of Tom Moore to the board of directors of the Canadian National Railway (the "people's railroad") was presented as further vindication of the slow but sure methods of the trade union establishment.[49]

Apart from the specific shortcomings of the CPC's analysis of the amalgamationist movement, the party's role in the movement revealed the generic flaw in their whole approach to workplace struggles: their abstract propagandism. "Amalgamation!" and "Amalgamation or Annihilation!" were proposed as non-negotiable, "correct" demands - which unfortunately were proved "incorrect" in practice. They were not the "partial" demands on which the Comintern placed so much emphasis, demands that arose directly out of workers' struggles and related to the existing level of workers' consciousness, but were essentially political demands arising out of the communists' desire to accelerate the formation of class consciousness. Reluctance to deal seriously with partial demands remained a persistent fact of party life. In 1926 <u>The Worker</u> inquired: "Must the working class be let down so that it thinks only through the stomach?" It then answered its question with a ritualistic statement that it of course supported every effort to improve the daily lives of the working class but believed in emphasizing the ideal of struggle and the fact that workers could achieve

fundamental improvements only through revolution.[50] The CPC was aware of its shortcomings. Its educational program for 1923, for example, stated that while "left wing or revolutionary unionism" depended for its homogeneity on "slogans of dominion wide and quite general interest", the fundamental features of grass roots organization were orientation around the best and most militant elements in the workplace and the formulation with them of achievable demands.[51] Yet, the CPC never acted on this insight; nor did it ever make the organization of the TUEL as a crystallizing point for the left a serious priority. Even in places where the party had some degree of industrial influence the TUEL was slow to appear: September 1922 in the Toronto needle trades, May 1923 in the Alberta coal-field, and in the Cape Breton coal field, according to the testimony of the area's leading party member, the TUEL was never organized, in all probability because the party was so central to working class life that the TUEL would have been viewed as superfluous.[52]

Burdened by its failure to build the TUEL, the CPC remained reliant on a succession of abstract slogans, each of which was to be the key that would transform workers' consciousness. In autumn 1923 the slogan of Canadian Trade Union Autonomy was resurrected for the first time since 1920. Oddly enough, earlier in the year, the party

had explicitly rejected this slogan at its second national convention. "National autonomy", the party resolved, "is an illusion; international unity is the need."[53] Rejection of national autonomy, however, suggests that a sizeable number of party numbers had been discussing it. By August it was being promoted by delegates from IAM Local 235 - Tim Buck's union branch - on the Toronto District Labour Council (TDLC). And after the latter voted to endorse an autonomy resolution for presentation to the forthcoming TLC annual convention, the TUEL assumed leadership of the autonomy campaign.[54] Canadian autonomy, a TUEL leaflet explained, was primarily designed to stem the decline of trade unionism in Canada. This would be achieved by means of a transformation of the TLC into an organ of industrial intervention, financially and politically independent of the AFL, and having the centralized authority to call and finance strikes and "participate in any political activity in the interests of the working class regardless of how it may strike the capitalistic minds of the Grand Lodge Moguls across the line." Autonomy did not "necessarily" mean the severing of industrial ties; this was rendered out of the question by "the mobility of labour, the menace of international scabbing; and the need for the exchange of cards." But the fundamental reality for Canadian workers was that they

operated in a system which, regardless of American economic penetration, was politically unique. Since their main enemies were the national bourgeoisie and the national state, Canadian workers had to forge the appropriate national weapons: "Canadian unionism must parallel Canadian capitalism."[55]

The autonomy slogan represented a genuine initiative by the CPC, one consistent with Lenin's advice in 1920 that "communists in every country should quite consciously take into account ... the concrete features which [the] struggle assumes in each country, in conformity with the specific character of its economics, politics, culture, and national composition ... and so on and so forth."[56] Moreover, it was an initiative the CPC had actively to defend before the RILU World Congress in 1924 and the Seventh Plenum of the Comintern Executive Committee in 1926. This was due to strong opposition from the CPUSA, which despite endorsements of the Canadian position by both Moscow meetings retained an almost proprietorial attitude towards its sister party. Only in March 1927 did Foster publicly acknowledge that "the system of holding the Canadian unions bound 'air-tight' is utterly antiquated, if it ever was correct ... the left wing in both Canada and the United States must be made to understand this fact."[57]

The home-grown origins of the slogan, however, were no guarantee of its political utility. Quite clearly, the idea of Canadian autonomy was capable of mobilizing a substantial layer of trade union activists; it had, after all, been endorsed by the TDLC. But for the majority of Canadian trade unionists, it represented too great a rupture with tradition. Support for autonomy never exceeded the level it achieved at the 1923 TLC convention in Vancouver, when just under a third of the delegates cast their vote for it[58]. Before the convention Tom Moore denounced autonomy as "a repetition of the policies on which the OBU was founded" and an attempt to commit the TLC to political action and political strikes, neither of which were in line with Congress's established practices.[59] At Vancouver, and on later occasions when autonomy resolutions were presented, other trade unionists voiced a number of specific criticisms. Spokesmen for the UBCJ and ITU, for example, argued that the balance of accounts between the international offices of their unions and the Canadian locals stood overwhelmingly in the latter's favour. In particular, international support of the four-year long Toronto printers' strike (1921-24) seemed to provide compelling proof of the necessity of maintaining close international links.[60] Robert Hewitt argued that there were too many inconsistencies and unproven contentions

in the autonomy case: it called for Canadian independence of American unionism while simultaneously calling for affiliation to the RILU; it asked for national autonomy but proposed strict limitations on individual trade union autonomy; and it argued for greater political freedom for Canadian labour when Canadian labour had never demonstrated any real desire to pursue an independent political line.[61] Plumbers' Union official John W. Bruce simply contended that trade union internationalism had brought North American workers too many benefits to be summarily overturned.[62] Most organized workers agreed.

If the autonomy campaign revealed the influence of native traditions on the formation of CPC policy, the party's next campaign unmistakeably bore Moscow's imprint. It can be dated precisely from the moment Tim Buck returned from the Third RILU World Congress in 1924 and immediately set in motion preparations for the upgrading of the TUEL into a fully-fledged rank and file organization in the style of the British National Minority Movement (NMM), which had been launched in August.[63] In November the party brought out the first issue of The Left Wing, labelling it "The Official Organ of the Canadian Trade Union Minority", a force already "promising to become the dominant factor in Canadian unionism".[64]

The invigoration of the TUEL did not stem primarily from recognition of the need to make good past failures. Rather it was an integral part of a renewed "bolshevization" drive in the international communist movement. As noted earlier, bolshevization of the movement had been emphasized since the Third Comintern Congress. After Lenin's death, however, and the onset of the Stalin-Trotsky factional fight, all Lenin's appeals for a "modest" approach by the Russian communists in their relations with non-Russian comrades and for a balancing of what was clearly of universal application in the bolshevik experience - democratic centralism, soviets, orientation on workplace struggles - with the integrity of particular national experiences were forgotten. With Stalin's victory in 1924, bolshevization became the "watchword" of the leading Russian group "and a central directive to every individual party. Parties threatened by heresies and deviations were instructed to bolshevize (purify) themselves. The implications were perfectly clear. Since Trotsky had been accused by the Russian party majority of not being a true bolshevik, the parties were put on notice to expunge similar deviations and to align themselves unquestioningly with the 'correct' tendency in the Russian party."[65]

Although initially the CPC refused to join in the universal condemnation of Trotsky even after the Comintern

referred darkly to "ideological confusions" in the Canadian leadership (one suspects that the luxury of neutralism was made possible only by the CPC's peripheral status), every other aspect of bolshevization was endorsed in 1924-25.[66] After the launch of The Left Wing the party began to emphasize the need for a fully centralized organization based mainly in the workplace; for much more systematic rank and file trade union work; and for immediate recruitment of several thousand industrial workers, chosen on the basis of militancy rather than prior theoretical sophistication, as a means of placing the party on a genuine mass proletarian basis.[67] Running parallel with this frantic drive for mass party status was a searing attack on the role of the Finnish and Ukrainian language organizations, with some critics claiming that the Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA) and Finnish Organization of Canada (FOC) were no better than social clubs and that party members who worked exclusively within them were shirking their real revolutionary duties.[68] Even those English-speaking comrades who considered this view a gross slander, Hugh Bartholomew for example, agreed that the "ethnic" comrades had to be integrated more effectively into general party work and supported the dissolution of the party's language fractions.[69]

Another feature of the bolshevization period was a growing emphasis on the theme of international trade union unity. In its early days the CPC had followed the contradictory line of combining a call for revolutionaries to return to the reformist international unions and the TLC with one calling for those same unions to affiliate to the RILU and reject affiliation to the Amsterdam-based International Federation of Trade Unions (which it labelled the "Yellow" International).[70] Now, following the Russians' diplomatic success in establishing reciprocal relations between its All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (AUCCTU) and the British Trades Union Congress (TUC), and especially after the formation of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee (ARTUC) in April 1925, the line became one of working for the eventual fusion of the RILU and IFTU. Russian trade union head Mikhail Tomsky actually mooted the prospect of the RILU's immediate dissolution, but this was too unambiguous and precipitate a policy to win Comintern approval. All the Comintern would consider was the convening of a unity conference of the two trade union centres and eventual creation of an entirely new centre "on the basis of freedom of agitation and strict discipline in all actions against the bourgeoisie."[71] Much of <u>The Left Wing</u> was given over to the international unity debate, and especially to the views of RILU Secretary Lozovsky, whose

pamphlet The World's Trade Union Movement it commended as the key to communist advance on the industrial front. According to Halifax communist Joe Wallace: "We don't know our course, we don't know our speed, we don't know our goal." Lozovsky had the answers.[72] When Alfred Purcell, one of the British trade union leaders most prominent in the ARTUC, visited Montreal and Toronto in November 1925 (he had been the TUC's fraternal delegate to the AFL convention), the CPC called on Canadian workers to seize the chance to hear one of the foremost representatives of the new left trend in European trade unionism.[73] The party carried the international unity issue into its work in the Trades and Labour Councils, winning a significant number of endorsements for it as part of a broad TUEL platform set out in the first issue of The Left Wing. Members spent much of the next ten months organizing to push the platform at the 1925 TLC convention in Ottawa.[74] However, as in the past, it was one thing to have resolutions submitted to the TLC convention and quite another to have them passed by labour's "parliament". The Ottawa meeting accepted watered-down versions of TUEL resolutions on coal mines' nationalization and opposition to the use of the military during strikes, but rejected the others by decisive margins. In the debate on international trade union unity, Tom Moore left the Presidential chair to

speak against the motion, an action the party considered symptomatic of an event that had become labour's "annual humiliation and betrayal".[75]

What, then, of the CPC's efforts to make the TUEL a "mass movement on the same lines as the British Minority Movement" and to place itself on a mass basis?[76] Results were dire. Buck spent considerable space in The Left Wing discussing the implications of a Canadian Minority Movement, but the unconsciously plaintive title of one of his articles - "Why Not Organize the Canadian Minority?" - suggested the gap between his grandiose plans and the reality of a weak and increasingly divided party. While Buck discussed undertaking "the formulation of wage demands ... [and] organization of the unorganized" and claimed that the finances necessary for such action could "easily" be raised without direct membership dues (which he considered likely to provoke expulsions from the internationals, on the grounds of "dual" unionism), The Left Wing itself was rapidly going under from lack of funds. Its November 1925 issue carried the first of many unsuccessful emergency appeals. The paper finally folded in August 1926.[77] The TUEL effectively foundered with it.[78]

If anything, the attempt to root the party in the workplace was even less successful. During the most frantic

period of the bolshevization drive a number of industrial branches were formed and several "shop papers" launched. But this early impetus was never sustained, as can be seen from the party's organizational structure in Toronto early in 1927: of 36 party units only 8 were shop groups.[79] All the drive against the Finnish and Ukrainian language fractions achieved was a further distancing of the party from these two important groups. Indeed, the FOC formally broke its institutional ties with the party in 1925.[80] This is not to say that bolshevization was in principle the disaster it proved in practice. Given the CPC's overwhelmingly industrial orientation, it is hard to see how it could have avoided major organizational restructuring if it wished to intervene seriously in class struggle. It was the intrusion of the methods of bureaucratic fiat, then becoming customary in the Russian party and Comintern, that effectively shattered any prospect of a successful grafting of bolshevization.[81]

Various non-communist labourites and socialists suggested from time to time that communists adopt a more patient - and much more tolerant - approach to industrial activity. The CPC's failure to abide by the accepted rules of discourse became, in fact, a favoured argument on behalf of its elimination as a force in the labour movement. Over the bolshevization question, however, a voice

from within the party made a similar case. Hugh Bartholomew's objections to the tenor of Anglo-Canadian criticisms of the ethnic contribution to Canadian communism have already been noted. In his view, far from having nothing to offer the revolutionary movement, when the language organizations stressed the importance of political education they spoke directly to the CPC's need to raise the "ideological standard" of the membership. Bartholomew agreed with the aims of bolshevization, but felt that the industrial implantation of the party would be a long-term process. Most certainly, it would not be accelerated simply by passing "frantic resolutions of an idealized character". The immediate need was not mass recruitment but the consolidation of the existing membership through a thorough-going programme of political education. Such a programme, emphasizing the necessity of concrete research and analysis of Canadian society (he felt too many leading cadres owed their reputations to their erudition on France and Germany), would make "vital and direct contact between theory and practice" and lay the groundwork for long-term party advance.[82] Bartholomew's attempt to develop a strategy compatible with the low ebb of class struggle was never seriously considered, as the party continued its fanciful pursuit of overnight mass status.[83]

Bartholomew's case for building the membership's knowledge, confidence and morale was made particularly pressing by the onset of an anti-communist drive in 1925. In the wake of the TLC convention of that year, Communists were expelled from the Quebec Section of the Canadian Labour Party (CLP), refused delegate status to the Hamilton TLC and deprived of the use of the Toronto Labour Temple, actions that encouraged the Canadian correspondent of The Times to report that "exclusion will now be the settled permanent policy of the Labour organizations in Canada."[84] Although his prediction was premature, it was supported by a growing number of articles in the labour press. Typical was one in the Canadian Congress Journal which favourably compared organized labour's tolerance towards the "reds" with the treatment of "counter-revolutionists" in Russia, then hinted that in future Communists would only be free to carry on their activities outside the unions.[85]

There were many more signs of anti-communism and declining CPC influence in 1926. The Toronto branch of the Jewish fraternal organization, the Workmen's Circle, expelled its communist members.[86] In Halifax, the international unions on the local TLC conducted a strange campaign against the council's communist faction. Having tried and failed to have its members, most of whom came

from the International Hod Carriers, Building and Common Labourers' Union, declared "not in good standing", they refused to stand a presidential candidate in the January 1926 council elections and allowed the left to elect its leading spokesman, veteran communist Hugh Pynn. Immediately, however, one union after the other, as if by premeditation, disaffiliated from the council. By the middle of the year it represented nothing but a sheepish group of communists. The following January, the establishment resumed control, Pynn having quietly left Halifax for the USA.[87] Circumstances in the Vancouver TLC were less bizarre, but there too left wing influence declined. Party member Jack Flynn of the Operating Engineers' Union lost his position as council Trustee, and the council refused to give any aid to a recently formed Women's Labour League (WLL) branch. This decision was instructive, for although the WLL was undeniably by then a party front (its National Secretary was CPC leader Florence Custance), at the same time as it was appealing for assistance, the council's journal was complacently criticising the failure of Vancouver's working women to unionize: encouragement of women's unionization was one of the WLL's main priorities.[88] Effectively, the Halifax and Vancouver experiences demonstrated the willingness of the international unions in the mid-1920s to weaken working

class organization rather than concede a hearing to the left.

In some communist bastions this period saw a sharp decline in party fortunes. By the winter of 1926-27 public activity was a thing of the past for communists in the Crow's Nest Pass coal districts. When the American communist Scott Nearing inquired if there were any party members in the area: "The answers were always the same: 'Not if they get caught at it!' 'Not a man who knows when he is well off!' 'Find them if you can!' 'Yes, in clink with Kid Burns!'"[89] The party's sorry condition stemmed from its participation in a number of unsuccessful strikes, following which even some of its best militants became demoralized.[90] An almost identical situation existed in the Cape Breton coal fields. Once an area of unequalled communist influence, after a long, ruinous strike in 1925 its support for the left evaporated. By January 1927, with the mines working on half-time and a "wave of reaction" prevailing, there were "only a few members" remaining in the party: "the ones that have left don't seem to have any inclination to come back."[91] Only in Winnipeg, where five years of consistent electoral activity at the municipal level produced the election of William Kolisnyk to city council in November 1926, was the CPC not clearly on the retreat.[92]

One of the more ingenious ways in which the party had gained influence in local trades and labour councils was by organizing locals of the International Hod Carriers, Building and Common Labourers' Union. This was done widely and often enough to indicate a conscious national tactic. Such locals were organized in Calgary, Saskatoon, Windsor and Halifax, and possibly also in Toronto. Communists used this union to organize small groups of unorganized and/or unskilled workers and gain representation on the labour council. Tom Ewan's Saskatoon local:

> went out on an organizational drive, and in no time at all lifted the local membership to 300 or more. We had needle trade workers, stenographers, every classification of industry we could recruit where they had no union of their own. Most of them, including some of their officers, wouldn't have known what a hod was if they fell over one, but that didn't matter. We were concerned with the objective, not the form.... [On the TLC] we were able to win substantial moral and financial aid for the big miners' strikes ... Locally we won scattered concessions for our diversified membership.[93]

After the Halifax Trades and Labour Council engineered the collapse of the IHBCLU local, there was a general right-wing reaction against this form of communist "infiltration". The fate of the Saskatoon local is not known, but communists were banned from joining a reorganized local in Calgary and thrown off the Trades and Labour Council in Windsor, in 1927 and 1929 respectively.[94]

In the unions themselves 1927 saw the first communist expulsions, beginning with a sizeable rank and file group in the garment unions then proceeding through a selective cull of leading militants.[95] At this juncture it is worth considering the lateness and limited extent of these expulsions in relation to the American experience. In the American locals of several unions, notably the carpenters, machinists and ladies' garment workers, mass expulsions began as early as 1923.[96] How can this difference be explained?

One possibility is that the parochial character of the international union milieu in Canada, the closeness of relationships even between political rivals, may have protected communists from the knife of administrative action. Labourites were often exasperated and embittered by the communists' penchant for claiming "a monopoly of all the honesty, sincerity and good sense in the labour movement", but were not convinced that sectarian intolerance was a capital offence.[97] Even Tom Moore, the perpetual butt of communist attacks on bureaucratic "fakirism", while holding the view that challenges to "British" constitutionalism deserved to be met "by the whole armed force of the State if necessary", still felt that the best way to curb "the activities of vicious minorities" was by "pitiless" exposure of their aims and methods and "by removal, so far

as is practicable, of conditions which give the glaze of plausibility to their extremist claims."[98] Some who considered CPC union tactics reprehensible were inclined to explain communists' "back-door methods" as a direct consequence of the sincerity of their commitment to the working class.[99]

Leading communist trade unionists were often held in high personal esteem both by members of their own unions and the labour movement at large. Members of the London local of the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union defied attempts, allegedly orchestrated by the union's Boston office, to discipline Albert Graves, a communist member of the local executive.[100] Similarly, IAM local 235 resisted the international office's persistent attempts between 1925-28 to have Buck expelled.[101] In the words of one prominent non-communist left winger in the Toronto District Labour Council, Buck was personally honest, "physically ... inoffensive, and a gentleman in all his social intercourse."[102] When Jack MacDonald was ejected from the 1928 TLC convention, the staunchly conservative Toronto Labor Leader reported the event with a note of regret: "We must express a little sympathy, however, for Jack MacDonald, the Scottish leader of our local Communists. We don't like MacDonald's politics, and never did, and we give him credit for causing more trouble for the Labor movement than any

other six men in Canada. Nevertheless, he has been honest about it all, and everybody knew exactly where MacDonald stood all the time - he was a Communist, and that was all there was to it. A fighter from the drop of a hat."[103] Even Jan Lakeman, a scourge of the union bureaucracy, had in the view of Robert Hewitt "done more than anyone else in the west to consolidate the [Brotherhood of Railway] Carmen."[104] Only in 1929, after years of hurling defiance at the class collaborationism of railway union leaders, was Lakeman expelled from his union.[105]

Other possible explanations lie, rather ironically, in the nature of the relationship between the TLC and its constituent unions, and between the TLC and AFL. Since 1923 the CPC had argued for the TLC to adopt a directive approach in initiating political and industrial action. It would have been difficult for the TLC to explain the adoption of a position similar to the AFL, which actively promoted anti-communism, having argued all along for the autonomy of individual unions in their internal affairs. The TLC's practical support of the AFL position was limited to the reprinting of attacks on the left previously published in the American labour journals.[106] At the same time, the TLC may have been reluctant to appear as the AFL's cipher in a period when there was a resurgence of nationalism in the Canadian labour movement. A 1929

article by Tom Moore in the American Federationist was certainly marked by a concern to underscore the TLC's "Canadian-ness". Moore pointed out that the TLC constitution explicitly assured "the public that the Congress, dealing with Canadian affairs only, is a really national organization and truly reflects the opinions of Canadian workers." And again, the TLC was "an autonomous body ... really a movement within a movement, operating independently in looking after the interests of Canadian workers as they are affected by conditions."[107] Any organization so attuned to Canadian labour opinion would have had to recognize that the CPC, despite its pretensions, was by the late 1920s no more than a minor irritant to the labour establishment.

It is inconceivable that the CPC's parlous state was not general knowledge. One observer at the 1927 TLC convention dismissed the communist intervention in a sentence: "Our Communist friends were in evidence as usual, but very weak in numbers, and their numerous objections to the proceedings were not taken very seriously by the delegates present."[108] The party was losing members in droves. In 1925 it still claimed a membership of 4500; by 1929 that figure had slumped to 2876[109]. A sure sign of the party's low ebb was an upsurge of gallows humour. In Montreal one garment union activist lamented, "the revolutionists

refuse to revolute and there is no sign of encouragement for the poor organization."[110] As the leadership had already been forced to admit, a "partial liquidation" of the post-war economic crisis had occurred, while the mass of the working class remained chained to bourgeois politics ("The tariff", Maurice Spector remarked, "is a siren song that still captivates the workers.") and was subject to all kinds of false consciousness.[111] The boom of 1928-29, moreover, further increased "bourgeois influence and illusions in a new country where capitalism still experiences organic growth."[112]

Apart from the party's intellectual and tactical failings and the difficulties of the objective situation, factors that persisted throughout the 1920s, one important reason for declining communist fortunes in the latter part of the decade was the erosion of working class belief in the Soviet Union. The young CPC inherited not only the kudos of the first successful socialist revolution, a gift that helped it win over many OBU militants, but also to some extent the broad wave of solidarity with which Canadian workers welcomed the Russian events.[113] As late as 1922 the May Day celebrations of the Toronto sections of the Canadian Labour Party amounted virtually to a bolshevik support rally, with Jack MacDonald sharing speakers' duties with Jimmy Simpson and the "premier labour woman in Canada",

Rose Henderson, and with mass choruses of 'The Internationale' and 'Red Flag'.[114] By then, however, solidarity with the bolsheviks had received its first major blow. The reports filtering through from Russia on the 1920-21 Great Trade Union Debate made clear that, despite Lenin's defeat of Trotsky's extreme proposals for the "militarization" of the trade unions, the latter's independence had been sharply curtailed. The B.C. Labor News pungently observed: "The Communist Executive Committee and the party tribunal have taken the place of the Czarist police. Another fist, but the same whip."[115] A further erosion of support may have resulted from the campaign waged between 1922-25 against the bolsheviks' suppression of political dissidents, a policy that seemed less and less supportable as the memory of the civil war waned. In 1925 the former Menshevik leader Raphael Abramowitch visited Toronto, Montreal and Winnipeg on a North American tour sponsored by the Workmen's Circle, seeking support for an appeal to the bolshevik government for the release of his comrades. Although CPC members broke up his meetings, it seems probable that his appearance planted fresh doubts about the fate of the revolution.[116] The mid-1920s saw an apparently permanent entrenchment in Russia of the New Economic Policy (NEP), which to many was little more than a restoration of capitalism. At the same time there was a

palpable degeneration of political life in the Russian Communist Party, as the anti-Trotsky struggle approached its climax.[117]

Scarcely a hint of criticism surfaced in the CPC, of course. The Nova Scotia communist Roscoe Fillmore, who took his horticultural skills to Russia in the spring of 1923, reported after three months travel and work that there were "lots of discouraging things" and certainly "no millenium". But these could be explained by the ravages of the civil war and were rapidly being put right. "All in all", he concluded, Russia was slowly but surely "getting on her feet as a Workers' Republic ... the class-conscious worker who travels over Russia ... knows in his bones that the Revolution is a success."[118] Party publications underlined the advances under socialism of national minorities, women, and - bourgeois lies notwithstanding - industrial workers. Among several low-priced pamphlets on Soviet labour unions available to Canadian workers, one claimed categorically that "even now [1929] the workers in the Soviet Union enjoy conditions and power to determine conditions which workers in capitalist countries scarcely dream to attain."[119] Not every Canadian worker was convinced.

A sense of the doubt beginning to surface is

communicated in an article by Scott Nearing. On one of his periodic tours of Western Canada he found "prodigious interest in Russia":

> Whatever economic issue was up for discussion, four-fifths of the questions would be about Russia ... They wanted to know how the factories are being run in Russia, what is the standard of living, whether it is true that the people are hungry and cold. They want to know what is happening as the result of the Russian revolution. They ... [asked] not once or twice, but a thousand times[120].

No doubt Nearing gave his interrogators positive answers. Whether they proved persuasive is less certain. One socialist who had formed a definitely negative view of the Soviet Union was John Bruce. He had never agreed with the bolsheviks' break, as he saw it, with classical marxism, nor had he any time for their Canadian followers (although as late as 1926 he shared a platform with Jack MacDonald at a rally on behalf of the British General Strike).[121] In 1927 Bruce rounded on the CPC, declaring his outrage at the prohibition of dissent in the communist movement, best exemplified by the expulsion from the party and banishment from Moscow of "the great Trotsky".[122] Even if Bruce was shedding crocodile tears, there must have been more than a few Canadian communists who objected to the party leadership's sudden reversal of neutralism in the factional debate, if only because by endorsing Trotsky's banishment the CPC left itself open to comparable disciplinary

measures at the hands of the labour leadership.[123]

At the very least, it can be argued that the most predisposing factor to growth in the early years of the CPC - the Russian connection - had been neutralized by the late 1920s. Buck admitted as much when he reported in 1925 that the theme of international trade union unity had failed to generate interest even in party ranks; and then again in 1928 when he informed a party meeting that the party's slogans on the imminence of capitalist war on the Soviet Union had left the masses totally unmoved.[124] Some definite change of direction was clearly needed if the party was to stem its drift into irrelevance.

From 1921 to 1928 the CPC channelled its meagre resources into a losing struggle to pull Canadian labour away from "reactionary labour bureaucrats" and place it "on the side of the proletarian revolution".[125] These two aims underscored the central contradiction of its united front strategy: on the one hand, it recognized both the necessity of dealing with labour's weakened state after the ebbing of the 1919-20 tide and the existence within labour's ranks of widely varying degrees of class consciousness and organization; on the other hand, the strategy was predicated on the expectation of a sharp turn in the balance of class forces, further destabilization of

capitalism and the emergence of a fresh revolutionary wave. The Canadian party was not alone in lacking the acumen to balance out the long- and short-term requirements of unity and independence.[126] Nor, in certain circumstances, was it incapable of exercising initiative within the Comintern, as its positions on the OBU and trade union autonomy demonstrated. Its main failure lay in ignoring abundant evidence of labour's defensive mood - something the apathetic and cynical TLC leadership fully appreciated - and in failing to prepare itself for the moment when the working class would rediscover its confidence. The development of a cadre and the rooting of the organization in the workplace could - should - have proceeded in concert. Instead, the party undervalued theoretical work, adopted an "adventurist" approach to industrial struggle (as Malcolm Bruce remarked in 1930, during the 1920s "it was an accepted principle to wait for something 'dramatic' to happen, and then to 'exploit' it.") and never really came to terms with workplace politics.[127] Always it searched for <u>the</u> tactic, <u>the</u> slogan that would be the key to transforming the political situation. Its orientation on national unionism after 1926 was another case in point.

Footnotes

1. National Industrial Conference, Official Report of Proceedings and Discussions (Ottawa, 1919), especially pages 221-22.

2. Union membership figures are taken from the Department of Labour's Annual Report on Labour Organizations in Canada (A.R.L.O.C.), 1921-1925.

3. Strike statistics from the Labour Gazette and materials in the Department of Labour Files of the Province of Ontario, Provincial Archives of Ontario (PAO).

4. Kenneth Lines, British and Canadian Immigration to the United States since 1920 (San Francisco, 1978), 58, 114.

5. Public Archives of Nova Scotia (P.A.N.S.), E.H. Armstrong Papers, Vol. 670, E. W. MacDonald to E. H. Armstrong, 13 August 1923; "The Late Paul McNeil", Maritime Labor Herald (MLH), 21 June 1924

6. International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), Local 500 Pensioners, Man Along the Shore! The Story of the Vancouver Waterfront (Vancouver, 1975), 52

7. Union Worker (Saint John), July 1920

8. David Montgomery, Workers' Control in America (Cambridge, 1980), 100 shows how the same process occurred in the United States

9. Industrial Banner (IB), 27 August 1920; B.C. Labor News (BCLN), 12 August 1921; American Federationist (AF), 28 (April 1921), 344; "Report of the Deputy Minister of Labour, 1928", Ontario Sessional Papers, LXI (1929), 13-14

10. Fred Hawse, "The Situation as I See It", Carpenters' Monthly Bulletin (CMB), November 1925. See also the speech by Joe Marks of the Toronto Sheet Metal Workers' Union quoted in Trades and Labour Congress, Report of Proceedings of the 41st Annual Convention, Ottawa, 1925, 109-10 (TLC Proceedings)

11. The Bulletin (Winnipeg), August 1921

12. Tim Buck, "Renovation of the Trade Union Movement", The Worker, 1 June 1922

13. Ivan Avakumovic, The Communist Party in Canada: A History (Toronto, 1975), 29

14. Tim Buck, Canada and the Russian Revolution (Toronto, 1967), 87 states that each issue of the B.C. Federationist (BCF) containing excerpts from 'Left Wing' Communism had a circulation of 40,000.

15. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 31 (Moscow, 1966), 51-3

16. William Beeching and Phyllis Clarke, eds., Yours in the Struggle: Reminiscences of Tim Buck (Toronto, 1977); Tim Buck Memoirs, typescript, 91-2, Public Archives of Canada (PAC); Florence Custance, "The Split in the SP of NA", The Worker, 5 April 1926. Ian Angus throws considerable doubt on Buck's claim to have been a member of the SPNA. The point about the SPNA's premature bolshevism remains. Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada (Montreal, 1981), 24-61, 82-5.

17. PAC, MG 28 144, Toronto District Labour Council Minutes, 5, 19 August 1920; IB, 27 August 1920; New Democracy (Hamilton), 26 August, 9 September 1920

18. London Free Press and Toronto Globe, 13-18 September 1920; TLC Proceedings, Windsor, 1920, 84-9; Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour 1880-1930 (Kingston, 1968), 230-34. The TLC Executive conveniently lost the Toronto resolutions in the mail, but were persuaded to place some of them on the agenda by Vice President Jimmy Simpson who was still on the fringes of the left wing. The resolutions on Canadian autonomy and industrial unionism were kept off the agenda.

19. Jane Degras, ed., The Communist International 1919-1943, Vol. 1 (London, 1956), 243 ff.

20. Lenin, CW, Vol. 31, 53

21. A. S. Lozovsky, The International Council of Trade Unions (New York, 1920), 26-7. Nor were the bolsheviks the only revolutionaries to be impressed by the class war in Canada in 1919. See, for example, the comments of Antonio Gramsci and John Maclean in Quintin Hoare, ed., Antonio Gramsci: Selections from

Political Writings 1910-1920 (New York, 1977), 61; Nan Milton, ed., John MacLean: In the Rapids of Revolution (London, 1978), 190

22. Red International of Trade Unions, Labour's New Charter: Resolutions and Decisions of the First International Congress of Revolutionary Trade and Industrial Unions, Moscow, 3-19 July 1921 (Glasgow, 1922), 79-80

23. See, for example, "The OBU in Retrospect", Communist Bulletin, n.d. [c. February-March 1921]; The Communist, May 1921; Workers' Guard, 17 December 1921

24. On the OBU's shift to the right, see PAC, RG 27, Department of Labour Records, Vol. 3133, file 138, undated OBU leaflet [c. November 1919]; V. R. Midgley to Department of Labour, 14 June 1920

25. University of British Columbia (UBC) Archives, Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers' Union Collection, Box 159, file 24, Tom Mace to Walter Mill, 29 October 1921; "Report of OBU delegate J. R. Knight on Red International of Labour Unions Congress", 13 January 192[illegible] See also David J. Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union (Toronto, 1978), 220-26

26. Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, 223

27. Theodore Draper, The Roots of American Communism (New York, 1957), 320-22; Beeching and Clarke, eds., Yours in the Struggle, 39

28. Compare the Glasgow edition cited above (note 22) with the Chicago edition, Resolutions and Decisions ... etc. (Chicago, 1921), 62

29. IB, 24 February 1922; Gordon Cascaden, Shall Unionism Die? Report on 'Red' Trade Union International Congress held in Moscow, Russia (Windsor, 1922), 34-6 (Cascaden represented the Lumber Workers' Industrial Union in Moscow. A syndicalist, his report heavily criticised A. S. Lozovsky's alleged stage-managing of the Congress and highlighted the case of the "Left Opposition" in the bolshevik's Great Trade Union Debate of 1920-21); Maurice Spector, "The Constituent Convention of the Workers' Party of Canada, February 1922", typescript, Robert Kenny Collection, Fisher Library, University of Toronto, Box 1

30. Provincial Archives of Manitoba (P.A.M.), Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba Papers, R.B. Russell interview, 5

31. Buck, Canada and the Russian Revolution, 89

32. John Molyneux, Marxism and the Party (London, 1978), 91

33. "Canada: Workers' Party Congress", Labour Monthly, 4 (May 1923), 312-13; Edward W. Laine, "Finnish Canadian Radicalism and Canadian Politics: The First Forty Years, 1900-1940", in Jorgen Dahlie and Tissa Fernando, eds., Ethnicity, Power and Politics in Canada (Toronto, 1981), 99-100; John Kolasky, The Shattered Illusion: The History of Ukrainian Pro-Communist Organizations in Canada (Toronto, 1979), 13-14, 17

34. Buck, "Renovation of the Trade Union Movement"

35. "Principles and Program of the Trade Union Educational League", Labor Herald (Chicago), 1 (March 1922), 3-7. See also Earl R. Beckner, "The Trade Union Educational League and the American Labour Movement", Journal of Political Economy, 33 (August 1925), 410-31

36. Toronto Globe, 20 August 1920

37. These were: (1) The Running Trades' Brotherhoods (Engineers, Firemen, Trainmen, Conductors); (2) The Shop Crafts (Machinists, Boilermakers, Blacksmiths, Sheet-metal Workers, Steamfitters, Carmen and Electricians); (3) A miscellaneous group (Signalmen, Telegraphers, Switchmen, Clerks/Freighthandlers and Shop Labourers); and (4) the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees (CBRE), which had been expelled from the TLC in 1920 for refusing to merge with the AFL's Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks.

38. Foster's pamphlet was serialized in the Western Labor News (WLN) between 15 April and 24 June 1921.

39. R. C. McCutchan, "Closer Unity and Port Mann", The Bulletin, March 1922

40. Tim Buck, "Report of Canadian District", Labor Herald, 1 (September 1922), 9-10

41. BCF, 9 February 1923; Jan Lakeman, "The Shopmen's Struggle and Some Facts We Should Face", The Bulletin, November 1922

42. "Workers' Party Notes", The Citizen (Halifax Trades and Labour Council), 20 October 1922: Lakeman, "The Shopmen's Struggle"

43. "Canadian Membership of Railway Carmen", The Citizen, 28 October 1921; The People's Cause (Toronto), 20 April 1925; William Z. Foster, Pages From A Worker's Life (New York, 1970), 44-51

44. Hugh Bartholomew, "The Machinists in Convention", The Worker, 2 April 1923

45. "Grand Lodge Convention", Machinist Bulletin, October 1924. One of the consequences of the machinists' withdrawal from the shop crafts' federation was their assumption of total control of The Bulletin.

46. "Railroads in Control of Their Shops", The Independent, 109 (14 October 1922), 186; Paul Blanshard, "The Pennsylvania's War on Labor", The Nation, 117 (25 July 1923), 79-80; Western Labor News, 21 July 1922; Montgomery, Workers' Control in America, 100.

47. "Winnipeg Trades Council Turns Down Workers' Party", Western Labor News, reprinted in the Labor Leader (Toronto), 31 March 1922; Robert Hewitt, "More Light on Amalgamation", The Bulletin, November 1922 (originally published anonymously in WLN, 27 October 1922); Hewitt, "Amalgamation! How?", The Bulletin, March 1923. As early as March 1922 McCutchan (above, note 39) had emphasized that the ideological struggle for amalgamation would be a long haul.

48. WLN, 21 July 1922; Labor Leader (LL), 11 August, 27 October 1922; "Industrial Disputes Act", The Bulletin, August 1922. See also Stephen G. Peitchinis, Labour-Management Relations in the Railway Industry (Ottawa, 1971), 120-22

49. Canadian Congress Journal (CCJ), 1 (October 1922), 537

50. "The Communist Party and Immediate Demands", The Worker, 6 February 1926

51. Kenny Collection, UT, Box 1, Workers' Party of Canada, "Educational Program, 1923", section no.4

52. The Worker, 16 October 1922; Albert E. Allen, letter to the editor, The Worker, 20 June 1923; Royal Commission Investigating the Coal Mining Industry in Nova Scotia, November-December 1925, Testimony of

J. B. McLachlan, 1077 (henceforth Duncan Commission, microfilm copy in P.A.N.S.)

53. William Rodney, Soldiers of the International (Toronto, 1968), 109

54. PAC, TDLC Minutes, M. Ketcheson to P. M. Draper, 9 August 1923

55. UT, Kenny Collection, green scrapbook, TUEL Canadian Section, "Autonomy for Canadian Unionism", (n.p., n.d.); "For Canadian Trade Union Autonomy", The Worker, 29 August 1923; Tim Buck, "National Autonomy Our Next Step", The Worker, 5 September 1923

56. Lenin, C.W., Vol. 31, 21-2, 91, quoted in Tony Cliff, Lenin, Vol. 4 (London, 1979), 54 (emphasis in the original)

57. Report of the Fourth Congress of the RILU (London, 1924), 137-38; Rodney, Soldiers of the International, 113-15; The Worker, 26 March 1927

58. TLC Proceedings 1923, 92-6 (the vote was 120-53); Malcolm Bruce, "Left Wing the Only Hope of the Trades Congress", The Worker, 3 October 1923

59. "Tom Moore Opposes Tim Buck's Motion", Ottawa Evening Journal, 21 August 1923

60. "Money Talks", CMB, December 1924; TLC Proceedings 1924, 105; W. A. Trotter, "Personally Conducted Printers' Tour to Canada", AF, 36 (February 1929), 172-77; Sally F. Zerker, The Rise and Fall of the Toronto Typographical Union 1832-1972: A Case Study of Foreign Domination (Toronto, 1982), 189-96

61. Robert Hewitt, "The Left Wing at the Congress", The Bulletin, October 1923

62. John W. Bruce, "Does the International Labour Movement Need Salvaging", CCJ, 7 (July 1928), 24-29

63. Rodney, Soldiers of the International, 114-15; Roderick Martin, Communism and the British Trade Unions, 1924-1933 (Oxford, 1969); James Hinton and Richard Hyman, Trade Unions and Revolution: The Industrial Politics of the Early British Communist Party (London, 1975)

64. The Left Wing, 1 November 1924

65. Helmut Gruber, Soviet Russia Masters the Comintern: International Communism in the Era of Stalin's Ascendancy (Garden City, 1974), 8-9. As Gruber is careful to point out (xv, 514), the idea of a Leninist "golden age" in the Comintern followed immediately and abruptly by Stalinist degeneration obscures the extent to which Soviet domination of the Comintern had become entrenched during Lenin's last years, promoting habits of deference and discouraging self-reliance. On "Russian Hegemony in the International", see Cliff, Lenin, Vol. 4, 53-65

66. Ian Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks, 175-85. On the rather low esteem in which the CPC was held in Moscow, see PAC, W.L.M. King Papers, Vol. 63, file 419, "Minutes of Meeting of Colonial Commission of the Third International, Moscow, 5 December 1922", enclosed in Secretary of State for the Colonies to King, 26 February 1923. The Comintern Fourth World Congress considered Canada mainly in terms of the British Empire, placing it a poor fourth in importance for revolutionary intervention behind, in order, India, Ireland and Australia. I wish to thank David Frank for bringing this reference to my attention.

67. "Five Hundred New Members in November", The Worker, 7 November 1925 (i.e. 500 new members per party district); Tim Buck, "Recruiting for the Red Month", The Worker, 21 November 1925

68. Letters to the editor, The Worker, 15 August 1925 (Tom Ewan), 5 September 1925 (Jan Lakeman)

69. Hugh Bartholomew, letter to the editor, The Worker, 29 August 1925. Very little has been written about Hugh M. Bartholomew. Although Buck mentions him as a leading SPC member, he appears nowhere in the existing literature on that party. He was an Irishman, probably from Ulster, and was apparently unskilled. He had a reputation as a brilliant orator and was one of the foremost intellectuals in the CPC. The Worker carried numerous articles by him; as Norman Penner points out, his 1923 series of five articles on Canadian capitalism was the most sustained piece of left-wing writing on the subject until 1935. After 1925 "Bart" virtually dropped out of party life, reputedly because of official disapproval of his alleged homosexuality. He nevertheless remained close to the party and ran a marxist study group for students at the University of Manitoba. In 1931, after the party "centre" turned down a request for his rehabilitation as a public organizer, he apparently

committed suicide. See Norman Penner, The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis (Toronto, 1977), 160-61; Multi-cultural History Society of Ontario (MCHSO), Toronto, Harry Binder interview (by Joseph Starobin)

70. "Resolution of Policy on Labor Unions", The Worker, 15 March 1922; "Fundamental Problems of the International Trade Union Movement", The Worker, 15 April 1922; Malcolm Bruce, quoted in TLC Proceedings 1923, 113

71. Daniel Calhoun, The United Front: The TUC and the Russians (Cambridge, 1976); Gruber, Soviet Russia Masters the Comintern, 112-18, 144-50

72. Joe Wallace, "Where Do We Go From Here"", The Left Wing, February 1925

73. "Purcell on World Unity and Russian Revolution", The Worker, 7 November 1925; The Worker, 14 November 1925

74. UBC Archives, Vancouver & New Westminster Trades and Labour Council Minutes, 4 August 1925; The Citizen, 14 August - 11 September 1925

75. TLC Proceedings 1925, 104-5, 137-44; Ottawa Evening Journal, 1, 3, 5 September 1925; The Worker, 12, 19 September 1925

76. William Z. Foster, quoted in The Left Wing, October 1925

77. The Left Wing, December 1925, January 1926; The Worker, 9 January 1926

78. In October 1928 Buck admitted that the "TUEL is virtually non-existent as a leading and an organizing centre", Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks, 176

79. "How Communist Party Works in Toronto", The Worker, 26 March 1927

80. Lane, "Finnish Canadian Radicalism", 100. Ironically, one union in which the CPC could claim real influence in the late 1920s was the Lumber Workers' Industrial Union, which was based in the Lakehead and had an almost exclusively Finnish membership. Re-formed at the height of the bolshevization debate in 1926, it displayed a mixture of loyalty and reserve towards the party. See PAC, Department of Labour Records, Vol. 3133, file 140, Report of Proceedings of LWIU

Convention, Port Arthur, 31 March to 3 April 1928

81. After a debate distinguished by vituperation and the one-sidedness of its anti-ethnic stance, the party curtailed further discussion in April 1926 and ordered the dissolution of language branches. According to an RCMP report, this decision produced considerable resentment and an immediate falling-off in party activity. PAC, Arthur Meighen Papers, 89310 ff., Weekly Summary No. 331, "Notes Recording Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada", in Cortland Starnes to Meighen, 12 August 1926

82. Bartholomew, letter to the editor, The Worker, 29 August 1925; "Urges Systematic Party Education", The Worker, 31 October 1925. Bartholomew had periodically attempted to tackle the tasks he set for the party in articles for The Worker (see, for example, "Statistical Survey of Canadian Labour Unions", 5 September 1923; "The Modern State", 15 September 1922), but the job was obviously too great, and too important, to be left to individual endeavour.

83. After 1925 the CPC did pay more attention to the development of cadres, beginning a number of provincial training schools, notably at Sylvan Lake, Alberta. But a plan to establish a national training school never got off the ground, after Scott Nearing was unable to accept the party's invitation to organize and direct it. Rodney, Soldiers of the International, 130-31. Oddly, it does not seem to have occurred to the party to offer the job to Bartholomew, perhaps because of deference to formal academic training, perhaps because it was around this time that he became embroiled in a homosexual scandal that effectively ended his public party activity.

84. "Canadian Labour and Communists", The Times, 30 November 1925

85. "Equal Rights?", CCJ, 4 (August 1925), 33. See also John Frey, "Disrupters Without their Sheep's Clothing", Hamilton Labor News, 30 March 1925; William L. Hutcheson and Frank Duffy, letter to officers and members, UBCJ, CMB, February 1926; E. C. Davison, "Communist Activities Described", CCJ, 5 (January 1926), 16-21

86. PAC, Arthur Meithen Papers, Vol. 147, 89310 ff., Weekly Summary No. 327, "Notes Recording Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada", in Starnes to

Meighen, 17 July 1926.

87. See The Citizen continuously from November 1925 to September 1926, and the issue of 14 January 1927; also Halifax Herald, Halifax Evening Mail, 13 February 1926; The Worker, 6 March 1926

88. UBC, Vancouver & New Westminster Trades and Labour Council Minutes, 19 January, 5 April, 3 May 1926; "Pin Money for the Female", Labor Statesman, 9 July 1926

89. Scott Nearing, "The Crow's Nest Pass", Labour Monthly, 9 (February 1927), 120-23

90. Allen Seager, "A History of The Mine Workers' Union of Canada, 1925-1936", M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1977, 38-53

91. PAO, Communist Party of Canada Papers, 5B 0002, 5B 0014-15, Harry Campbell to Annie Buller, 23 January, 7 March 1927

92. Donald Avery, "Ethnic Loyalties and the Proletarian Revolution: A Case Study of Communist Political Activity in Winnipeg, 1923-1936", in Dahlie and Fernando, eds., Ethnicity, Power and Politics in Canada, 73-5

93. Tom MacEwen, The Forge Glows Red: From Blacksmith to Revolutionary (Toronto, 1974), 100-101

94. Alberta Labor News, 9 July 1927; The Worker, 29 October 1927, 27 July 1929; Canadian Labor Herald, 31 July 1929

95. These developments are dealt with at greater length in chapters two and seven.

96. Edward B. Mittleman, "Basis for American Federation of Labor Opposition to Amalgamation and Politics at Portland", Journal of Political Economy, 32 (February-December 1924), 86-100; William Z. Foster, "Bureaucrats Drive Against Left Wing", The Worker, 19, 26 December 1925; Mark Perlman, The Machinists: A New Study in American Trade Unionism (Cambridge, 1961), 64-5; John H. M. Laslett, Labor and the Left: A Study of Socialist and Radical Influences in the American Labor Movement (New York, 1970), 41-3, 87-8, 227-29

97. "A Candid Friend Speaks", Alberta Labor News, 1 October 1927. See also Bruce, "Does the International Labour Movement Need Salvaging"; "Unity", CCJ, 5 (November 1926), 32-3; John G. O'Donohue, "A Survey of Labour", CCJ, 2 (December 1923), 63; J.C., "The United Front", BCF, 16 January 1925

98. Moore, quoted in Norman Reilly Raine, "Tom Moore, Safety Valve of Labour", Maclean's, 38 (1 April 1925), 15. For two good examples of the abuse Moore had to put up with, see "Going Up!", The Worker, 1 November 1922; "Don't Let Tom Moore Take the Fight Out of Your Union", MLH, 4 April 1925

99. Robert Hewitt, "The Left Wing at the Congress"

100. "Militant Shoeworkers Get Secretary Baines' Goat", The Worker, 2 January 1926; The Worker, 8, 29 May 1926

101. "Green Boosts the Reds", The Worker, 19 December 1925; Hamilton Labor News, 28 May 1928

102. John W. Buckley to Minister of Justice, 5 August 1933, reprinted in Report of the Royal Commission to Investigate the Penal System of Canada (Ottawa, 1938), 87

103. "Trades Congress Vindicates the Policy of the Labor Leader", LL, 14 September 1928

104. J. Lakeman, "Who is For Amalgamation?", The Worker, 18 April 1923

105. Robert Hewitt, "Charter of Edmonton Railway Carmen Revoked - New Union", Labor Statesman, 27 December 1929

106. "Equal Rights?", CCJ, 4 (August 1925), 33; Davison, "Communist Activities Described"

107. Tom Moore, "The Canadian Labor Movement", AF, 36 (February 1929), 154-59

108. F. J. Hawse, "Report of the Delegate to the Trades and Labour Congress Convention", CMB, September-October 1927

109. Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada 1921-1976 (Toronto, 1982), 29; Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks, 199

110. Lita-Rose Betcherman, The Little Band: The clashes between the Communists and the political and legal establishment in Canada, 1928-1932 (Ottawa, 1982), 12-13

111. "United Front Policy", The Worker, 10 January 1925; "Stabilization", The Worker, 3 October 1925; Maurice Spector, "Class Struggle in Canada 1925", The Worker, 9 January 1926; Beckie Buhay, "So this is Canada: Reflections of a Class-Conscious Worker Wandering from Coast to Coast", The Worker, 26 March 1927. See also on the issue of labour's traditional partyism J.A.P. Haydon, "The New Canadian Government", CCJ, 5 (October 1926), 19-20, which is almost gleeful at the "progressive" complexion of King's new Liberal administration.

112. Tim Buck, "Background and Perspective of Our Sixth Convention", Canadian Labour Monthly, 2 (February-March 1929), 33-40

113. A Ross McCormack, Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement 1899-1919 (Toronto, 1977), 139-43; Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks, 20-26

114. Labor Leader, 5 May 1922. On Rose Henderson, see John Manley, "Women and the Left in the 1930s: The Case of the Toronto CCF Women's Joint Committee", Atlantis, 5 (Spring 1980), 104-7

115. "Communists Use Czarist Tactics", BCLN, 2 September 1921; also "Amsterdam versus Moscow", The Bulletin, July 1921; "Labor Victims and Serfs of the Soviets", AF, 28 (March 1921), 211-20; "Russian Trade Unions Are Under Scourge of Communist Dictatorship", WLN, 5 August 1921; Cascaden, Shall Unionism Die?, 77-87

116. "The Convention of the Workmen's Circle", The Worker, 15 May 1922; The Worker, 21 March 1925; Benjamin Gitlow, I Confess (New York, 1939), 216-23

117. "More Light from Russia", CCJ, 1 (August 1922), 429. (In this article the TLC monthly sneers at the gap between theory and practice in Russian economic life.) On the New Economic Policy the material is voluminous. See, e.g., Cliff, Lenin, Vol. 4, 138-60; Neil Harding, Lenin's Political Thought, Vol. 2 (London, 1983), 280-81; Stephen F. Cohen, Bukharin and the Russian Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938 (Oxford, 1980), ch.VI; Charles Bettelheim, Class Struggles in the USSR, Second Period: 1923-1930 (New York, 1978). On the decline in the moral authority of the Russian leadership due to the factional debate, see "On the Situation in the Bolshevik Party", (1926) in Quintin Hoare, ed.

Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Political Writings 1921-1926 (London, 1978), 426-40; also Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks, 187

118. Roscoe A. Fillmore, "Peas, Potatoes and the Proletariat in the Kuzbas", MLH, 29 September 1923. In his 1949 autobiography A. E. Smith explained that any criticism of the Soviet Union "meant, in effect, condemning the Russian revolution". All My Life, (Toronto, 1977), 80

119. "The Soviet Revolution and the Status of Women", The Worker, 19 November 1925; Kolasky, The Shattered Illusion, 12; Katerina Avdeyeva, The Trade Unions and Socialist Construction in U.S.S.R. (New York, 1929), 6. Copies of this and other similar publications are included among the Robert Russell papers, P.A.M.

120. Scott Nearing, "The Labour Situation in Western Canada", Labour Monthly, 7 (May 1925), 288-93

121. LL, 14 May 1926; PAC, MG31 B8, John W. Bruce interview, 2-5

122. Bruce, "Does the International Labour Movement Need Salvaging?"

123. "A Revolution that Did Not Materialize", The Advance, 16 March 1928

124. UT, Kenny Collection, Box 2, Tim Buck, "Report of Industrial Department", CPC Fourth National Convention, 1925, 7-8; Betcherman, The Little Band, 13

125. "Program of the Communist Party of Canada", The Communist, June 1921; "Resolution of Policy on Labor Unions", The Worker, 15 March 1922

126. According to Antonio Gramsci, writing in 1923, the "tactic of the united front, laid down with considerable precision by the Russian comrades, both technically and in the general approach to its practical application, has in no country found the party or the men capable of concretizing it." "What the Relations Should Be Between the PCI And the Comintern", in Hoare, ed., Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Political Writings, 1921-1926, 155 (original emphasis).

127. Bruce, "Tailism in the Work Among Unemployed". Another indication of the party's failure to convince members of the basic necessity of factory-based organization or even of trade unionism was the remark by a Medicine Hat worker to Scott Nearing that since the revolution was so imminent such organization was unnecessary. Nearing, "The Labour Situation in Western Canada".

CHAPTER TWO

NATIONAL UNIONISM AND THE TURN TO THE LEFT

The apparently abrupt "left turn" in the CPC's industrial tactics in 1928-29 actually had its beginnings in the events of 1925-26, when one could argue without exaggeration that the party was in crisis. As the 1925 TLC Convention had shown, any influence the party once had had virtually disappeared; and as party members, via the bolshevization debate, turned on each other, political opponents confidently predicted the party's unarrested decline. Yet an escape route from internecine wrangling and demoralization remained. In 1924 a party delegation led by Maurice Spector won the RILU's approval for the slogan of Canadian trade union autonomy. Henceforth, the CPC was to devote more attention to the "tasks of organizing the unorganized sections" of the working class - on a national basis. The RILU unequivocally ordered sceptical American Communists, who were also to initiate work with the unorganized, to give assistance to the Canadians but "under no circumstances" to set up international unions imitative "of the practices of the reactionary AF of L."[1] This return to the platforms of 1920 and 1923 set definite targets for the party.

Initially, the CPC hoped that it would be able to coax the TLC into leading an organization drive, but that

prospect disappeared in 1925. Immediately, however, the prospect of constructing an independent, left-wing trade union centre was raised. In a letter to The Worker Alex Lyon, a prominent member of the independent Amalgamated Carpenters' Union (ACU) and a founder member of the CPC, asked aloud who was "big enough" to take the lead in launching preparations for such a project. Canadians had to have the right to control their own movement, decide on international affiliations, "consider solidarity on an intelligent basis" and recognize "the development of capitalism" in planning their industrial politics.[2] At that moment the CPC was not prepared to abandon the TLC. Launching a new trade union centre would clearly be fraught with complications, not the least of which was the issue of dual-unionism: it was more than coincidental that Lyon's ACU was in sharp rivalry with the UBCJ. Consequently, the CPC tried to avoid the certain diviseness of an organizational split and continued to call for the TLC to reverse its position of non-cooperation with national unionism. Even after the TLC 1926 Convention refused yet again to consider unity talks with the national unions, the party affirmed its continued support for united front work in the internationals. At the same time, however, it called on the national unions to "unite their forces in another trades congress to become a sufficiently powerful fact for even Moore and Jimmy Simpson to see."[3]

In March 1927 the All-Canadian Congress of Labour (ACCL) was formed.

The new trade union centre was not the most imposing of labour organizations. International unionists wrote it off as a puny mixture of "reds", opportunists and disgruntled failures.[4] And with the exception of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees, its only well-established affiliate, this assessment was not too wide of the mark. Yet Communists viewed the ACCL as a hopeful development, specifically because it promised to help them fulfil their task of organizing the unorganized:

> THE GREAT work facing the new Congress, and that which would bring its strength up to that of the older organization, is the organization of the unorganized. Here it has the chance of organizing thousands of unorganized workers into a Metal Workers' Union, a Textile Workers' Union etc. The Internationals have left this field untouched, hamstrung as they are by jurisdictional prejudices.[5]

Moreover, though most of the unions which made up the ACCL were weak, they at least showed signs of greater receptivity to radical organizing methods and political outlooks. Communists had played a crucial part in forming the Mine Workers' Union of Canada (MWUC) in 1925, as a breakaway from the discredited UMWA in Alberta, and Finnish Communists controlled the Lumber Workers' Industrial Union (LWIU), resurrected towards the end of 1926 during a strike in the Lakehead.[6] The comments of leaders of the

Communication Workers' Union of Canada (CWU), which broke from the international Commercial Telegraphers' Union in December 1925, suggested that here was another "class struggle union". Vancouver official W. T. Burford, who became ACCL Secretary-Treasurer and editor of the Canadian Unionist in 1927, attributed the split to the American leadership's "bureaucratic degeneration" and promised that the CWU would be a "fighting organization of working people, not a closed corporation". "Six-figure funds", Burford noted, were "desirable accessories":

> but the union that fights anyhow - on a shoe-string if necessary - is more likely to be animated by a true purpose than one in which the monetary impulse is predominant. Big bank accounts and banking and insurance institutions, controlled by unions, are mere trimmings on the labour movement. To let them assume exaggerated importance is to invite stagnation. Bureaucratic excrescences bespeak conservatism[7]

Above all, there was the "progressive" leadership provided by CBRE President Aaron Mosher both to his union and the ACCL, of which he was also President. This was best represented by his actions at the CBRE Annual Convention in 1927, when he ruled out of order a motion to ban Communists from holding office in the union and supported resolutions protesting Mackenzie King's severing of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and calling instead for the extension of trade credits.[8] The CBRE was committed to the principle of industrial unionism and considered "struggle with capitalism" a vital part of its raison d'etre. If such

views could be transmitted to the ACCL, the new centre would certainly prove a receptive medium for Communist work.[9]

The party saw the ACCL's future development running along parallel lines with the TLC, building strictly by means of organizing the unorganized workers of the open-shop mass production industries. Always, it cautioned against the temptation to build the ACCL by splits from the international unions. Yet the fact remained that most of the ACCL's founding members were in competition with the internationals and were more concerned about their own expansion than with the growth of new unions. There was even competition <u>between</u> ACCL affiliates for the same workers. In the Winnipeg repair shops of the CNR, for example, the CBRE and the One Big Union, another ACCL affiliate, vied with the international shop crafts for the loyalties of the skilled shopmen. The inevitable result was that when manning reductions had to be made, CN management was able to win the support of the TLC majority by discriminating against OBU and CBRE members. The party's position on this struggle was to support the international unions as the dominant force embracing the largest group of workers, arguing that only if all workers joined the AFL-TLC shop crafts could lay-offs be fought and that the CBRE's "senseless guerilla warfare" had to stop.[10] The

CBRE remained unrepentent. Mosher entered into protracted public correspondence with the party (carried in The Worker) in which he insisted that "any left wing agitation in the Canadian subsidiaries" of the international unions would always be offset by the "huge reactionary majorities" in the United States. Why, he asked, attempt the impossible when the CBRE - "a modern adaptable and efficient industrial union" - was willing and able to solve all the problems of labour disunity? In effect, Mosher was suggesting that the CPC make some hard choices, something that it was not prepared to do. Unwilling to cast itself adrift from the TLC, the party answered Mosher by quoting "Left Wing" Communism on the necessity of working "SYSTEMATICALLY, STUBBORNLY, INSISTENTLY AND PATIENTLY" inside reactionary unions.[11]

The CPC failed to think through the implications of its equivocal tactics. On the one hand it seemed to be arguing that the correct choice for militants was to join the dominant union in their respective industries, while on the other hand it explicitly refused to support "any one against the other because we recognize, as any trade unionist who gives the matter serious consideration must recognize, that it is folly for one existing organization, or group of organizations, to think of destroying all the rest."[12] Neither side could be satisfied with such a

formulation. The difficulty of riding two mounts at once was sharply exposed in October 1927, when the Toronto locals of the UBCJ struck to obtain the elimination of the ACU from union contracts, an action that represented the culmination of a long-standing feud dating back to 1911.[13] In that year the ACU's antecedent, the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, a North American offshoot of the British Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, was expelled from the AFL after refusing to merge with the UBCJ. Two years later the TLC reluctantly also expelled the ASC, most of whose members began to enter the international union. As late as 1924, however, there were loyal ASC branches in Vancouver and Toronto, but their fate was thrown into question when the British union decided to terminate its residual interests in North America, and encouraged its remaining members to join the UBCJ.[14] Instead, in February 1925 the ACU was formed on a "Canada for Canadians" platform, and the two unions began competing for members, their rivalry being particularly sharp in Toronto.[15]

In 1926 the construction industry finally began to revive in Toronto (nationally the value of new contracts awarded rose by 25 per cent over the 1925 figure), and the UBCJ responded by lodging a demand for an hourly union rate of $1.10, up from 80¢. Immediately, however, the ACU signed a union contract with the Toronto Building

Exchange for 85¢ an hour during the last six months of 1926, rising to 90¢ in 1927, justifying this apparent undercutting of the UBCJ demand with the claim that the international union had only really been interested in "squelching" its rival.[16] The UBCJ then signed a similar agreement, but was only deferring the moment when it planned to eliminate the ACU. In April 1927 it recommenced independent negotiations with the Building Exchange for a dollar an hour and employment only of "journeymen workers of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners or other workers, non-union or otherwise, who would agree to join ... within a month's time." Negotiations broke down in late September and Brotherhood members walked off the job on 4 October.[17]

The carpenters' strike placed the CPC in a quandary. It agreed with the UBCJ's assessment that the presence of two competing unions was not in the interests of the workers, but refused to take sides on the grounds that the two unions were of approximately equal strength in Toronto (a claim that was at variance with other accounts) and that the UBCJ leadership was less concerned with the wellbeing of the rank and file than with their own jobs (which, even had it been true, was irrelevant).[18] Although it never explicitly endorsed the ACU, its call for the two sides to form Joint Councils, with the rank and file taking more of

a lead, was consistent with the ACU's stand: the national union was willing to throw the factional issue open for debate and to submit the dispute to tri-partite talks, provided its continued existence was not at stake. The UBCJ was in no doubt that the party favoured the ACU, the Carpenters' Monthly Bulletin claiming that The Worker's reporting of the strike had exposed "the Communists for what they are, nothing but a union-breaking organization."[19] Heavy play was made of the ACU's "revolutionary allies", a tactic that may have helped bring about the over-ruling of an injunction obtained by the Building Exchange to forestall a threatened general sympathy strike by the TLC Building Trades' Council.[20] In the event, plans for a general strike fell through, and a curious compromise settlement was reached, whereby the dollar an hour rate was granted, the UBCJ alone was allowed to sign the contract, but the closed shop was rejected.[21] A month later, when the heat had died down, the Building Exchange signed an agreement with the ACU which seemed to give it preference.[22]

The main impact of the dispute was to push the CPC into closer contact with the national unions. The party may have felt that its approach had been even-handed, but it seriously misjudged the mood in the international unions. They had won nothing from the strike, but were nevertheless enthused by the quashing of the Building

Exchange's injunction against sympathy strikes. Bricklayers' leader William Genovese observed that Justice Logie's decision that the Toronto Building Trades' Council was acting legitimately in defence of its members' interests was "pleasing and far-reaching as it means that any body of organized workers can strike against a dual-union, just as if they were a body of non-union men."[23] More than ever, the possibility of dialogue between national and international unions had been foreclosed. Sooner or later it was inevitable that other parties would make the decisions the CPC seemed reluctant to make.

The international unions' move against leading communist militants tended to strengthen the national-communist bond and give further impetus to anti-communism in the internationals. Many small links developed between the ACCL and CPC. In 1927 the ACCL invited the WLL Federation's affiliation, and despite the decision of the latter's executive to make no decision until a referendum of the membership could be arranged (this never took place), relations between the two organizations remained amicable; in 1928 Florence Custance directed an educational programme for the ACU's Women's Guild.[24] In Calgary the communists excluded from the IHBCLU local formed the first local of the ACCL's General Workers' Union.[25] From March 1928 onwards there were collaborative attempts to launch

industrial unions in the automobile, woodworking and textile industries.[26] And when communists single-handedly created the Industrial Union of Needle Trades Workers in August 1928, the party gave every indication that it planned to affiliate the union to the ACCL.[27]

The best example of shifting communist allegiances was provided by the party's secessionist campaign in UMWA District 26. As early as 1925 the party leadership was considering an effort to split District 26 away from the international and ally it to the Mine Workers' Union of Canada (MWUC). Two reasons lay behind its tactical shift in Cape Breton. First, in 1924 the party locally had elected two of its members, John W. McLeod and A. A. "Sandy" McKay, President and Secretary of District 26. Very rapidly, however, the two men shifted to the right and, according to J. B. McLachlan, "repudiated everything we stood for." McKay (and probably McLeod) was expelled from the Glace Bay branch early in 1925.[28] Secondly, it was felt that the UMWA would never recover from its disastrous conduct of the 1925 strike - although McLachlan for one admitted that there was little opposition to the district executive's tactics of "begging and being respectable".[29] The alternative to the UMWA remained problematic. As McLachlan wrote to Buck:

> The thing to do now is to allow BESCO to drive the Lewis machine out and be prepared to keep the men organized in some fashion. As you say, perhaps a little weak local affair to start with.

Yet as McLachlan fully appreciated, other alternatives were company unionism or the OBU, which had a small but nagging presence in the district.[30] An immediate link-up with the MWUC was ruled out by the Alberta union's communist secretary John Stokaluk, who refused to comply with Buck's urgings that he invite Nova Scotian representatives to its first convention on the grounds that such action would make him vulnerable to charges of outside interference.[31] The Cape Breton communists were left with no alternative but to appeal for unity in the face of Besco's provocations while continuing to persuade rank and file miners that the UMWA would have to be replaced at some point.[32]

Further consideration of secession was delayed until the early months of 1928, when the party sent Joe Gilbert in to organize the Progressive Miners' Committee (PMC), in effect a Canadian extension of the dissident campaign then being conducted against UMWA President John L. Lewis in the United States. Gilbert's first reports to the centre were full of optimism: early PMC meetings had been enthusiastic and he had received so many threats of physical violence that it was clear that the UMWA leaders

were rattled.[33] The reality was rather different. At this time the CPC was in the middle of the worst period in its history in Cape Breton. In March 1928 the Glace Bay branch was down to 8 members who had not met since the branch was evicted from its rooms four months earlier.[34] There had been a brief revival of militancy in the mines in the summer of 1927, over longwall mining, lay-offs and unfair dismissals, which the party managed to convert into a 24-hour strike in protest against the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti. At one mass meeting J. B. McLachlan rekindled memories of different times with "one of his old time fiery [speeches] in which he used some very strong terms of speech referring to Governor Fuller and the employers of labour in the State of Massachusetts."[35] When over 4,000 miners answered the strike call, the union executive quietly set aside earlier threats of disciplinary action.[36] These events, however, have to be set against the easy victory of the entire right-wing slate in union elections held a few days earlier and the overwhelming endorsement of a new contract with Dosco in April 1928.[37] Left wingers had argued against the contract, the main feature of which was a dubious profit-sharing scheme, but as a delighted Sydney Post observed: "The negative vote was so small ... as to suggest that the dissidents represent only the dying residue of the radical element, now thoroughly discredited in all the collieries." The paper looked forward to a new

era in "healthy industrial relations".[38]

In its propaganda the PMC made heavy play of John L. Lewis's betrayal of the rank and file in collaborating with the coal operators to eliminate over 250,000 miners' jobs throughout North America, and added a nationalist element in alleging that District 26 received nothing in return for the $350,000 in dues sent annually to Indianapolis. But it was not until several weeks into the campaign that it openly advocated splitting from the UMWA and allying with the MWUC.[39] Towards the end of May the PMC began to issue literature elaborating the anti-Lewis, pro-MWUC line over the signature of two militant miners, John Miller and Mickey F. McNeil, the latter President of Reserve No. 11 local. The literature carried a call for militants to attend a "special convention" in Sydney on 3 June, two weeks before the official District 26 convention. No sooner had this call been issued, however, than the Glace Bay Gazette reported that Dosco would end union recognition if the miners voted to join the MWUC and added that the UMWA would expel any miner who attended the "outlaw" convention.[40] On 1 June the large and traditionally militant Phalen local voted against sending delegates to the PMC convention, a sure sign that rank and filers were not in favour of secession or were fearful of the consequences. In the event, the convention was a muted affair. Whether it

was because they recognized its unrepresentative character or chose to protect the 50 or so delegates from victimization, the organizers immediately decided to convert the convention into a protest rally, and after speeches by McLachlan, McNeil and Gilbert, the meeting was abandoned.[42]

By 18 June, when the official delegates convened in Halifax, both McNeil and Miller had been expelled and a number of other militants from Springhill, Stellarton, Thorburn, Inverness and elsewhere had been suspended. Despite substantial resentment at this treatment, which led to the convention's voting for the expelled men's immediate reinstatement, the district executive's prompt action had achieved its purpose. The left put up a fair showing at the convention, particularly in quizzing John L. Lewis's right-hand man Philip Murray, whose presence indicated the seriousness with which Lewis viewed events in Nova Scotia. But the incumbent leadership ended in firmer control than ever: the last act of the convention was to vote a 10 per cent increase in executive salaries.[43]

According to party organizer Bill Sydney the campaign had virtually sunk the party in Cape Breton; only J. B. McLachlan retained any credibility, while his own task of soliciting Worker subscriptions was out of the question.[44] Harry Campbell, the last party member still selling the paper in his workplace, had to give up. Management had

threatened him with dismissal if he persisted, and it was highly unlikely that the union would defend him.[45] A headline in the Worker of 7 July read "Nova Scotia Miners Organizing for Fight to the Finish". To all appearances, the left in District 26 was already finished. The programme Gilbert left behind as he bade goodbye to Cape Breton - election of progressives to union office; Canadian unity; one industrial union for coal and metal miners; solidarity with the anti-Lewis forces in the USA; and organization of the unorganized - was for the distant future.[46]

Nationally, the secessionist campaign in Cape Breton added one more case to the international unions' growing charge-sheet. It was no surprise, therefore, that when the TLC executive at the 1928 Convention announced its rejection of Jack MacDonald's delegate credentials, Tom Moore explained the decision as stemming in part from "the necessity to clarify public opinion as to the attitude of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada regarding Communism" but mainly as the appropriate punishment for someone whose contributions to dual-unionism were unrivalled.[47]

Oddly, Moore's juxtaposition of anti-communism and anti-national unionism, designed to justify expulsions from the TLC and its affiliates, had the same effect on the ACCL.

The very last thing the new trade union centre wanted was to be tainted by revolutionism at a time when the CPC was facing growing state repression, Spring 1929 having seen Chief Constable Dennis Draper of Toronto launch his attempt to drive the party off the streets.[48] From the ACCL's birth, its leaders had faced the allegation that their's was, in Tom Moore's phrase, the "All-Red Congress". In a Senate speech, Gideon Robertson, erstwhile labour leader and past and future Minister of Labour, warned the King government to be watchful against inadvertent recognition of this collection of "festering spots".[49] TLC Vice President Jimmy Simpson announced that ACCL supporters were "nothing better than rats ... they are inspired in everything by Moscow".[50] And to the ACCL leadership's consternation the government seemed to accept these views. The first report of the ACCL's formation in the Department of Labour's Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada drew its account entirely from The Worker. An internal ACCL memorandum stressed that this attribution should be changed in future editions.[51]

In 1927-28 Aaron Mosher was happy to use Communists to build the ACCL (just as John L. Lewis would do in the late 1930s). By winter 1928-29, however, the party connection was viewed as a liability. ACCL officials lined up to disavow the alleged relationship and pledge their

organization's loyalty to constitutional government. The Toronto National Labour Council made the point that most Communist trade unionists were in TLC unions, adding that several TLC leaders, notably Jimmy Simpson and John Bruce, had done as much as any men to promote "the class struggle" in Toronto.[52] In categorically denying that the ACCL was in any way "controlled by Moscow", Mosher observed that it would be curiously inconsistent to accept Russian control while fighting against control from the United States.[53] To its credit, even as it tried to distance itself from the CPC, the ACCL continued to lobby the federal government on behalf of several of its Communist members who were facing deportation orders stemming from incidents during the Toronto "Free Speech" fight. When MWUC member Joe Farbey and LWIU member Sam Langley were convicted of "vagrancy" (a standard catch-all charge) after one run-in with the "Red Squad", Mosher and Burford wrote to Minister of Immigration Robert Forke: "While the purpose for which the meeting was held in Toronto was not directly of concern to this organization, the Executive Board ... is deeply interested in seeing that the elementary democratic rights of workers in this country should not be abrogated."[54] The Executive Board also pressed for an investigation into the mysterious circumstances surrounding the deaths of two Finnish LWIU organizers, Rosvall and Voutalainen.[55] Gradually, however, the ACCL came to the position that "Bolshevism"

had to be fought. In June 1929 the Toronto National Labour Council declared that "the Toronto police generally show tact and forbearance in carrying out their duties" and that one young Communist injured in a clash with the police "had got all that was coming" to him.[56] The Canadian Unionist, on the other hand, held that the way to beat the Communists was by ignoring them; police brutality only gave "a fresh lease of life to a movement which needs only to be left alone to bore itself to extinction."[57] By then, the LWIU and AWIU had been expelled from the ACCL for non-payment of dues. The CPC's brief flirtation was over.

It is almost certain, in any case, that 1929 would have seen the end of the CPC's sojourn in the national union movement. The previous year had seen the Sixth Comintern Congress launch the "new line" of "class against class", based upon the thesis that Western Capitalism stood on the brink of a new "third period" of economic and political crises during which Communist Parties had to be prepared to lead and direct an inevitable upsurge of class struggle.[58] One of the main ways in which Communists were to prepare was to assert greater independence in trade union activity, although precisely what form independence would take remained unclear. By August 1928, the CPC was already sufficiently attuned to the "new line" to proceed

with the formation of a National Left Wing Committee, a sort of super-charged version of the TUEL. The party planned to announce this organization with some fanfare, by means of local conferences and specially printed letterheads bearing the names of all the Committee's prominent members. This idea did not go down too well, however, it being pointed out that since most rank and file trade unionists knew who the local left-wingers were, the likeliest consequence of open publicity would be victimization.[59] The National Left Wing Committee went no further.

By the early months of 1929 the CPC had internalized most of the "third period" analysis. Buck restated its arguments in Canadian terms in an incisive article in the Canadian Labour Monthly, the party's short-lived theoretical journal. He began by pointing out how four factors - the strength of "bourgeois illusions" in the new country's future, the fact that Canadian capitalism still experienced "organic growth", the weakness of the trade union movement, and the "unprecedented treachery" of the trade union bureaucracy - had conspired to prevent the CPC from becoming a mass, bolshevik party. This unfortunate situation, however, would soon change. Noting the stagnation of the pulp & paper and automobile industries (a new feature that was troubling even boosterish economic commentators), he predicted that the inescapable contradiction of ever-

increasing productive capacity and glutted markets would fairly quickly precipitate an international conflict in which Canada would play a central role. In the coming class struggles industrial work would be "the decisive factor". Hence it demanded "a break with the general Party tendency to drift" and, if done correctly, would inevitably lead to an intensification of the "already sharp struggle of the trade union bureaucracy against us" and of the party against the bureaucracy:

> The main orientation of the Party is to be upon the unorganized workers, and we will avoid isolation not by striving to prevent a widening gulf between ourselves and the reformists, but by participating more energetically in concrete struggles 60

At the same time an internal document stressed that the party "does not aim at the creation of a third trade union centre". It would create new unions, but these could conceivably be affiliated to either of the existing centres "provided they can do so without losing their own identity, have complete freedom of action and remain an integral part of the revolutionary opposition movement." At all costs, the party had to exercise "the greatest care ... that we do not isolate ourselves from the workers belonging to one or the other centre."[61]

This position went as far as the RILU appeared to desire, for as late as July 1929 Lozovsky was warning that new revolutionary unions could only be formed "at the high-

tide of strikes ... when the political struggle is very acute, when considerable sections of the proletariat have already grasped the social fascist character of the reformist trade union bureaucracy, and when these masses are actively supporting the formation of a new union." And even when all these conditions existed, in countries where there were no independent revolutionary unions their formation "should be undertaken only from case to case, in conformity with the objective situation." Although Lozovsky also emphasised that CPs should not "shrink" from splitting the unions if that was necessary in order to carry out revolutionary activity, the burden of his argument, applied to Canadian conditions, did not suggest that a new trade union centre was in the offing.[62]

Yet the CPC must have been confused about the future. In March the National Organizer of the TUEL in the United States, Philip Aronberg, invited Buck to attend the organization's forthcoming convention in Cleveland where "the establishment of a new revolutionary centre" would be the main item of debate.[63] It was not too difficult to infer that this decision had already been taken and that the CPC, operating in an "objective situation" at least as promising as that of the Americans, would be required to follow suit. The arrival of Sam Carr from Moscow, where he had been among the first Canadian Young Communists to attend

the Lenin School, clarified the situation. In the manner of Young Communists everywhere at this juncture, Carr's role was to enforce the Comintern line.[64] In the party's pre-convention discussion he scorned the possibility of working in the TLC and was scarcely less sceptical about the ACCL, which would "sooner or later", embark on an expulsion policy of its own unless Communists achieved the "highly improbable" feat of completely changing its policies and leadership. He agreed that talk of launching an entirely new centre was "untimely and out of the question", but there was no doubt that he saw such a launching as at least a medium-term prospect.[65] Carr's impact on the debate was decisive. Initially, Buck stuck to support of the ACCL as a matter of "Leninist principle", but by the end of May he was resigned to the new line, perhaps pushed further and faster than he would have wished by the fact that Jack MacDonald, then coming under attack as the leader of the out-of-favour right-wing faction, considered Buck's support for the ACCL stupid. MacDonald argued that the CBRE was the ACCL's only real union and declared himself in favour of the immediate creation of a new trade union centre.[66] At the May-June Sixth National Convention it was decided that the party's main objective in industry would be "the building of a revolutionary Canadian center based upon industrial unions and linked up with the world revolutionary trade union movement by affiliation to the RILU." This new

centre - as yet unnamed - would coordinate the left-wing movement in the "conservative" unions and initiate organizing drives in the unorganized industries. Organizationally, it was to be formally independent but based on democratic centralism and "under the acknowledged leadership of the Communist Party", although deviations from these principles would be permissible "as conditions dictate".[67] The decision to go it alone had finally been taken.

It is important to establish here the CPC's motivations in launching the Workers' Unity League (WUL). Despite the expulsions from the TLC unions, it could not be argued that every possibility of revolutionary activity in them had been exhausted. Similarly, though the ACCL was proving less and less hospitable to Communists, it had not launched a general purge. Thus it was not the case, as the party would later claim, that the decision stemmed from a radical reassessment of Canadian conditions and prospects: it was a hesitant adaptation to the new line emerging from the Comintern. The party leadership did not base the decision on a thorough sounding of rank and file opinion. And, in fact, it knew that the new line was opposed by large sections of the membership, particularly Finnish and Ukrainian comrades. The formation of the Auto Workers' Industrial Industrial Union had already exposed the nature of their resistance, which stemmed from the political

requirement that they join the union and participate publicly in its activities. Many ethnic comrades in the Windsor area flatly refused to comply with a directive they considered a guaranteed recipe for victimization.[68] In general, as the historian of the ULFTA has observed: "The Ukrainians were opposed to playing a leading role in the escalating struggles, fearing arrest and deportation."[69] If they and other Eastern European workers refused to follow the new line, there was little likelihood that new industrial unions could be built. Aware of the extent of opposition, the party proceeded towards a total break with the ACCL very cautiously, and as late as October 1929 it retained hopes that the national centre could be cured of its now pronounced "rightist" tendencies.[70] The ACCL's Third Convention in early November dispelled this faint hope, and the following month, after receiving a reminder from the Comintern, the party finally - quietly - created the WUL.[71]

One can only imagine what was going through the minds of the party leadership in winter 1929-30. No matter how many times they might insist that the new line did not imply a total break with trade union reformism, they must have known that they were about to take a leap into uncharted territory with only the barest survival kit. On the one hand, as Buck has observed, many comrades who had

been sceptical about the feasibility of the "third period" policy had been won over by the dramatic collapse of the New York - and Montreal and Toronto - stock market: "people who a few weeks earlier had denied that there would ever be another economic crisis now said 'This is the collapse of capitalism'."[72] Yet the party remained in turmoil, manifestly ill-equipped for the mounting tasks ahead. That was the inescapable lesson to be drawn from its first venture into independent leadership of class struggle: the strike at National Steel Car Company of Hamilton in September-October 1929.

Footnotes

1. Red International of Labour Unions, Report of the Fourth Congress of the RILU (London, 1924), 137-38. In 1926 Tim Buck and Matt Popovic had to argue strenuously against American opposition before the RILU re-endorsed the trade union autonomy line. See William Rodney, Soldiers of the International (Toronto, 1968), 113-15.

2. Alex Lyon to the editor, The Worker, 5 September 1925, 2; also Lyon to the editor, Canadian Trade Unionist, 22 December 1926, 2; Lyon to the editor, The Worker, 2 January 1926, 3; and Tim Buck, "What Should the Policy of the Left Wing Be?", The Worker, 16 January 1926, 3. Lyon urged the CPC to abandon the TLC and take the lead in launching a rival centre; Buck rejected the argument on the Leninist principle that Communists had to be where the workers were. It may well have been at this point that Lyon left the party.

3. "On Boring From Within", The Worker, 9 October 1926, 4; Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, Report of Proceedings of the 42nd Annual Convention, Montreal, 20-26 September 1926, 149-50

4. Tom Moore, quoted in Hamilton Labor News, 29 January 1926, 4; F. J. Hawse, "Report of the Delegate to the Trades and Labour Congress", Carpenters' Monthly Bulletin, September-October 1927, 2-3; John W. Bruce, "Does the International Labour Movement Need Salvaging?", Canadian Congress Journal, 7 (July 1928), 24-9

5. The Worker, 19 March 1927, 1, original emphasis

6. On the formation of the Mine Workers' Union of Canada, see Allen Seager, "A History of the Mine Workers' Union of Canada, 1925-1936", (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1977), chs. 1, 2. The brief accounts in Norman Penner, The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis (Scarborough, Ontario, 1977) and Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour 1880-1930 (Kingston, Ont., 1968), 360 are incorrect. On the resurrection of Lumber Workers' Industrial Union, see Beckie Buhay, "Ontario Loggers Win Wage Increase", The Worker, 13 November 1926, 1

7. W. T. Burford, "The Crimes of Chicago", Communication Worker, August 1926, 2-3

8. The Worker, 8 October 1927, 1, 4

9. W. P. Greening and M. M. McLean, It Was Never Easy,

1908-1958: A History of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway, Transport and General Workers (Ottawa, 1961), 79, 90

10. 'Workers' Correspondent' to the editor, The Worker, 30 July 1927, 1-2; Tim Buck, "CBRE and Question of Unity of Railway Workers", The Worker, 27 August 1927, 2

11. Aaron Mosher to the editor, The Worker, 13 August 1927, 2; 10 September 1927, 2; "Work in Reactionary Unions", The Worker, 17 November 1927, 4

12. Buck, "CBRE and Question of Unity"

13. Robert H. Babcock, Gompers in Canada: A Study in American Continentalism Before the First World War (Toronto, 1974), 145-49

14. A. G. Cameron, General Secretary, Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, to Amalgamated Society of Canada, 21 July 1924, quoted in Carpenters' Monthly Bulletin, October 1924, 2

15. Carpenters' Monthly Bulletin, March 1925, 1; December 1925, 2

16. Canadian Trade Unionist, 22 July 1926, 1

17. The Globe, 5 October 1927, 13

18. The Worker, 5 November 1927, 1. The Globe estimated that the UBCJ had 1,200 members in Toronto, the ACU around 800; while the pro-international unionist People's Cause, October 1927, 2, claimed that the correct figures were 1,000+ for the UBCJ and 353 for the ACU.

19. "Communists Show Their Hand", Carpenters' Monthly Bulletin, September-October 1927, 3

20. The Globe, 28 October 1927, 13; "Injunction in Building Trades' Strike at Toronto", Labour Gazette, XXVII (November 1927), 1267

21. The Globe, 5 November 1927, 17

22. "A Canadian Union's Success", Canadian Trade Unionist, 24 December 1927, 2

23. "Ontario Provincial Conference of Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers' International Union", Labour Gazette, XXVIII (April 1928), 384

24. See the correspondence between W. T. Burford and Florence Custance in The Woman Worker, 2 (October 1927), 13-15; The Worker, 18 February 1928; "The Fifth Milestone", Canadian Trade Unionist, 31 October

1932. According to the Tim Buck Memoirs, PAC, Custance's husband was an ACU member.

25. Executive, General Workers' Union, Calgary, to the editor, The Worker, 29 October 1927. It is surely more than coincidence that the Secretary-Treasurer of the Vancouver GWU in 1929 was CPC member William Findlay, while another member of the local was party agit-prop director George Porter. See PAO, Communist Party Papers, 1A 0071-78, B.C. applicants for RILU Correspondence Course, n.d. [early 1929]

26. "Knitting Mills Workers Join Unions", The Worker, 23 June 1928; "Woodworkers Organize!", The Worker, 22 September 1928. On the auto industry, see below chapter seven.

27. See below chapter eight.

28. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 1A 0018, J. B. McLachlan to Tim Buck, 4 May 1925; McLachlan, "A Reply to John W. McLeod", MLH, 1 May 1926; "The Election of Grafters", Nova Scotia Miner, 29 October 1932; Royal Provincial Commission Investigating the Coal Mining Industry of Nova Scotia (1925), evidence of A. A. McKay, 1595; David Frank, "The Cape Breton Coal Miners, 1917-1926", Ph.D. dissertation, Dalhousie University, 1979, 408.

29. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 1A 0014-17, 0018-19, McLachlan to Buck, 4, 26 May 1925

30. H[arry Campbell?], "Which Way Shall the N.S. Miners Turn?", The Left Wing, December 1925

31. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 1A 0029-31, John Stokaluk to Buck, 22 September 1925

32. "We Are Against Splits", MLH, 20 March 1926

33. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 5B 0073-9, Harry Campbell to Annie Buller, 21 May 1928; 5B 0081, Joe Gilbert to Buller, 5 June 1928

34. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 5B 0049-50, R. McDougall to Buller, 7 November 1927; 5B 0064-69, Campbell to Buller, 19 March 1928. At its peak in 1923-24 the CPC had around 250 members in Cape Breton. Frank, "The Cape Breton Miners", 338

35. "Big Mass Meeting Held at Glace Bay", Sydney Post, 22 August 1927

36. "Glace Bay Miners Go Back to Pits", Sydney Post, 23 August 1927; "Strikers to be Disciplined", OBU Bulletin, 1 September 1927; "5,000 Glace Bay Miners Down Tools

for Sacco-Vanzetti", The Worker, 3 September 1927; PAO, Communist Party Papers, 5B 0036, Campbell to Buller, 5 September 1927

37. "UMW Elects Few New Men", Sydney Post, 17 August 1927; "Miners Strongly in Favour of Agreement", Sydney Post, 20 April 1928. In March 1928 the hated Besco was taken over by a new holding company, Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation (Dosco), dominated by the Royal Bank of Canada. See David Frank, "The Cape Breton Coal Industry and the Rise and Fall of the British Empire Steel Corporation", Acadiensis, VII (Autumn 1977), 3-34

38. "A Gratifying Verdict", Sydney Post, 20 April 1928; "Profit Sharing Exploitation in Nova Scotia", Young Worker, May 1928

39. "Borers About Face", OBU Bulletin, 31 May 1928; "Progressive Miners Open Campaign in Nova Scotia", The Worker, 2 June 1928

40. "Threatening Expulsions in District 26", The Worker, 9 June 1928; "UMW Takes Steps to Stamp Out 'Outlaw' Union", Sydney Post, 1 June 1928

41. "Phalen Will Not Send Delegates", Sydney Post, 2 June 1928. The Phalen local was popularly known as "The Kremlin" at the height of CPC influence in the early 1920s. Frank, "The Cape Breton Miners", 130

42. "Rump Convention Abortive", OBU Bulletin, 7 June 1928; "Nova Scotia Miners War Against Lewis", The Worker, 16 June 1928; "Attempt to Form New Labor Union", Sydney Post, 4 June 1928

43. Sydney Post, 19-25 June 1928; "Machine Rule", OBU Bulletin, 21 June 1928

44. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 5B 0085, W. Sydney to Buller, 25 June 1928

45. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 5B 0088-90, Campbell to Buller, 20 August 1928

46. Joseph Gilbert, "Nova Scotia Miners Must Take Control", The Worker, 21 July 1928

47. TLC, Report of Proceedings of the 44th Annual Convention, Toronto, 1928, 13-20; Labor News, 28 September 1928, 1

48. Lita-Rose Betcherman, The Little Band (Ottawa, 1982), 1-85

49. Robertson quoted in Canadian Congress Journal, 7 (April 1928), 24-8

50. Simpson quoted in Canadian Trade Unionist, 28 November 1928, 1

51. Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Canadian Labour Congress Papers, Vol. 164, Memo re "Some Suggested Alterations and Additions", 30 December 1927

52. "Reds Are Not Linked Up with Canadian Unions", Canadian Trade Unionist, 22 September 1928, 2

53. Canadian Trade Unionist, 28 November 1928, 1

54. PAC, CLC Papers, Vol. 163, A. R. Mosher and W. T. Burford to Hon. Robert Forke, 10 May 1929

55. PAC, CLC Papers, Vol. 164, Peter Heenan to W. T. Burford, 19 December 1929; Satu Repo, "Rosvall and Voutalainen: Two Union Men Who Never Died", Labour/Le Travailleur, 8/9 (Autumn-Spring 1981/82), 79-102

56. Compare "For Freedom of Expression", Canadian Trade Unionist, 20 March 1929, 2, and "Reject Communist Advances", ibid., 21 June 1929, 2

57. "Censorship Runs Amuck", Canadian Unionist, 3 (October 1929), 50

58. Helmut Gruber, Soviet Russia Masters the Comintern: International Communism in the Era of Stalin's Ascendancy (Garden City, N.Y., 1974), 175-200

59. PAO, Communist Party Papers, Malcolm Bruce to Tim Buck, 25 September 1928, 1A 0039; Victor Friedman to Buck, 2 October 1928, 1A 0043; John O'Sullivan to Buck, 31 October 1928, 1A 0048

60. Tim Buck, "Background and Perspective of Our Sixth Convention", Canadian Labour Monthly, 2 (February-March 1929), 33-40. See also C. H. Burgess, "Conditions in Canada", New Statesman, 33 (27 July 1929), Financial Supplement, ix-x

61. PAO, Communist Party Papers, Internal letter from "the Secretariat", 15 February 1929, 10C 1846 ff.

62. "Extracts from the Theses of the Tenth ECCI Plenum on the Economic Struggle and the Tasks of Communist Parties", July 1929, in Jane Degras, ed., The Communist International 1919-1943: Documents, III (London, 1965), 52-64

63. PAO, Communist Party Papers, Philip Aronberg to Tim Buck, 29 March 1929, 1A 0177

64. E. J. Hobsbawm, "Confronting Defeat: The German Communist Party", in Revolutionaries (London, 1978), 50

65. Sam Carr, "Why So Many Failures in the Industrial Work", The Worker, 4 May 1929, 3. See also Penner, The Canadian Left, 132-34

66. PAO, Communist Party Papers, Tim Buck to Bill Dekker, 22 May 1929, 1A 088; Jack MacDonald, "Party Pre-Convention Discussion: Some Criticism and Some Critics", The Worker, 25 May 1929, 3

67. PAO, Communist Party Papers, "Report of the Sixth National Convention of the Communist Party of Canada", 31 May-7 June 1929, 8C 0257 ff. (quotations between pages 26-36)

68. See below, chapter seven

69. John Kolasky, The Shattered Illusion: The History of Ukrainian Pro-Communist Organizations in Canada (Toronto, 1979), 14-15

70. PAO, Communist Party Papers, Trade Union Educational League to "Dear Comrade", 22 October 1929, 1A 0206

71. PAO, Communist Party Papers, CPC National Trade Union Department, Minutes, 25 December 1929, 10C 1813-4

72. William Beeching and Phyllis Clarke, eds., Yours in the Struggle: Reminiscences of Tim Buck (Toronto, 1977), 148

CHAPTER THREE

REHEARSAL FOR REVOLUTION: THE NATIONAL STEEL CAR CORPORATION STRIKE, HAMILTON, 4 SEPTEMBER TO 18 OCTOBER 1929

The National Steel Car strike in Hamilton (4 September-18 October 1929) was of major importance to the new party leadership which emerged from the CPC's May-June convention and the subsequent July plenum of the Central Executive Committee. These two events had produced the ascendance of a leadership dominated by a left-wing faction led by Tim Buck and pledged to prosecute the Comintern line of class against class. But within the ranks of the party itself the new leadership and the "left turn" commanded only minority support. Indeed the Buck faction only attained its position through its support from the Comintern, allied to the Ukrainian Communists' decision to stand aside from the internecine struggle when party secretary Jack MacDonald refused to accept their suggestion that the party convention entirely exclude the left from the CEC.[1] Their virtual defection from party activity led to the plenum's election of a 6-3 left majority on the party Political Bureau (Polburo), which promptly moved to launch the class against class line against the resistance of a largely sceptical party rank and file. When the steel erecting department at the National Steel Car Corporation (NSCC) walked out, the new leadership seized the opportunity to vindicate the new line by presenting the strike as clear evidence of

inexorable mass radicalization. The strike became, in effect, a rehearsal for revolutionary unionism.[2]

Circumstances could hardly have been more opportune for the CPC's first independent intervention. Hamilton, only 35 miles from the party "centre", was the undoubted heartland of Canadian capitalism, the home of such corporate giants as Canadian Westinghouse, International Harvester and the Steel Company of Canada (Stelco). In these and other large corporations independent trade unionism was entirely absent. But if a wedge could be driven into the monolithic open-shop, it was not inconceivable that the tremors of industrial unionism might ripple through the city and beyond. The same trend towards capitalist rationalization that had induced the NSCC to complete in the six months before the strike a $2½ million investment programme, "to put the plant into shape to produce high production", was enveloping all mass production industry, bringing in its wake the altered practices of work and wage payment that, the CPC leadership argued, would inevitably precipitate sharpening class antagonism. If Communists proved their leadership qualities to the NSCC strikers, they could anticipate becoming - finally - the vanguard of an insurgent proletariat. Within hours of the walk-out Harvey Murphy, a young but industrially experienced supporter of the party leadership, was offering his services. He was immediately

elected chairman of the strike committee, and from then until the moment the strike was called off Communists were in complete control.[3]

Founded in 1912, the NSCC rapidly gained a reputation as one of Hamilton's least munificent employers. As IAM Lodge 414 observed in 1923, its "wages and working conditions ... are far below the standard in other industrial plants."[4] It operated a standard 10-hour day, and with no overtime payments 14-hour days were common. Lacking independent representation, the company's mainly semi-skilled and unskilled workforce (numbering around 1,200) accumulated a catalogue of grievances: inadequate safety measures (strikers claimed that there had been "at least" four industrial fatalities in 1929 alone), poor winter-time heating, monthly pay days, the employment of youths at "men's" jobs on "boys'" wages, and the irritating custom of buying jobs from plant foremen.[5] One or other of these issues had precipitated minor walk-outs in the past, but not until the 4 September strike was the company presented with a genuine challenge.[6] On this occasion the strikers, about 800 strong at the peak of the strike, realized that something essential was at stake. Following its investment programme the NSCC had attempted to impose a sharply reduced piece-rate schedule on the steel car line, making it identical to the schedule for wooden cars. Since only seven

of the former could be produced in the same time as twenty-five of the latter, workers on the steel car line were faced with either a drastic drop in earnings or an equally drastic leap in time at work. Relatively well-paid riveters, estimating that they would have to work a 60-hour week to earn $16, refused to submit to naked exploitation. With their boy helpers they led the walk-out.[7]

Another reason why the 1929 strike was not as ephemeral as its predecessors was the rapidity of the CPC's mobilization and assumption of control. Initially, this was largely thanks to Murphy's dynamism. At the time of the strike there were three party members employed at the NSCC, but they were largely unknown to the workforce.[8] Murphy's arrival transformed this situation. When the strike committee reconstituted itself as the executive of the National Steel Car Workers' Industrial Union (NSCWIU), CPC member Stan Marriner was elected Secretary. Murphy, like most of the strikers, was a young man in his early twenties, with a rough-and-ready organizing style that seems to have caught the strikers' imagination. He introduced himself to them by appearing at the plant gates, where a particularly detested foreman, Red Flannery, was entreating them to come back to work, and immediately moving a resolution to tell Flannery to "go to [illegible]ell".[9] Murphy also capitalized on his position as National Secretary of the Auto Workers'

Industrial Union. (Both the office and the union itself were by then largely mythical, but the strikers were probably unaware of this.) The AWIU experience clearly influenced the launching of the NSCWIU as "an independent union, built along industrial lines - a union that every worker in the shop can join."[10] From the beginning, Communist spokesmen called on the strikers to "Remember Oshawa!", a reference to the sell-out of industrial unionism at General Motors the previous year. The speed with which the strikers took up the idea of industrial unionism suggests that this was one area of party policy with real resonance.

The structure of the strike group - young, unskilled and immigrant - facilitated Communist control. According to a Young Communist League (YCL) report, around 25 per cent of the NSCC workforce were youths in their mid-teens. They were easily the most exploited section in the plant, earning an average of 19¢ an hour. Encouraged by the YCL, which was given special responsibility for youth recruitment to the union and the Communist movement, they responded enthusiastically to the party's mass picketing techniques, displaying a militancy that produced several court appearances on charges of intimidation and "willful damage to property".[12] An unknown - but large - proportion of the strikers were immigrants, their ethnic diversity suggested

by the names most prominent in court cases: Amunsden, Derenevski, Labinski, Mueller, Holubishen, Volkosta, Zerenuk. Despite his Scots-sounding name, union President Andrew Lockhart was pointedly identified as a Ukrainian by the local press.[13] Although the "alien" community, as several historians have shown, was not the monolithic "red" bloc so beloved by the period's scare-mongering press, East European workers usually provided a relatively congenial medium for Communist activity.[14] During the strike organizers drew freely on the capacities of left wing immigrants, particularly from the party's Hungarian section, while striving to combat the chauvinism of Anglo-Canadian workers "poisoned by the agents of the boss and the press" into believing that the strikers - "only foreigners" - were unworthy of solidarity.[15]

The type of semi-skilled and unskilled work done by the strikers also encouraged acceptance of party leadership. Even the riveters who considered themselves skilled and therefore deserving of better treatment from the company, were aware of their dispensability. Their job could be learned in a matter of months, and according to the Hamilton Spectator (admittedly staunchly anti-strike) most of the riveters had picked it up in the last year.[16] To a heterogeneous group which had a definite sense of self-worth and an awareness of their lack of economic leverage the idea of

industrial unionism must have seemed eminently reasonable (it is worth also pointing out that the local craft unions displayed no desire to offer an alternative). Their lack of negotiable skill, moreover, predisposed the strikers to activist methods. Unlike some craftsmen they could not afford simply to withdraw their labour and wait for the company to capitulate. They had to carry out militant picketing and actively seek material solidarity, to compensate for the absence of an established strike fund. Communist tactics were self-evidently appropriate.

According to the class against class line workers in struggle could rely only on the Communist movement. Strikers, for example, should expect to encounter a united front of capital and its "social fascist" allies. The latter, especially, were to be closely watched for treacherous behaviour ("Remember Oshawa!"). Communists hoped that the exposure of "social fascist" betrayal during class struggles would be politically educative, attaching the working class ever more firmly to the party. Their constant problem was that in their anxiety to unmask labour "fakers" they employed tactics that made working class unity impossible and seriously hampered the likelihood of strike victory. This was clearly apparent in the conduct of the NSCC strike.

The anticipated bourgeois united front quickly materialized. Hamilton's two dailies rarely deviated from an anti-communist and anti-strike line. They chipped away at the strikers' morale by emphasising the weakness of their case, reported that a canvass of strikers' families divulged widespread antagonism to the strike and support for the view that the strikers were "ill-advised to be led by a few agitators", and regularly predicted the strike's imminent collapse in the face of the strikers' inability to shut down production.[17] Both papers stressed the "foreign" character of the strikers and the "alien" nature of strike leadership. The Herald responded apoplectically to the news that Hamilton City Council were considering giving the strikers permission to hold a "tag day" collection, arguing that it was quite inconceivable that the city should do anything to assist "a party of agitators who are not even Canadian in their sympathies or their aims, but who act on orders from Moscow and whose design is to change the whole character of Canadian life, so that it shall respond to orders from Moscow, and accept dictation from the Soviet Republics."[18] In this way the actual issues underlying the strike became obscured and the strike itself became a test of Canadianism.

Similar views predominated in the City Council and Board of Control. A handful of Labour Aldermen, led by

veteran trade unionist Sam Lawrence protested these proposals. But the Council majority took its lead from Mayor William Burton who claimed to have evidence that the CPC planned to make Hamilton an industrial battleground "if their methods are successful in this instance." The prospect of strikes breaking out at every plant in the city, Burton argued, was sufficient cause for Hamilton to follow Toronto's example: "We should stamp out this communist menace as we would a diptheria epidemic. It is affecting the prosperity of the City of Hamilton."[19] Burton assured a strikers' delegation that he was in "full sympathy" with their plight, although he would have preferred that they eject the "communistic element" from their midst.[20] A dependable indicator of where his sympathies really lay was the role played by the City Police Department in controlling the picket lines. From the outset, the police enforced a maximum plant-gate picket of twenty strikers, surrounding them with at least twice as many of their own number.[21] The Worker's observation that "more than half the Hamilton Police Force including all the motorcycle traffic cops are on continuous strikebreaking duty" was substantially correct.[22]

These responses were entirely predictable. More significant, though, was the response of organized labour. Historically, the international trade unions in Hamilton had displayed little sympathy for the CPC and its causes. From

1920 when the HTLC rejected the Toronto TLC left wing platform, through 1925 when it became one of the first labour bodies to expel Communist delegates on the basis of their political activities, to 1928-29 when the Communists were in the midst of their brief flirtation with the ACCL, the Hamilton labour movement had been dominated by the right wing.[23] The CPC-ACCL alliance in particular hardened attitudes against the left. In January 1929 the ACCL's Textile Workers' Industrial Union (TWIU) offered sideline criticism to the conduct of a strike at Canadian Cottons by the United Textile Workers of America (UTWA), the HTLC having hurriedly called in this virtually moribund union to take control of what had been a spontaneous walk-out. Although the TWIU renounced any intention of challenging the international union's control, on the grounds that "to do so would mean the splitting of your [the strikers'] ranks", it pointed out that they should be aware of UTWA history, which had been one of craft conservatism, sell-outs and a "whole series of miserable failures", and should be prepared for a betrayal. "WATCH YOUR LEADERS!", it warned.[24] When the strike collapsed and the UTWA departed, the HTLC fastened on the "disciples of Sovietism" as the culprits, the Labor News observing that they had "outlived their welcome within the international trade union movement".[25] This historical background inevitably

conditioned the HTLC's response to the NSCC strike.

Thanks to a letter sent to the Dominion Department of Labour by its Hamilton correspondent C. I. Aitchison, it can be seen that the international labour movement was willing to collaborate with capital. Aitchison reported his attendance at a meeting called (he did not state by whom) for the explicit "purpose of curbing the activities of the strikers, or Reds as they are termed, as this labour trouble might spread to other factories." Also present were NSCC officials, representatives of Hamilton Bridge, International Harvester and Stelco, City Council and Police Commission representatives - and several labour spokesmen, notably Sam Lawrence and Humphrey Mitchell. Unfortunately, the letter contained little further detail of what was a quite lengthy meeting, except to note that the labour men insisted that labour's right "to assemble and have free speech" be guaranteed, and that they observed, for reasons not immediately apparent, that "dual organizations of labour were a menace to the International Labour Movement".[26]

Aitchison's account was too cryptic to support other than a speculative interpretation of the meeting, but the following inferences can be tentatively suggested. First, the meeting was a clear case of class collaboration from

which the international unions presumably hoped to benefit. It may have raised the labourites' hopes that by presenting themselves as the "sane" alternative to radical industrial unionism - just as the Trades and Labour Congress and American Federation of Labor were doing on a broader scale - they might win some degree of recognition and freedom to organize craft workers in the Hamilton plants. At the same time, the meeting may have demonstrated to them the profundity of capital's class consciousness, which in turn could have simultaneously sharpened their awareness of the difficulties facing the strikers and aroused their latent class instincts sufficiently to offer at least a modicum of resistance to the prospect of all-out action against the strike. Instructively, though, this resistance remained almost entirely on the terrain of democratic rights. Active solidarity with the strikers was conspicuously lacking. A handful of local unions did provide financial assistance in the strike's early stages, but this source rapidly dried up after the HTLC refused by "an overwhelming majority" even to receive a strike delegation. As the Labor News pointed out: "Hamilton's handful of Communists have some nerve. After calling local international trade unionists many fancy names, they had the effrontery to ask for money to aid the National Steel Car strikers [who] belong to the Communists' National union. The international trade union movement has no truck with dual organizations. So the

appeal for aid was rejected."[27]

There is an obvious irony in the News' editorial: even if the CPC had not behaved obnoxiously to Hamilton labourites, the HTLC might still have refused to aid the strike and the case for "social fascist" treachery would have been strengthened. But the party's approach was undeniably sectarian. At an early mass meeting Jack MacDonald (in his last moments of party leadership) went to great lengths to stress the "impotency and vile treachery of the American Federation misleadership", while a Trade Union Educational League leaflet stated that the international labour movement was "actually a weapon in the bosses' hands."[28] Given this approach, few strikers could have felt that the HTLC's antagonism was entirely unwarranted. Any political capital made by the party was almost certainly devalued by the suspicion that greater comradeliness might have forced a more positive response from the international unions. Without their help the possibility of victory grew more distant.

Closed off by design from outside influence, the CPC was free to implement its as yet untried techniques of "mass struggle". The latter involved mobilizing all available forces around three main areas of strike activity - relief, picketing and workers' defence. Efficient organization in

these areas would, it was argued, not only increase the likelihood of victory but also provide the collective experience out of which a deepened class consciousness would emerge. In other words, the strike was a lesson in class struggle which, even if defeated in the short term, prepared the class for future battles on an ever-ascending scale.[29] Since, however, confidence and morale were more likely to flow out of victory than defeat, it was vital that every effort be made to win the strike at hand. The Hamilton strike provided an early indication of how effective mass struggle tactics were likely to be.

From the amount of attention paid the CPC by the authorities and the bourgeois press at this time, the average onlooker might well have inferred that it was a potent, well organized body; an image that may have had a good deal to do with the NSCC strikers' ready acceptance and quick defence of Communist leadership.[30] In reality the party was in turmoil. Factionalism was eroding its ethnic membership, and many of the leaders emerging out of the internal struggle had still to prove themselves. Charles Sims, the new District Organizer for Southern Ontario, had rapidly risen from the ranks in Alberta but had not distinguished himself as party organizer in Windsor, where earlier in the year he had lost out in a clash with the Ukrainian section.[31] Similarly, the new

Secretary of the party Trade Union Department, Tom Ewan, while he had demonstrated his abilities as a local organizer in Saskatoon and Winnipeg, was untested as a national strategist.[32] At the very top of the party hierarchy there was a leadership vacuum, with the increasingly isolated MacDonald continuing as General Secretary only because Buck was recovering from illness.[33] Morale and finances were flagging, and in general there was little in the party's internal resources to suggest its capacity to support even one strike, far less a putative insurrection.

There was an almost improvisational quality in Harvey Murphy's early organization of the strike. Having travelled to Hamilton with unquenchable enthusiasm, the party's blessings and little else, his first task was to make sure that the strike survived through the first few days. He did so by virtually hand-picking the strike committee and transforming it into the executive of the NSCWIU, into which he then began recruiting strikers; within a week the union was claiming 700 members.[34] On the first weekend of the strike, Murphy was assisted by the arrival of party leaders Jack MacDonald and A. E. Smith, who held several meetings with the strikers. On Sunday 9 September a parade of strikers, 1,000 strong according to The Worker, marched to a mass meeting at the plant gates, where they were addressed by Murphy, Smith, MacDonald and a

number of less well known Communists. MacDonald struck the keynote of the meeting when he identified Communism and industrial unionism as the decisive issues in the strike. Urging the strikers not to be intimidated by the use of "red scare" tactics, he pointed out that these should in fact show precisely who were the workers' most dependable allies. He closed with a further exhortation, that the Hamilton union "must be the beginning of a nation-wide metal workers' industrial union".[35] This early display of Communist strength clearly stiffened the strikers' resolve. The Herald, which had predicted a substantial return-to-work movement, had to admit that the following Monday had seen no change in the situation, with the strikers "for the most part ... still sticking together".[36] Murphy had accomplished his first task.

This early success created its own problems. The second week of the strike saw more and more workers coming out. Precisely how many were out by the end of the second week is hard to establish. The CLDL claimed there were 1,600 - more than the total workforce.[37] A more dependable assessment was probably that of Aitchison, who on 19 September reported that the "number on strike is around seven hundred with more men coming out daily in support of the strikers."[38] Ten days later the union put the figure at 635.[39] In any event, the numbers on strike created

considerable logistical problems for Murphy; with a rudimentary union structure and a mainly inexperienced rank and file it was always going to be difficult to maintain interest and control. Murphy seems to have pinned his hopes on a quick victory, for he emphasized above all the crucial necessity of militant mass picketing, while doing little forward planning for a protracted struggle.

Mass picketing had a dual purpose. In the short term its immediate objective was to shut down the plant and force company capitulation; in the long term it was one of the best methods of building collective experience and certainly the likeliest to provoke the state into revealing its true class character. At Hamilton, it was quickly apparent that mass picketing was not going to close the plant. Police restrictions on the number of pickets who could patrol the plant gates meant that a genuine mass picket of hundreds of strikers and sympathisers was impossible. Hence the strikers had to make tactical adaptations, frequently of an unlawful nature. One ingenious action, designed to protest police repression, was a "sit-down" strike on the pavement outside police headquarters. According to the Spectator, this totally non-plussed the officers present.[40] There was also a good deal of intimidation of strikebreakers, a form of activity that the party did nothing to discourage; the CLDL announced

that it would represent every striker charged with offences arising out of the strike.[41] Tom Ewan's autobiography tells with relish another anecdote that underlines the party's readiness to meet fire with fire. Apparently, most strikebreakers were ferried into the plant on the Hamilton trolley-car system, the cars approaching the plant up a steep incline:

> Then someone got the bright idea that a goodly helping of grease on the up-grade tracks would slow the scab transport down a bit ... it did; the trolley and its load never made the top after that. It would stop mid-way on the up-grade, then slowly slide back to the bottom... Meantime, the scabs would be the unhappy recipients of the strikers' morning 'greetings'. After a few more tries, the City of Hamilton decided to terminate that area of its transit service[42]

Yet the fact remained that militant picketing failed to close the plant. Efforts to maintain an all-night picket were hampered when the police tore down a tent erected on a piece of waste ground near the plant.[43] Strikebreakers were effectively introduced, and although the strikers claimed that these men were inefficient workers one party organizer privately admitted that by the latter stages of the strike production was going ahead at twice the pre-strike rate.[44] With the company obviously prepared for a lengthy battle, the party had to give serious consideration to the neglected question of relief.

Initially the party had not overlooked the relief issue. When Jack MacDonald and A. E. Smith visited Hamilton on the first weekend of the strike, they were accompanied by a young, recently recruited woman comrade, Rose Minnie Shelley, who had been given the responsibility of co-ordinating the relief effort. Shelley, however, failed to receive any support from the local comrades, and a week later Sims had to write Murphy and the Hamilton Central Committee a stiff reminder that relief was "an important task of our Party ... Comrade Shelley must receive all support and cooperation from the entire Party and [CLD] League membership".[45] Not until the third week of the strike did the party begin to give material assistance to the strikers.

Sims instructed the Hamilton comrades to launch an immediate house-to-house collection, employing as many as possible of the strikers themselves. Meanwhile, a more detailed relief plan was drawn up, examination of which reveals party priorities quite instructively. The first concern was to transform the strike relief committee headed by Shelley into a branch of the Workers' International Relief (WIR), another of the Comintern's front organizations. Together with the party the WIR would then launch a national campaign to mobilize working class solidarity with the Hamilton strikers by arranging for strike representatives to visit working class meetings,

issuing a press service both to working class organizations and the daily press - which the union claimed was maintaining a vow of silence on the strike - and launching a national relief effort to collect money, clothing and food. Tacked on at the end of the plan were two concrete suggestions for activity in Hamilton: party language organizations were to organize raffles and the strikers were to organize a series of concerts.[46] Regardless of the necessity of a well articulated relief programme, the plan outlined here was a grandiose self-deception; it would be weeks rather than days before anything came of it. As Shelley's experience demonstrated, it was considerably easier to create a paper talisman - the WIR - than actually to build solidarity.

Shelley's job was not made easier by the fact that organized labour was antagonistic to the strike. She knew well that the lion's share of financial support would have to come from three sources: the party, reformist unions where the left retained some influence, and the general public. It was not a prospect that aroused optimism. Little could be expected from the general public outside Hamilton, and even there the ban on public "tag days" and the atmosphere of anti-communism and nativism must have hurt the strikers' cause. Money was gathered at house-to-house collections and at mass meetings, but the proceeds

were predictably low. Financially constrained workers could not afford to be generous. One meeting, at which the Worker claimed there were 2,000 in attendance, raised $40 - 2 cents a head.[47] Militants in the reformist unions found money gathering no easier. Even in industrial Cape Breton, where small pockets of militancy had survived the general decline in left wing fortunes since the mid-1920s, appeals for assistance met with sceptical opposition. Murdoch Clarke, a young party member in the traditionally militant Phalen local of the UMWA, did manage to have the local agree to a $50 donation, but only after he had assured the members that the strike was genuine and that Rose Shelley was a trustworthy person; in fact, he had never met her.[48] Inside the party itself the situation was little better. Of the $2,042.27 raised in the three weeks up to 16 October, more than half came from party sources.[49] Yet the response would undoubtedly have been much more fulsome had the party not been embroiled in factionalism. Donations from the Ukrainian and Finnish organizations were unusually low by their past standards. As late as 3 October the editor of the Finnish party weekly Vapaus informed Shelley that he was considering inserting a special strike donation column, his lack of urgency suggesting that not all party members were convinced that the Hamilton strike was pivotal.[50] Some members did respond positively to Shelley's appeals. Typically, Beckie Buhay took time out from her own under-

financed campaign for a Windsor seat in the Ontario provincial election to organize a house-to-house collection of money, groceries and clothes; she raised $22.35.[51] By the time the relief effort had gained momentum, the strike had already been defeated.

For two weeks the strikers displayed exemplary morale. After that point, however, company intransigence and sheer economic necessity began - slowly - to force them back to work. Murphy responded to these new circumstances in a manner that made a mockery of the democratic aspirations and political principles of "mass struggle" unionism. In a last gasp effort to maintain solidarity and win the strike Murphy, according to an internal party critique, actually "terrorized" workers into staying out and proposed that the relief committee give strike pay only to the riveters, the section with the greatest industrial leverage. Not surprisingly, these actions served only to destroy confidence in the party's leadership. Murphy had always been inclined to "come out to Hamilton and tell [the strikers] that this has got to be done, and no arguments."[52] But where this approach, in itself entirely contradictory to the claim that the union was "controlled and led by the men in the shops", might have worked when there were still favourable prospects of success, it was counterproductive when defeat was at hand. Broad discussion of the realities

facing the strike might have resulted in a tactical retreat, preserving as much of the union structure as possible. As late as 8 October, the company offered to take back all but 28 of the most prominent strike leaders.[53] This would undoubtedly have hurt the fledgling union, but not so much as the decision to reject the offer and carry on the struggle.

This decision was announced immediately after it became known that an appeal from the union for an investigation of the dispute by the federal Fair Wage Officer (who had jurisdiction because the company supplied the CNR) had been dismissed by federal Labour Minister Peter Heenan.[54] In itself, this appeal was a measure of the union's desperation, being entirely inconsistent with the party's view of arbitration by the state. It did show that the party - very possibly in response to rank and file pressure - was capable of flexibility if still incapable of judging the time to concede defeat. It unavailingly tried to derive some advantage from Heenan's decision, given after a meeting with a strike delegation in the Royal York Hotel, Toronto. The Worker's account of the meeting highlighted the contrast between the strikers in their working clothes and the "luxurious corridors" of the famous hotel, where company and state officials could rub shoulders in an atmosphere of familiarity.[55] But the

implication that a deal had been done was at least partly undermined by Heenan's adroit manipulation of an apparent compromise. He won from the company an offer to open its books provided that all Hamilton companies did likewise - a highly unlikely prospect - and when neither side expressed willingness to deviate from their basic positions he washed his hands of the strike, announcing rather belatedly that it was a provincial responsibility.[56] Ten days later, the strikers quietly capitulated.[57]

One final aspect of the party's strike strategy remains to be examined: workers' defence. The party believed that an organized defence effort would be vital, given that the clash between mass picketing and state repression would inevitably result in numerous prosecutions. Traditional methods of defence were considered ineffective, since workers up against the capitalist state had no chance of justice. Only mass pressure, with comrades of the accused expressing solidarity both outside the court and from the public benches, would force recognition of workers' rights, and even then only to a limited degree. As A. E. Smith later noted "We were not looking for justice in the courts of capitalism ... Our task was to expose the lack of it."[58] At all times, the issues underlying each court appearance had to be exposed, the "accused worker carrying the class struggle from the factory and from the street into the courts."[59]

Picket line violence had the predicted consequences. There were at least 37 arrests, the vast majority of which produced no prosecution but nevertheless kept strikers away from the picket lines. Of the nine cases that made it to the magistrate's court, four were thrown out for lack of evidence. The cases against the accused must have been flimsy in the extreme, since the evidence used to convict the remaining five strikers was inconclusive to say the least. One striker was asked to choose between a $100 fine or two months in jail after a ruling that, since his accuser had been cut during a fight between them, "the accused must have had a knife." No weapon was ever found, and several witnesses swore that none had been used. The judge added for good measure that he had taken a particularly serious view of the assault because of the circumstances in which it had occurred: if it had arisen in a private quarrel, the sentence would have been less severe.[60]

The party's agency of "class struggle in the courts", the CLDL, was in poor shape to mobilize a campaign around the prosecutions. It had never really established itself as a mass organization since its creation in 1925, and in 1929 it shared in the party's general confusion. National Secretary A. E. Smith made a number of appearances during the strike, and it seems likely that the organization

performed useful work in raising bail and winning the release from detention of strikers held on flimsy charges. To politicise legal struggles was another matter. On only one occasion, the trial of Stan Marriner, did the local press consider the presence of sympathizers in the court worthy of comment.[61] Defence lawyer, Jack Counsell, Q.C., "a sympathizer and established financial supporter of the Communist Party of Canada", tried to expose the central issues of the strike, but to little effect.[62] He had one plaintiff admit that he, himself, had been on strike and had only returned to work because of economic hardship. When questioned further he admitted that there had been a wage cut and that it had been "something like" 50 per cent, Counsell's line of questioning had to be curtailed. The magistrate's comment that "all I am interested in is the charge before me" proved an effective warning.[63] All in all, the employment of mass struggle in the courts was not conspicuously successful.

On 18 October the strike collapsed, leaving the party grasping for anything it could salvage to make its efforts appear worthwhile. Initially it claimed that the strike had been a victory for the strikers, the company having allegedly withdrawn the original wage cut and raised rates in the main departments of the plant.[64] At the same time, though, the party had to admit that the 300 strikers who

had remained solid to the end had no chance of regaining employment at the NSCC and would in all probability be blacklisted. The contradiction between claim and reality, as Aitchison reported to the Department of Labour, was making the CPC "the laughing stock of the International Labor organizations in Hamilton."[65] The CPC quickly backtracked on its original claims and acknowledged that "only one concrete gain [had been made] ... and that is the union", which had to be defended and extended to every plant in Canada engaged in the production of steel cars.[66] In fact, the union had been effectively smashed. The NSCC had raised wages, but only as a means of buying off future disturbance. At the same time, free of the threat posed by the 300 staunchest unionists, it accompanied wage increases with drastic speed-up and fierce work discipline. One worker who remained a union supporter reported in February 1930: "We can't speak to any of the other gangs in the plant or else we would be fired from our jobs."[67]

At least as important as the short-term balance sheet are the political conclusions the party drew from the strike. In the eyes of the party, the Hamilton experience had shown that the Comintern's "analysis of this 'third period' ... [was] quite correct." The strike was a "striking vindication of the militant policy of the Communist Party and the left wing and it has clearly

exposed the traitorous leadership" of "official" trade unionism. To the YCL its main significance was as "the precursor of similar and greater mass struggles of working class youth."[68] The party took solace in the fact that the Hamilton strike had really been its first experience of independent leadership; better results could be expected once the organizational apparatus of mass struggle was in full working order. The major shortcoming had been the absence of "some organized channels through which help may be sent in immediately" to support embattled workers.[69] The answer was to build rapidly a Canadian section of the WIR, which as Rose Shelley later explained would "activize all workers in such strikes and ... send relief immediately ... strengthen the bonds of solidarity between the Canadian workers of the world [sic] ... instill class consciousness into larger and ever larger sections of the working class ... [and] unite the workers who receive relief with those who give this relief in the strong bonds of Working Class Solidarity."[70] In February 1930 the party duly formed the new organization.[71]

This mode of analysis would become increasingly familiar as the "third period" progressed. In essence it said: the Comintern line is irreproachable and only has to be "correctly" applied. At Hamilton, Communists applied the line meticulously - with the single exception that they

shied away from encouraging rank and file control.[72] But was defeat simply the result of organizational inadequacies? The answer has to be in the negative. The crucial feature of the "class against class" line was the insistence on Communist leadership and total exclusion of so-called "social fascists" during class struggles. In political terms, this would only have made sense had there been any validity to the Communists' analysis of the conjuncture; that is, if there really existed a revolutionary situation in which the party's "vanguardist" aspirations had a chance of fulfilment. Determining the presence of a "revolutionary situation" is rather precarious, but on any objective analysis of the political and economic context of 1929 it is impossible to sustain the thesis that such a situation was at hand. On the economic level there were indications that Canadian capitalism was not completely healthy, but little sign that the patient was a terminal case.[73] More importantly, despite the handful of examples of industrial conflict used by the CPC to generalize a situation of imminent working class upsurge, Canadian workers remained very much on the defensive, whether they were well-organized proletarians with militant traditions, the Cape Breton miners for example, or unorganized mass production workers encircled by new technology and welfare capitalism. As strike figures for the period 1925-1929 show, the economic upturn brought no

clear pattern of rising working class militancy. Moreover,

TABLE 3(i) STRIKES AND LOCKOUTS IN CANADA, 1925-1929

YEAR	NO. STRIKES	NO. STRIKERS	NO. STRIKE DAYS	NO. S.D.s COAL MINING
1925	86	28,919	1,193,281	1,040,276
1926	75	23,689	266,601	35,193
1927	72	22,264	152,570	53,833
1928	96	17,491	224,212	88,000
1929	88	12,672	152,080	6,805

Source: Labour Gazette

although trade union membership began a slow revival, in that period, organized labour remained deeply divided in its national and international sections, soon to be joined by the Communists' new left-wing centre. In such conditions striking workers, especially those who were simultaneously building the foundations of union organization, desperately needed every kind of external support. When Communists employed tactics that virtually guaranteed the absence of that support, they sacrificed the immediate interests of the strikers for the sake of dubious political victories.

Any possibility that the CPC might have reconsidered its tactical approach to organizing the unorganized in the light of the Hamilton strike was comprehensively shattered by the epochal events that followed. On 21 October, only three days after the strike was called off, the Wall Street

stock market was hit by the first tremors of what a week later had become "The Crash". Instantly, the reverberations reached out to North America's financial centres, sending stock values tumbling.[74] As the collapse progressed, Tim Buck has claimed, it worked an amazing transformation on Communist morale.[75] At precisely this moment, the CPC Political Committee was considering a letter from the Red International of Labour Unions apparently insisting that there be no further delay in launching a centre of revolutionary unions. At its meeting of 13 December, the Pol-Com finally decided to create the Workers' Unity League, communicating its decision to the party Trade Union Department which duly endorsed it on Christmas Day 1929.[76]

Footnotes

1. For a detailed analysis of the "turn", see the extremely useful work of Ian Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada (Montreal, 1981), especially chapters 12-14.

2. In his autobiography Tom McEwen erroneously refers to the strike as having been led by the WUL in 1928. We can forgive his mistakes (the strike having occurred in 1929 and the WUL having been launched the following year) on the grounds that spiritually the NSCC strike was the first intervention of what would be the WUL moment. Less forgivable, though, is McEwen's strong hint that the strike was won, a claim that was also made by labour historian Charles Lipton, and which survives to the present day in the CPC's official history. See Tom McEwen, The Forge Glows Red (Toronto, 1974), 143-5; Charles Lipton, The Trade Union Movement of Canada 1827-1959 (Toronto, 1973), 250; Communist Party of Canada, Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada 1921-1976 (Toronto, 1982), 83-4

3. Provincial Archives of Ontario (PAO), Communist Party Papers (henceforth PAO-CPP), 10C 2295, "Report on Hamilton Steel Car Strike", submitted to Polburo, Young Communist League of Canada, 14 November 1929 (henceforth YCL "Report")

4. Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, Report of Proceedings of the 39th Annual Convention, Vancouver, 1923, 86-7; Canadian Foundryman, 4 (July 1913), 101 (I wish to thank Craig Heron for this reference.)

5. PAO-CPP, 10C 2275, "Statement of Strike Committee of the Workers Employed in the National Steel Car Co.", 9 September 1929

6. PAO-CPP, 10C 2295, YCL "Report"

7. Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Department of Labour Records: Strikes and Lockouts Files (henceforth PAC-SLF), Vol. 343, file 87, C. I. Aitchison to C. W. Bolton, 19 September 1929

8. PAC-SLF, Vol. 343, file 87, The Worker, 13 July 1929, clipping; PAO-CPP, 10C 2295, YCL "Report"

9. Harvey Murphy interview, Multi-cultural History Society of Ontario, Toronto; Allen Seager, "To A Departed Friend of the Working-Man", Committee on Canadian Labour History, Bulletin, 4 (Autumn 1977), 9-14

10. PAO-CPP, 10C 2310, National Steel Car Workers' Industrial Union, undated flier (c. 11 September 1929)

11. Young Worker, October 1929, 1; PAO-CPP, 10C 2302, Trade Union Educational League, Metal Trades Department, undated flier. The Oshawa strike is discussed in chapter 8.

12. Young Worker, November 1929, 1, 5

13. PAC-SLF, Vol. 343, file 87, Hamilton Herald, 22 October 1929, clipping

14. See Donald Avery, 'Dangerous Foreigners': European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932 (Toronto, 1979), passim; John Kolasky, The Shattered Illusion: The History of Ukrainian Pro-Communist Organizations in Canada (Toronto, 1979), 64; Satu Repo, "Rosvall and Voutalainen: Two Union Men Who Never Died", Labour/Le Travailleur, 8/9, (Autumn-Spring 1981-1982), 81

15. PAO-CPP, 10C 2304, Strike Committee NSCWIU, flier, week ending 7 October 1929; ibid., 10C 2309, Canadian Labour Defence League, Special Bulletin, undated

16. Hamilton Spectator, 6 September 1929, 7

17. "Government to Act", editorial, Hamilton Spectator, 17 December 1928, PAO, microfilm clipping file; HS, 7 September 1929, 7

18. PAC-SLF, Vol. 343, file 87, "A Crazy Proposal", HH, 28 September 1929, clipping

19. HS, 27 September 1929, 7

20. HS, 7 October 1929, 7

21. HS, 10 September 1929, 7

22. The Worker, 5 October 1929, 1

23. Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada 1925 (Ottawa, 1926), 162-64

24. PAC-SLF, Vol. 342, file 29 (4), "To The Textile Workers of Hamilton!", undated flier. See also Dorothy Kidd, "Women's Organization: Learning from Yesterday", in Acton et al., Women at Work: Ontario 1850-1930 (Toronto, 1975), 345-58

25. Labor News, 29 January 1929, 2; Labour Herald, 28 February 1929, 2

26. PAC-SLF, Vol. 343, file 87, Aitchison to Bolton, 19 September 1929

27. Labor News, 26 October 1929, 2; HS, 5 October 1929, 28;

PAO-CPP, 10C 2316, "AF of L Unions Turn Deaf Ear to Strikers' Plea for Aid", undated flier

28. Young Worker, October 1929, 1; PAO-CPP, 10C 2302, Metal Trades Department, Trade Union Educational League, undated flier

29. Ewan later emphasized how the NSCC strike provided strikers with "a lot of invaluable experience which was to stand them in good stead in later years in the building of the United Steelworkers Union"; indeed, as a collective history of Hamilton labour has noted, "the National Steel Car workers once again led the way" when industrial unionism finally arrived "in the early years of World War II". McEwen, The Forge Glows Red, 144; Craig Heron et al., All That Our Hands Have Done: A Pictorial History of the Hamilton Workers (Hamilton, 1980), 130, 151-2

30. PAO-CPP, 10C 2310, National Steel Car Workers' Industrial Union, undated flier [c. 11 September 1929]

31. Multi-cultural History Society of Ontario, interview with Stewart Smith; also below chapter 8

32. The regard in which Ewan's organizing abilities were held in Winnipeg is reflected in PAO-CPP, 1A 0133, Bertha [Dolgoy?] to Tim Buck, 20 August 1929. Oddly, although Ewan provides a lively account of the NSCC strike in his autobiography, the contemporary sources fail to mention him.

33. Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks, 255, 293

34. PAO-CPP, 8C 0607ff, Tom Ewan, "Report to the Communist Party of Canada Plenum", February 1930 (sic), 4-8; ibid., NSCWIU, undated flier [c. 11 September 1929], 10C 2310. Although Ewan's "Report" is dated 1930, the plenum actually took place in February 1931; the report is a highly revealing account of the way the party operated during the Hamilton strike.

35. PAO-CPP, 10C 2314, Toronto Star, undated clipping; The Worker, 21 September 1929, 2

36. PAC-SLF, Vol. 343, file 87, Hamilton Herald, 7, 11 September 1929, clippings

37. PAO-CPP, 10C 2309, CLDL, Special Bulletin, undated [c. 13 September 1929]

38. PAC-SLF, Vol. 343, file 87, Aitchison to Bolton, 19 September 1929

39. Ibid., Department of Labour, Canada, Industrial Disputes Form, Workers, 29 September 1929

40. HS, 10 October 1929, 7

41. PAO-CPP, 10C 2309, CLDL, Special Bulletin, undated

42. McEwen, The Forge Glows Red, 144

43. "Hamilton Bulletin", The Worker, 19 October 1929, 1

44. The Worker, 12 October 1929, 1; PAO-CPP, 10C 2287, R. M. Shelley to Beckie Buhay, 14 October 1929

45. Ibid., 10C 2277-78, Charles Sims to Harvey Murphy, Hamilton CCC, and CLDL Party Fraction, 16 September 1929

46. Ibid., 10C 2296, "Plan for Relief Work for the Strikers at the National Steel Car Corporation", undated. The WIR was formed in 1922 as a rationalization of the various "Famine Relief for Soviet Russia Committees". With offices in Moscow and Berlin, it was under the direction of the German Communist Willi Muenzenberg, and was closely allied with the International Red Aid, parent organization of the CLDL. In addition to its primary responsibility of supporting workers in struggle (its slogan was "Not Charity - But Solidarity") it made and distributed workers' films and newsreels.

47. "Hamilton Bulletin", The Worker, 19 October 1929, 1

48. PAO-CPP, 10C 2279, Murdoch Clarke to Jack MacDonald, 30 September 1929; ibid., 10C 2283-85, Clarke to Shelley, 11 October 1929

49. PAO-CPP, 10C 2318, Strikers' Relief Committee, "Financial Statement as at 16 October 1929". The various party contributions were as follows: CPC $582.42, CLDL $211.60, YCL $111.52, ULFTA $96.25, Finnish Cooperative $37.00

50. PAO-CPP, 10C 2281, Editor, Vapaus, to Shelley, 2 October 1929

51. PAO-CPP, 10C 2286-94, various letters between Beckie Buhay and Rose Shelley

52. PAO-CPP, 8C 0607ff., Ewan, "Report"

53. "Hamilton Bulletin", The Worker, 19 October 1929, 1

54. PAC-SLF, Vol. 343, file 87, Andy Lockhart to Gerald H. Brown, 2, 7 October 1929; ibid., William Burton to Peter Heenan, 2 October 1929, HS, HH, 2 October 1929, clippings

55. The Worker, 19 October 1929, 1

56. PAC-SLF, Vol. 343, file 87, Toronto Mail and Empire,

8 October 1929, clipping

57. Ibid., H. N. Baird, Vice President NSCC, to Heenan, 19 October 1929

58. A. E. Smith, All My Life: An Autobiography (Toronto, 1977 [1949]), 124

59. Ibid., 116

60. Canadian Labour Defender, May 1930, 8; PAC-SLF, Vol. 343, file 87, Chief Constable D. Coulter to Aitchison, 25 November 1929 (also HS, September, October 1929); PAC-SLF, Vol. 343, file 87, Beckie Buhay quoted in London Free Press, 14 October 1929, clipping; HS, 16 September 1929, 7; PAC-SLF, Vol. 343, file 87, HH, 22 October 1929, clipping; HS, 4 October 1929, 7

61. PAC-SLF, Vol. 343, file 87, HH, 22 October 1929, clipping

62. PAC, R. B. Bennett Papers, 92824, Hugh Guthrie to R. B. Bennett, 2 March 1931. Counsell appears to have been a CPC member in Hamilton since its very early days. See George Hardy, Those Stormy Years (London, 1956), 148

63. HS, 20 September 1929, 38

64. The Worker, 2 November 1929, 1

65. PAO-CPP, 10C 2322, Shelley to W. O. Dekker, 24 October 1929; PAC-SLF, Vol. 343, file 87, Aitchison to Bolton, 9 December 1929

66. Young Worker, November 1929, 5; PAO-CPP, 10C 2031, Executive Committee, National Car Workers' Industrial Union, "BUILD THE INDUSTRIAL UNION OF STEEL CAR WORKERS! - On the Lessons of the Hamilton Strike", [illegible]lier, 4 November 1929

67. [illegible]oung Worker, February 1930, 2

68. The Worker, 2 November 1929, 1; PAO-CPP, 10C 2295, YCL "Report"

69. PAO-CPP, 10C 2308, Shelley to "Dear Comrades", undated

70. PAC-SLF, Vol. 343, file 87, R. M. Shelley, "On the Need for a Canadian W.I.R.", The Worker, 16 November 1929, clipping

71. Beckie Buhay, "Building the Workers' International Relief in Canada", Canadian Labour Defender, I (May 1930), 7. The WIR was never established on an ongoing national basis; it had to be "built" and "rebuilt"

with virtually every party-led strike in the early 1930s.

72. According to Ewan in his report to the Party plenum in 1931, strike organizers feared that allowing a broad degree of rank and file autonomy on tactics would lead to deviations from the over-all "class against class" strategy, or as he put it "a right error"; in his view they then committed their own "left error" by placing total control of major decisions in party hands. See PAO-CPP, 8C 0607ff., Ewan, "Report"

73. The spring of 1929 had brought fears of a major crop failure on the prairies (as it happened, quite justified), while another of the country's most decisive industries, pulp and paper, was already in a slump brought on by over production; automobile production also entered a sharp decline in the spring. See C. H. Burgess, "Conditions in Canada", New Statesman, 33 (27 July 1929), financial supplement ix-x; chapter 8, below

74. NSCC stock was among the victims. At the beginning of the strike it stood at 91½ on the Montreal exchange; by 15 November it had slumped to 37; Monetary Times, 83 (13 September 1929), 14; 83 (15 November 1929), 14

75. Phyllis Clarke and William Beeching, eds., Yours in the Struggle: Reminiscences of Tim Buck (Toronto, 1977), 148

76. PAO-CPP, 8C 0210, Communist Party of Canada, Political Committee, Minutes, 13 December 1929 (the letter was received on 19 October); ibid., 10C 1813-4, CPC, National Trade Union Department, Minutes, 25 December 1929

PART I

POSTSCRIPT

In his study of the relationship between the CPUSA and the American labour movement historian Bert Cochran titled his chapter on the 1920s "A Decade of Failure".[1] The overwhelming burden of evidence presented here suggests that a similar assessment could be made of the CPC's efforts. Yet it would be a mistake and an injustice to deny that, whatever their political shortcomings, Canadian communists were serious revolutionaries who resolutely accepted numerous unpopular and largely thankless tasks, pursuing working class interests in areas left untouched by a passive labour establishment. These efforts, and why communists were willing to make them, deserve consideration; not least because in understanding them, we can gain a firmer understanding of why communists were willing to take on even more strenuous tasks in the incomparably more difficult conditions of the early 1930s.

Perhaps more than any other distinguishing characteristic, what marked communists off from their political rivals was their intransigent approach to political issues and relationships. In a hostile capitalist environment they gave unreserved support to the Soviet Union and simultaneously waged unremitting struggle against bosses, labour bureaucrats and every form of bourgeois ideology,

especially as manifested in the working class. This quality was particularly marked in members who had moved to the party from the OBU, and who often chafed under the tactical constraints of the united front, usually enforced by Buck and MacDonald.[2] Three examples will make the point: (i) March 1922. Johanna Knight attacked Tom Moore at a meeting in the Toronto Labour Temple so viciously that even Jack MacDonald was appalled; (ii) September 1923. At the TLC Convention in Vancouver Jack Kavanagh, standing firmly on the terrain of international working class solidarity and class consciousness, attacked the majority's support of "Asiatic Exclusion" and, despite threats of expulsion, insisted that the TLC should concern itself solely with the task of organizing British Columbia's Japanese and Chinese workers, many of whom, he added for good measure, "had a better understanding of working class solidarity than many of the labour fakirs who continually attend this Congress."; (iii) November 1923. Malcolm Bruce precipitated the rejection of his application for membership in the UBCJ and the repudiation of the CPC by the Toronto District Labour Council by writing an editorial for <u>The Worker</u> criticising Armistice Day.[3]

A refusal to compromise political principles was not restricted to former-OBUers. No one was more intransigent than Cape Breton miners' leader J. B.

McLachlan, whose readiness to accept the bosses' gauntlet was only matched by his detestation of those who quailed at the sight of it.[4] McLachlan's co-worker in the United Mine Workers of America District 26, Joe Nearing, shared his repugnance for class collaboration, going so far as to describe as less than a man one miner who, signing himself "A Former Red", wrote to the Glace Bay Gazette to repudiate his past and appeal for class harmony.[5] In the party's early years, in fact, there was a general "catering to leftist sentiment" that often spilled over into overt sectarian personalization and, by the admission of one party organizer, retarded the formulation of policies expressing immediate working class interests.[6] At the same time, however, the depth of feeling that gave rise to intransigence and sectarianism also drove communists into acts of remarkable self-sacrifice.

What, then, did it mean to be a CPC member? For rank and filers the implications of party membership depended on local circumstances. All were expected to participate in trade union activity, read at least some socialist literature, certainly read and if possible sell The Worker, display militant class consciousness in industrial struggles and in expressing solidarity with workers in struggle elsewhere, and develop skills as public propagandists. If, however, like machinist George Powell,

you were the only party member in your area (in his case Belleville, Ontario), you had less opportunity to carry out these tasks than, say, rank and filers in Toronto, Winnipeg or Vancouver.[7] If we consider only the issue of trade union activity, we can see that the party's overall strategic failings did not prevent some party members from actively building their unions: Jan Lakeman in the Railway Carmen; communists generally in the Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg garment unions; Tom McEwen in building branches of the Blacksmiths' and Hod Carriers' Unions in Saskatoon; and Hugh Pynn in reviving the Hod Carriers' local in Halifax and doing "some work on the matter of organizing the machinists and chauffeurs."[8]

CPC membership usually involved an element of risk and self-sacrifice. Victimization was a persistent hazard. It made no difference, for example, that R. A. MacDonald was a respected trade unionist who could list in his <u>curriculum vitae</u> the presidency of the Nova Scotia Labour Party, the Halifax Cooperative Society and his branch of the IAM, not to mention the secretaryship of the Halifax Trades and Labour Council; in 1924 the blacklist drove him back to his native Cape Breton.[9] Lewis MacDonald ("Kid Burns") was blacklisted for his part in the Alberta miners' sympathy (with the Cape Breton coalminers and steelworkers) strike in 1923 - and in 1926 received a three year jail sentence

for his activities during the previous year's Drumheller coal strike.[10] No doubt the 1920s saw many hundreds of labour activists victimized who were not communists. But party membership was clearly an added liability: in 1925 the Saskatoon City Council banned communists from city jobs.[11]

Among the other costs of party membership were financial self-exploitation and the disruption of family life. The constant financial demands of party life must have weighed heavily on men and women who, as the Maritime Labor Herald succinctly put it, had "not too much cash".[12] A sense of the demands involved can be gleaned from a report of a Worker subscription drive in Winnipeg in November 1926: "The campaign ... was held under great difficulties, because the comrades were busy collecting money for the election, for the Ukrainian Labour News, for the Furriers' Union strike and British miners at the same time." Nevertheless, $151 was raised for the ever-impoverished party paper.[13] Financial strain and domestic strain went hand in-hand. In Winnipeg Jacob Penner spent so much of his personal money on party work and on assisting municipal constituents that his wife was "struggling ... she just could not make ends meet." When she pleaded with Tim Buck to help her situation, he "gave her one of those paternalistic lectures on sacrifice."[14] So great were the

time demands on party members - particularly on the leadership - that there was a conscious downplaying of domesticity. Annie Buller was almost apologetic about her unusually warm family life. She wrote to Joe Wallace: "comrades that are hard-boiled credit me with being too much attached to them [her husband and son], but you are what you are and the things that please you, you hold on to."[15] In his autobiography Tom McEwen admitted to the "belated realization" that his decision to become a party full-timer was taken with inadequate regard for the "neglect, sacrifice, and often extreme hardship and opprobrium" that would be his young children's lot.[16] One of the few concessions the party made to the contradictory demands of family life was to have the same dues for married couples as for individuals; when bolshevization forced couples into separate branches, each paid half-dues.[17] Belatedly, at least in Toronto, the party accepted responsibility for coping with domestic problems, and appointed a "troubleshooter" to deal with them. A married man himself, he took his job so seriously that his own domestic situation suffered.[18]

For the party leadership these pressures were magnified. When rank and file members became full-timers they invariably suffered a substantial reduction in living standards. Before Tom Ewan became District 7 (Manitoba/Saskatchewan) organizer

in 1927 he had been a highly skilled blacksmith, a multiple-prize winner at the Saskatoon Fair and "one of the highest paid mechanics in Western Canada."[19] Tim Buck's pride in his work as a skilled machinist comes through strongly in his autobiography.[20] And Jack MacDonald, a pattern-maker, worked in one of the most skilled of all the metal trades; his prominence as a union delegate on the TDLC and as Vice President of the Toronto Metal Trades Council may have had something to do with his reputation as a craftsman.[21] All had to exchange craftsmen's wages for party salaries that were never high and often hypothetical.

Even more than the rank and file, leaders had to live up to the requirements of membership in a "Party of Action". Having pilloried the marxist intellectuals of the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) for their alleged reluctance to leave the ivory tower of discussion and study, they were obliged to immerse themselves in the class struggle wherever it could be found.[22] Hugh Bartholomew, for example, was uprooted from his job as the party's first Western Canadian organizer, to go to Nova Scotia in the winter of 1922-23. His tasks were to strengthen the party among the miners and assist local communists in the organization of the Sydney steel plant, at the time Canada's largest. After identification by the local authorities as a particular threat to Besco's interests, however, he was

withdrawn and replaced by Tom Bell and Malcolm Bruce.[23] The summer of 1923 found him on a three-week organizing tour of the Crow's Nest Pass, during which he addressed meetings in no fewer than eleven centres: Drumheller, Lethbridge, Coalhurst, Michel, Fernie, Belleview, Hillcrest, Blairmore, Coleman, Calgary and Nordegg.[24] Another tireless organizer was Beckie Buhay, whose redoubtable presence at picket lines and workers' meetings resulted in the recruitment of numerous militants.[25] On one visit to Winnipeg in November 1926 she spoke at ten meetings in sixteen days. The range of her topics, including such titles as "The New Russia", "Who Owns Your Mind?", "Women and Communism", and "Canada and British and American Imperialism", suggests the intellectual cum propagandist qualities expected of party leaders.[26]

As Tim Buck has observed, the mode of travel on such organizing trips was usually in keeping with the state of the party exchequer. Returning from Drumheller to Toronto, he "rode all the way ... on one load of coal on a hopper, an open box car. You can imagine what my clothing was like ... If you didn't try to ride on a passenger train in the blind baggage, or in the baggage car of the freight train ... so long as you didn't get inside anywhere", the police gave you no trouble.[27] Conversely, the most favoured party leaders could look forward to a trip to the

Soviet Union and residence in the relative comfort of the Luxe Hotel.[28] Such material benefits, however, can hardly have compensated for the physical and emotional deprivations.

One of the few compensations for all party members was "the immense strength which ... [they] drew from the consciousness of being soldiers in a single international army, operating ... a single grand strategy of world revolution."[29] Canadian communists temporarily depressed by the failure of the Canadian masses to rise could always look to the "Mecca" of the revolution, to have their hopes rekindled. Lenin and the bolsheviks, Moscow and internationalism, were at the heart of much of their culture. In the first issue of The Worker the 51 year old Lenin was already "the Grand Old Man of the Revolution", the patriarch in whose spirit all comrades had to work.[30] The anniversary of his death (24 January 1924) immediately joined May Day and the anniversary of the October Revolution as the main holidays in the party calendar. All three occasions provided opportunities to affirm the bonds and obligations of proletarian internationalism, a concept which, as the bolshevization debate suggested, usually failed to inform ethnic relationships within the party. Nevertheless, the 800 Windsor area workers who attended the Ninth Anniversary celebrations of the revolution did

symbolize the simultaneous honouring and transcendence of cultural diversity that was one of the most compelling attractions of international communism. They heard speeches, poetry, music and song in Ukrainian, Finnish, Yiddish and English, before these and other languages united in the singing of "The Internationale". The entire audience then decamped to finish the evening in comradely fashion with a banquet in the Jewish Freiheit Club.[31]

If the party failed to give sufficient emphasis to this ethical dimension of party life - and belittled those who gave it importance - it was trying in other areas to build working class organization and consciousness with virtually no help from the official trade union movement. For example, in the early 1920s the party tried to organize the unemployed at the local level and on a national basis. This attempt was both reformist, in that it sought immediate municipal relief provision and the passing of a federal unemployment insurance bill, and revolutionary, in that it sought to educate the unemployed "in regard to the social and economic causes of unemployment and the policies which must be advocated to secure even an approximate remedy" and to "prove a disruptive force in the vitals of capitalism". In 1925 the Unemployment Association of Canada, according to its Secretary A. E. Smith, had 4,000 members. But the combination of a sharp economic upturn

and police infiltration during that year led to the organization's rapid decline.[32]

The CPC also made faltering efforts to integrate women into the working class movement. Within the party itself women's work was not a priority. In her report to the Fourth National Convention of the party in 1925 Florence Custance claimed it was the "least understood" of all party activities.[33] Custance later observed that the party's weakness in this area was due to limited resources, but it was also the case that neither of the party's other two leading women comrades, Annie Buller and Beckie Buhay, shared her enthusiasm for "special" work with women, despite having been feminists in their pre-communist days.[34] Through the 1920s the CPC failed to carry out the Comintern's 1922 directive to organize a special apparatus for women's work, which therefore depended on local initiatives. One place where there was some promising activity was Montreal, where in 1925 around 8 party members were enrolled in a study group reading August Bebel's Women and Socialism. Members of the group were encouraged to write essays and speak, and "four new comrades" had been blooded on public platforms. The party had little strength among women industrial workers, although members were selling The Worker and the Kamf in their workplaces whenever possible. It had substantially more influence among "bourgeois"

women's organizations, such as the Consumers' League and Mothers' League, but its work here was restricted by a lack of appropriate literature.[35]

The question of work in "bourgeois" women's organizations reflected the lack of an articulated strategy on women. Beckie Buhay, for one, was absolutely opposed to any such deformation of the united front. In her view "nothing" could be gained from it. "Let us", she urged, "only work in pure proletarian circumstances." Then rather confusingly added: "Of course the more reactionary [the circumstances] the more necessary our work, but in my opinion we can only reach the masses by keeping the work on strict mass lines and by giving a more Communist orientation to it."[36] Over time a working compromise was reached: most women's work was carried out through the Women's Labour Leagues, which were neither "pure proletarian" nor "bourgeois".

Women's Labour Leagues took their name from the women's section of the British Independent Labour Party. They developed in Canada during and immediately after World War I, acting sometimes as agencies for working class participation in the women's suffrage movement, sometimes as Labour party auxiliaries, and increasingly as advocates of women's specific interests both in the home and the workplace[37]. Under the influence of Florence Custance,

Secretary of the Toronto WLL, the 12 Leagues dotted throughout the country agreed to form a Canadian Federation in 1924. From that point on the WLL came under increasing communist influence. Already, however, it had been identified as "a political body and a wing of the Workers' Party" and refused the Trades and Labour Congress's endorsement on the grounds that "existing trade unions made ample provision for membership of women workers and therefore there was no necessity for women to organize separately"; that - rather contradictorily - the TLC already enjoyed a fraternal relationship with the American-based National Women's Trade Union League (NWTUL); and that, as the Congress's Committee on Constitution and Law put it, "if women workers were taking full advantage of [the] opportunity to organize they would be represented by delegates of their own sex at Conventions of this Congress."[38]

These arguments were as dishonest as they were complacent. Not only did the NWTUL lack any presence in Canada (although it hoped to establish one), Mabel Leslie, its fraternal delegate to the TLC 1924 convention, urged the Canadian unions to find "new ways" of organizing women. Moreover, the Congress Committee that chided the apathy of women workers contained delegates from the carpenters' and moulders' unions, both of which prohibited female membership![39] That many trade unionists rejected the TLC

leadership's rationalizations of non-support was shown by the closeness of the 1923 endorsement vote - 76 to 66 - and by Tom Moore's personal assurance that "there would be no interference with the local TLC's encouraging the movement to the extent of accepting their affiliations and having delegates."[40] Nevertheless, it was clear that the TLC's general outlook was hostile and that some of the anti-communist mud slung at the WLL had stuck. Its future, therefore, as a national working women's organization was always likely to prove uncertain.

At the founding conference of the WLL Federation the delegates worked out a detailed programme of aims and reforms. Their paramount aim was the unionization of women workers, of whom they claimed only 1 per cent were organized. They also sought to establish the Federation as a real national body, and to combat the image of women purveyed by the bourgeois press. Among the reforms they sought were equal pay for equal work, state non-contributory unemployment insurance with no discrimination between male and female unemployed, two months leave of absence before and after childbirth, the appointment of women factory inspectors, the extension of mothers' allowances, and greater state provision of maternity homes, clinics and nurseries.[41] Although impeccably reformist, this programme was also hopelessly ambitious in a period when "Government,

the judiciary, the church, business, and the press regarded the free enterprise system as sacrosanct."[42] And, it might be added, when the TLC leadership had largely agreed to tailor its reformist programme to the snail's pace of W. L. Mackenzie King's.[43] Part of the WLL programme was taken up by the CLP, into which the various Leagues channelled much of their energies, but the CLP itself was politically irrelevant.[44]

In practice, WLL work was localized and more modest in scope. Much of it was of a social nature, with numerous whist drives, dances, socials and "affairs". Educational work was also emphasized. Once a month the New Aberdeen Women's Labour Club devoted its weekly meeting to "purely educational work", usually consisting of a political talk by such notable local radicals as J. B. McLachlan and Joe Nearing.[45] The Montreal WLL had fortnightly lectures with an emphasis on "working women's education". The Toronto WLL took a more catholic approach, its 1928 lecture schedule including talks by representatives of the Minimum Wage Board and Workmen's Compensation Board.[46] The purpose of political and social education was to augment a general effort to prepare women for "an active and effective part" in the labour movement. Club activities were organized to give women confidence in speaking, writing and administration, thereby helping "counteract all the influences that tend towards keeping working women docile and therefore the

apt tools of the employing class and the forces of capitalism."[47]

Local Leagues participated in election campaigns, anti-war activities, strike solidarity, union drives and lobbying for female suffrage in Quebec. One area of activity common to most of the Leagues was agitation for improvement and enforcement of Minimum Wage Laws in women's employment. As early as 1922 the Toronto WLL was protesting the inadequacy of the minimum wage schedule and accusing the labour representatives on the Ontario MWB of being unsympathetic to women workers.[48] In December 1924 the WLL organized a strike of 25 chambermaids at Toronto's King Edward Hotel. The strike was unsuccessful, but Florence Custance later took the girls' case before the MWB in an appeal for payment of unpaid overtime.[49] It is not clear whether Custance won this case, but over the next two years the WLL successfully sued on numerous occasions for payment of arrears. Its success, however, produced a dilemma. In the absence of effective trade unions the MWB did offer some protection to young women workers; at the same time it tended to convince many of the women workers that unions were unnecessary. The WLL's answer was to continue using the MWB while adopting a more critical attitude towards it, and emphasizing the superiority of workers' self-organization over the ambiguous guardianship of the state.[50]

Another of the Toronto League's most significant campaigns concerned the issue of birth control. Since the early days of the CPC this issue had been interpreted in class terms. The family, the party argued, was for many workers an indispensable barrier to the daily brutality of capitalism. Yet because of capital's need to reproduce its source of profit, it deprived workers of the capacity to organize reproduction, setting up "a wail ... with uplifted hand and pious horror" whenever the working class sought to avail itself of methods the bourgeoisie took for granted.[51] In the 1920s abortion was still a criminal act in Canada, carrying a maximum 7 year sentence for anyone involved in procurement. Despite this, the WLL's Woman Worker claimed, "we all know in a vague sort of way that abortion is one of the most common practices, and women take their lives in their hands when they permit it to their persons."[52] The arrest of two Toronto doctors in 1927 provoked the League into a major campaign for the decriminalization of abortion and the organization of birth control clinics by municipalities. It won the support of the TDLC for both demands, pursued them into the Social Hygiene Council and lobbied provincial Minister of Health and Labour, Forbes Godfrey. He, however, "treated the matter as a joke ... his remarks were light and frivolous - how he would like [Tory provincial] Premier Ferguson to hear us!"[53] The campaign was responsible for a substantial increase in the

League's Toronto membership in 1927-28, but most of the new members fell away when the issue was dropped: "The work of the General Labor Movement failed to hold them."[54]

Despite the fluctuations of the WLL's Toronto membership, it appears that nationally the organization was growing. From 12 branches and 1,000 members in 1924, it claimed 56 branches and 2,500 members in 1928. There is a paucity of hard sociological data on the Leagues, however, and only tentative inferences can be offered on its social composition. Most of the members were working class housewives, although in Toronto the abortion issue drew in numerous professional women who preferred independence to "the drudgery of domestic life" and who gravitated to the WLL to overcome a sense of isolation.[55] Most members were not CPC members: in the Toronto "English" League in 1930 there was only one communist among twenty members; and in the same city's Jewish League five of forty members were also in the party.[56] An increasing number of WLL members were Finns. Of 20 branches reporting to the Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada for 1927, eleven had British-Canadian executives, seven were Finnish, one was Jewish and one had a mixed Jewish-British leadership; in 1928, with 17 branches reporting, the figures were eleven Finnish, four British-Canadian, and two Jewish.[57] In Montreal there was a declining number of British-Canadian members and a total absence of French Canadian women.[58]

By the end of the 1920s the WLL Federation mirrored the women's wing of the party, predominantly Finnish and overwhelmingly restricted to housewives. Its main aim of organizing and recruiting women workers had not been achieved, largely because in the absence of adequate financial backing from the general labour movement it was almost entirely dependent on the limited resources of a party which did not itself see the organization of women as an immediate priority. Moreover, in 1927-28 the League suffered two blows that severely hampered its work as a national organization. In November 1927 the TDLC joined in the anti-communist drive by ruling, after more than five years' affiliation, that the WLL was ineligible. And in October 1928 Florence Custance, suffering from physical exhaustion, fell ill and was ordered to rest completely for three months; she never recovered and died in July 1929.[59] On her death the National Committee of the WLL Federation ceased to function - adding support to the suspicion that the CPC never gave her the assistance she deserved.[60]

Brief mention should also be made of the CPC's disproportionate contribution in organizing solidarity for workers in struggle. According to J. B. McLachlan the party's support of the Cape Breton strikes was absolutely unparalleled. In 1922 Halifax communists used their influence among the unemployed to delay the recruitment of

a special police force.[61] In 1923 Drumheller communists led the only group of workers to answer McLachlan's appeal for a general sympathy strike.[62] And in 1925 the CPC was the only body coordinating a national solidarity appeal for the embattled Cape Bretoners.[63] Also in 1925, the CPC took the lead in organizing the Canadian Labour Defense League (CLDL), initially to provide legal and financial assistance for miners arrested during strikes for recognition of the Alberta-based Mine Workers' Union of Canada.[64] Communists were also active throughout the British General Strike and subsequent six-months miners' strike.[65] In that particular struggle the CPC's contribution was only one part of a generalized Canadian expression of solidarity; even the TLC offered an uncharacteristically militant defence of trade union internationalism.[66] This last quality, however, was conspicuously absent during strikes called by the dissident UMWA "Save the Union" movement in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia in 1927-28. Around these strikes the CPUSA cooperated with socialist militants such as John Brophy and Powers Hapgood. In Canada the CPC made a major attempt to generate a broad united front support movement; J. B. McLachlan sat on the central National Miners' Relief Committee. But while a degree of unity did develop - secretary of the Toronto Miners' Relief Committee was Jean Laing, President of the IAM Women's Auxiliary and future CCF member - the party's

prominence at a time when the international unions were becoming increasingly anti-communist was a sufficient pretext for denying support.[67]

As we have seen, the decision to form a revolutionary trade union centre in Canada was taken by the Comintern and foisted on the CPC. Nevertheless, the assertion of independence from the reformist labour movement undoubtedly came as a relief to communists who had chafed under the strain of working inside the international unions. That Malcolm Bruce should welcome the "New Line" was predictable enough; but even Jack MacDonald, allegedly the personnification of the "right danger" in the party, saw it as a chance to break free of the TLC bureaucracy's shackles. Communists had seen the labour movement shift from apathy and inertia to hostile activity - but against them, not capital. Their faith in the rank and file, which in many instances had resisted the bureaucracy's attacks, remained undiminished; equally, their jaundiced view of the bureaucracy's irredeemably treacherous character was confirmed. Their own leadership qualities, honed in attempts to organize women and the unemployed, build solidarity for workers in struggle and generally sustain a beacon of revolutionary socialism in the organized working class, would be given full rein as organizers of the unorganized. There were, in short, solid domestic factors which

increased the party's receptivity to the "third period" strategy: the latter's fundamental sectarianism connected with a native Canadian strain rooted in the individual communist's readiness to commit her/himself, body and soul, to the working class cause. With no labour bureaucracy intervening between the party and the mass of the unorganized working class, and in a period when workers not only needed support and leadership more than ever but were believed to be open to revolutionary politics, there was every prospect that the party's revolutionary virtue would be rewarded.

Footnotes

1. Bert Cochran, Labor and Communism: The Conflict That Shaped American Unions (Princeton, 1977), chapter two. See also Joseph Starobin's review of Rodney's Soldiers of the International, Canadian Forum 48 (December 1968) 202

2. PAC, Tim Buck Memoirs, 253-54, 314, 329; Malcolm Bruce, "Tailism in the Work Among Unemployed", The Worker, 18 October 1930

3. "Toronto Reds Disgrace Canadian Labour Movement", LL, 24 March 1922; TLC Proceedings 1923, 82; "The Vancouver Convention", CCJ, 2 (October 1923), 357-66; PAC, MG28 144, TDLC Minutes, 15 November 1923; UBCJ Ontario Provincial Council, Trade Report, November 1923

4. J. B. McLachlan, "Nothing to Arbitrate", MLH, 12 November 1921; "Moore Does Some Toadying", MLH, 19 January 1924

5. Joe Nearing, letter to the editor, MLH, 30 August 1924

6. Beeching and Clarke eds., Yours in the Struggle, 107; Tom MacEwen, The Forge Glows Red: From Blacksmith to Revolutionary (Toronto, 1974), 111

7. UT, Victoria College, United Church Archives, A. E. Smith Collection (microfilm), reel 2, George S. Powell to Smith, 16 September 1925; Smith to Powell, 17 September 1925

8. Lakeman, "Who Is For Amalgamation"; biographical note on Lakeman, The Worker, 6 June 1935; McEwen, The Forge Glows Red, 98-101; Hugh Pynn, "Halifax Notes"; MLH, 18 April 1925

9. "Halifax Notes", MLH, 12 July 1924

10. Seager, "The Mine Workers' Union of Canada", 39-53; J. Petryshyn, "Class Conflict and Civil Liberties: The Origins and Activities of the Canadian Labour Defense League, 1925-1940", Labour/Le Travailleur, 10 (Autumn 1982), 40-42

11. A.R.L.O.C. 1925 (Ottawa, 1926), 162-64

12. MLH, 21 March 1925

13. "Worker Campaign in Winnipeg with Beckie Buhay", The Worker, 4 December 1926

14. PAC, MG 31 B11, J. E. Rea collection, interview with Norman Penner, 16-18

15. PAO, CPC Papers, 5B 0130, Annie Buller to Joe Wallace, 21 May 1928; also 5B 0042, Buller to J. B. McLachlan,

16. McEwen, The Forge Glows Red, 126
17. "With the Communist Party", The Worker, 16 January 1926
18. Metropolitan Toronto Public Library (MTPL), "Toronto Between the Wars" tape collection, interview with Bob Hunt
19. McEwen, The Forge Glows Red, 36, 86, 125
20. Beeching and Clarke eds., Yours in the Struggle, 36
21. Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks, 66
22. B. A. Rodgers, "What is a Party of Action?", BCF, 30 December 1921; "The SP of A and the SP of C", The Communist, July 1921; MacEwen, The Forge Glows Red, 87. On the Saskatoon SPC branch MacEwen writes: "... we were a very exclusive group, deeply immersed in the profundities of our Marxist studies, but completely isolated from the realities around us ... We were too busy debating the entrancing elements of Value, Price and Profit or what Marx really meant or whether a post-hole constituted a commodity ... to worry about the proletariat or the economically harassed farmers around us."
23. P.A.N.S., Armstrong Papers, Vol. 666, folder 7, J. W. Gray to E. H. Armstrong, 1 March 1923
24. The Worker, 29 August 1923
25. UT, Kenny Collection, Box 41, "Beckie Buhay in Alberta. Personal Recollections by E. R. Fay", Vancouver, 1955
26. "Worker Campaign in Winnipeg with Beckie Buhay"
27. Beeching and Clarke eds., Yours in the Struggle, 115
28. See the ironic commentary, done in the style of the daily press's social notes, on Tim Buck's second visit to the Soviet Union. Canada Forward, 15 January 1927. This informs interested Toronto trade unionists that they could "spend a nice holiday in Moscow on $831. Of course, if you intend to travel to other parts of the Soviet Union you would expect to have to figure on an expenditure of over $1,000." On the foreign community at the Hotel Luxe, see Peggy Dennis, Autobiography of an American Communist (Berkeley, 1977), 59-66
29. E. J. Hobsbawm, "Problems of Communist History", in Revolutionaries (London, 1978), 5
30. Maurice Spector, "The Fight Against the Bureaucracy", The Worker, 15 March 1922

31. The Worker, 20 November 1926. See also Allen Seager, "A Forecast of the Parliament of Man: Aspects of the Alberta Miners' Movement, 1905-1945", paper presented to McGill University conference on "Class and Culture: Dimensions of Canada's Labour Past", March 1980, 9-10

32. UT, Victoria College, United Church Archives, A. E. Smith Papers, reel 2, A. E. Smith to 'Dear Comrade', 27 January 1925; A. E. Smith and John A. Gallagher to W.L.M. King, 29 January 1925; "Progress of the Toronto Women's Labor League and the Results of Activities for the Past Year", The Worker, 20 April 1924; J. Petryshyn, "A. E. Smith and the Canadian Labour Defense League", Ph.D. dissertation, University of Western Ontario, 91-3; The Citizen, 5 August 1921; 25 August, 10 November 1922; BCF, 13, 20 January 1922; "Workmen's Club for the Unemployed is Formed at Halifax", LL, 29 September 1922; P.A.N.S., Armstrong Papers, Vol. 668, folder 3, Halifax City Council, extract from Minutes, 27 February 1922; Paul Phillips, No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in B.C. (Vancouver, 1967), 81-2; Roger N. Baldwin, "A Strike Against the Government", The Nation, 119 (30 July 1924), 120-21

33. UT, Kenny Collection, Box 2, Florence Custance, "Report of Women's Section", Proceedings of the Fourth National Convention, Communist Party of Canada, Toronto, 11-12 September 1925

34. UT, Kenny Collection, Box 2, Florence Custance, "Our Tasks Among Women", Proceedings of the Fifth Convention of the Communist Party of Canada, Toronto, 17-20 June 1927; Kenny Collection, Box 41, Annie S. Buller, "In Memory of Beckie Buhay", undated [probably 1954]

35. "To the Central Committees of All Communist Parties", The Worker, 15 September 1922; "Activity of Montreal Communist Women", The Worker, 27 June 1925

36. R. Buhay to the editor, The Worker, 22 August 1925

37. On the early history of the WLL in Canada, wee WLN, 26 September 1919; New Commonwealth, 22 September 1934; BCLN, 2 September 1921; PAC, MG 28 144, TDLC Minutes, 20 November 1924, "Report on the Objectives, Policies and Work of the Federation of Women's Labour Leagues of Canada"

38. TLC Proceedings 1923, 131-32; Canadian Labour World, 4 October 1923; TLC Proceedings 1924, 111-12

39. TLC Proceedings 1924, 120; Katherine Fisher, letter to

the editors, The Nation, 117 (5 December 1923), 636; William L. O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave: A History of Feminism in America (Chicago, 1971), 101-2

40. PAC, MG28 144, TDLC Minutes, 18 October 1923, James Simpson and James Stevenson, "Report of Delegates from the TDLC to the 39th Annual Convention of the TLC of Canada"

41. "Report on the Objectives, Policies and Work of the Federation of Women's Labour Leagues of Canada"; Canadian Federation of Women's Labour Leagues to Elizabeth Christman, NWTUL, reprinted in The Worker, 29 August 1925

42. Betcherman, The Little Band, 5

43. J.A.P. Haydon, "The New Canadian Government"

44. Custance, "Our Tasks Among Women". Reports in the party press indicate WLL/CLP cooperation in New Aberdeen, Montreal, Toronto, Hamilton, London and Edmonton

45. "New Aberdeen Women's Club", MLH, 31 May 1924

46. B. Schacter, "Montreal", The Woman Worker, 3 (January 1929), 13; B. MacDonald, "Toronto Women's Labor League", ibid., 13-14

47. Nova Scotia Miner, 8 February 1930; Custance, "Our Tasks Among Women"

48. PAC, MG28 144, TDLC Minutes, 7 September 1922

49. TDLC Minutes, 18 December 1924; Labour Gazette, XXV (January 1925), 22

50. The Woman Worker, 2 (July-August 1927), 3-4; Custance, "Our Tasks Among Women"; "Horrible Exploitation in Toronto Factory", The Worker, 28 April 1928

51. "Birth Control", Workers' Guard, 26 November 1921

52. The Woman Worker, 2 (July-August 1927), 11; "Birth Control and Working Women", The Woman Worker, 2 (January 1928), 7-9

53. "Advocate Adoption of Birth Control", Canada Forward, 15 May 1927; "Birth Control and Working Women". One of the arrested doctors, a Dr Withrow, had lectured to the WLL since 1926: "he claimed that every woman should have the right to determine when she should have children. He scorned the quack remedies and old-fashioned ideas concerning childbearing ... it was noticeable, too, that after the meeting several women who were mothers, and young mothers at that, asked Dr Withrow for his card." The Woman Worker, 1 (July

1926), 2-3

54. "Toronto Women's Labor League", 14

55. The Woman Worker, I (July 1926), 3. Note also Florence Custance's article "Women's Freedom", The Woman Worker, 2 (January 1928), 10-11 which argues firmly against a single-issue concentration on birth control or anything else to the neglect of the total struggle to "take control of the means of life and run the affairs of the new society."

56. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 11C 2925, CPC Women's Department, Minutes, [n.d./probably October 1930]

57. A.R.L.O.C. 1927 (Ottawa, 1928), 305; A.R.L.O.C. 1928 (Ottawa, 1929), 247-48.

58. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 8C 0013, CPC Women's Department, District 2, Minutes, 9 July 1930

59. The Worker, 19 November 1927; "The Toronto Women's Labor League Moves Forward", The Woman Worker, 2 (December 1927), 8-10; The Worker, 27 July 1929; Canadian Unionist, 3 (September 1929), 39. See also the account of Custance's illness in PAC, Tim Buck Memoirs, 238-39. Buck claims that Custance, who had become increasingly estranged from the party allegedly because of Jack MacDonald's criticism of her WLL work, had virtually dropped out of the party by early 1929: "... what we did not know was that Florence was very sick." In fact, her illness was noted in the October 1928 issue of The Woman Worker, 3-4

60. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 1A 0695-0701, letter to Canadian Federation of Women's Labor Leagues Membership, 27 January 1930

61. "An Urgent Appeal", Nova Scotia Miner, 22 August 1931; MLH, 23 September 1922

62. Seager, "The Mine Workers' Union of Canada", 24

63. One worker complained that he had been disciplined by his union for sending money he had collected from his workmates to the Nova Scotia Miners' Relief Committee. Henry Lynch, Communication Worker, March 1926. The TLC's single donation was a cheque for $500 personally delivered by Tom Moore. See "Don't Let Tom Moore Take the Fight Out of Your Union", MLH, 4 April 1925

64. Petryshyn, "Class Conflict and Civil Liberties", 40-42

65. The Woman Worker, 1 (July 1926), 10. "Worker Campaign in Winnipeg with Beckie Buhay"

66. CCJ, 5 (June 1926), 32

67. The Worker, 18, 25 February, 19 May 1928

CHAPTER FOUR

TRIAL AND ERROR: THE WORKERS' UNITY LEAGUE, 1930-1933.

"History has ... decreed that Moscow will ultimately triumph." Tom Ewan, The Worker, 28 June 1930

"... so much to do and so little to do it with."
Tom Ewan, Toronto, 12 July 1931

"If you can just curse without getting discouraged and try other methods and try again, then I guess that makes you a good Bolshevik."
George Drayton, Vancouver, 10 July 1931

The first phase of the Workers' Unity League (WUL) years coincided precisely with the slump years of the great depression. To a great extent the steady decline of the Canadian (and world) capitalist economy, by simultaneously placing tremendous power in capital's hands and depriving the working class of much of its capacity for resistance, defined the limits and possibilities of class struggle down to the economic nadir of winter 1932-33. Though workers fought back against aggressive managerial control, intensified working conditions and wage cuts, the unequal relationship of class forces permitted only sporadic

resistance. Communist attempts to tilt the balance back towards the working class were often temporarily and partially successful, but were ultimately defeated by material conditions that at best made possible the preparation of a counter-offensive, not the decisive battle that the left hopefully anticipated. Politically, this phase was defined by the tension between party hopes and structural realities. Here I examine briefly the state of the economy in the slump years, the impact of mass unemployment on working class attitudes; and the efforts of the WUL to seize what it believed were revolutionary opportunities. I try to give a broad view of the range of WUL activities, but provide two detailed case studies of particular interventions. These are particularly useful in delineating the development of WUL tactics away from the extreme "ultra-leftism" of 1930-31.

The collapse of the wheat industry in 1929 provided Canadians with a glimpse into the future. One economic analyst, writing when the agricultural situation was still "somewhat uncertain", predicted that a crop of under 500 million bushels would represent disaster. In the event, production fell from 566 million bushels in 1928 to 293 million in 1929. With the value of wheat exports falling from $428 million to $215 million, the effect was felt "in so many different lines. The transportation companies had

so much less to carry; the steamship lines particularly adapted for that trade had little business, and when they did get it they had nowhere to unload, as the terminal elevators were full. The shipbuilders and repairers had little business because the ships were not moving. Nearly every industry was in one way or another affected."[1] Economic decay proceeded to permeate the entire structure of Canadian industrial capitalism, more or less unopposed by politicians who expected the downturn to be of brief duration. Some, like former Prime Minister Robert Borden, welcomed the depression as an opportunity to clean out a system riddled with "wastefulness ... a vice of the North" and reestablish the eternal values of hard work and thrift.[2] But over all, Canadian politicians and economists were no more blinkered than their counterparts elsewhere, who almost uniformly employed the standard nostrums of balanced budgets and reduced public spending, mixing in a strong dash of economic autarchy. R. B. Bennett's plan to "blast" Canadian products into world markets by means of an increased tariff is easy to slight, but at the time more than one nation was reacting in like manner against the economic nationalism of the United States, enshrined in the Smoot-Hawley tariff of spring 1930.[3]

Nevertheless, Bennett's economic policies did nothing to halt the slump of an economy heavily dependent on over-

seas trade and raw materials' exports. One-third of the national income in the 1920s came from overseas trade, and two-thirds of that amount came from commodities which proved particularly susceptible to falling prices. As Table 4-1 indicates, all export prices fell by 40 per cent between 1929-33; the fall in farm export prices was no less than 70 per cent.

Table 4-I

CANADIAN ECONOMIC INDICES IN THE SLUMP YEARS (1929=100)

YEAR	EXPORT PRICES	INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION	EMPLOY-MENT	NATIONAL INCOME ($m)
1929	100	100	100	$5,300
1930	84	85	95	4,500
1931	66	71	86	3,600
1932	60	58	74	2,800
1933	60	61	70	2,700

Source: International Labour Office, Public Investment and Employment (Montreal, 1946), 179

The labour market quickly contracted. Totally reliable figures on unemployment levels are unobtainable, but the general dimensions of the problem are clear enough. By January 1930, Toronto Political Economy Professor G. A. Jackson estimated, there were already almost 300,000 jobless; according to Harold Innis, the numbers had risen to 500,000 by the middle of 1931; and by the early months of 1933, it

is generally agreed, more than 700,000 Canadians were unemployed, slightly more than 30 per cent of the total workforce.[4]

As always, unemployment was an effective enforcer of labour discipline. "The traditional unions, for the most part, recognized their limits, devoted their resources to maintaining their members in good standing, and avoided quixotic temptations."5 In other words, they carried on where they left off in the 1920s. There was considerable common sense in their acquiescence: to strike when there were thousands of workers desperate for work was a risky business. Hence craft unionists - railroaders, printers, building workers - could only grit their teeth as their wage rates fell in line with the economy (Table 4-II).[6]

Unorganized mass production workers were in an even more precarious position than the unionized minority. Massive reductions in prices and output accentuated existing problems of excess capacity, accelerated the trend towards "increasing concentration in the more efficient lower cost mills" and factories, and vastly increased managerial control of the workplace.[7] To take just one example, the automobile industry in this period finally became completely American-owned and increasingly dominated by General Motors, Ford and Chrysler.[8] Along with other mass production workers, auto workers were often recent immigrants,

Table 4-II

NEW CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS AWARDED IN CANADA 1929-1933 ($m).*
AND CHANGES IN THE WAGE RATES OF SELECTED TORONTO BUILDING CRAFTSMEN 1930-1933**

	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	% decline
CONTRACTS	$576m	$457m	$315	$133m	$97m	
PLUMBERS		1.38	1.25	1.00	.85	39
BRICKLAYERS		1.35	1.10	1.10	.90	33
ELECTRICIANS		1.25	1.25	1.00	1.00	20
CARPENTERS		1.10	1.10	.90	.80	27
PAINTERS		.85	.85	.83	.70	18

Sources: * ILO, Public Investment and Full Employment, 185
** International Labour Review, 1931-37

mainly semi- and unskilled, and completely unorganized; their submission to rising managerial demands and worsening labour conditions was relatively easy to achieve, their unionization concomitantly difficult.

Given such unfavourable circumstances, the left's human resources were always going to be stretched to the limit. If the organization of the unorganized was to be realized, decisive action by a united party would be vital. Yet as the internal history of the CPC in 1928-29 had demonstrated,

the party was far from united. And so it remained in 1930. All through that year the new party leadership consolidated its control of the apparatus against the "right danger" of "MacDonaldism". This ideological struggle, in which the pace-setters were the returned Lenin School graduates Sam Carr and Stewart Smith, had the desired results. By mid-1930 MacDonald was no longer active in the party, and by March 1931 Carr was able to report to the Comintern that "MacDonaldism" had been virtually eradicated. Unfortunately, the ideological struggle had also devoured the rank and file: although the party claimed a membership of 4,000, the real figure was 1,300, with a further 800 in the Young Communist League.[9] Nevertheless, what remained of the party seemed likely to be united on the major issues.

It is important to note the impact of the party's factional struggles on the original leadership cadre. Already, by the mid-1920s several of the national leadership had left Canada (Jack Kavanagh to Australia, Joe and Joanna Knight to the United States, Tom Bell to Britain).[10] The events of 1929-30 accounted for Spector, MacDonald, Florence Custance, Bill Moriarty, Fred Shoesmith, Fred Peel and Michael Buhay, all of them Canadian "Old Bolsheviks".[11] They also accounted for an unknown number of rank and file and middle level cadres. One group of 20 Trotskyists included two needle trades' workers who were members of the

YGL National Trade Union Department and another who was Toronto YCL Agit-prop secretary.[12] Undoubtedly the expulsions deprived the party of some of its most capable younger elements who might have been expected to carry the organizational burden through the early thirties. This applied with even greater force to two established organizers: J. B. Salsberg and John Stokaluk. They were expelled as "rightists" who opposed the class against class line in the unions and in Salsberg's case as "one of the pivotal parts" of a conspiracy to split the party.[13]

The most significant consequence of this draining away of the original cadre was that the party left behind was almost entirely new and untried. Only a handful of the original leadership remained: Buck, Malcolm Bruce, Annie Buller, Beckie Buhay and (although never national figures) Alex Gauld and Jan Lakeman. Others who had come to the fore in the mid-1920s, most notably Tom Ewan, were also available. But increasingly the political character of the party was shaped by an infusion of new blood from the YCL: Carr, Stewart Smith, John Weir, Sims, Murphy, Leslie Morris, Paul Phillips and Charles Marriott, to name just a few of the more prominent (some who would later gain leading positions were gaining their earliest experiences at this juncture, for example Bill Kashtan, Oscar Ryan and Harry Binder). For the most part, the political outlook of this

group was shaped by a relative lack of industrial experience and, of at least equal importance, an almost exclusive training in the theory and practice of the post-Lenin Comintern. Several had undergone or were undergoing the rite of passage from the YCL through the Lenin School to national party leadership, in the course of which participants were literally "schooled" in subservience to the Comintern line.[14] For the YCLers Comintern publications contained everything of relevance to the struggle in Canada.[15]

Older party leaders who wished to retain their positions had to listen carefully to the collective voice of the Lenin School graduates. Tom Ewan, for example, made the mistake of expressing doubts about the advantageous objective situation for union organizing when he attended the Fifth RILU Congress in August 1930. After "continually harping on the lack of forces", he was abruptly cut off by Otto Kuusinen, Chairman of the Comintern's Colonial Commission, who remarked that "IN EVERY INSTANCE THE WORKERS WILL SUPPLY THE FORCES."[16] Ewan returned from Moscow believing that there was a "favourable objective situation"; that the RILU trade union line <u>had</u> to work, since if it failed during a revolutionary crisis there was clearly no hope ever for revolution; and that the party simply had to redouble its efforts to find "the link" that would fuse the stagnating

WUL to the rising revolutionary consciousness of the Canadian masses.[17]

The pessimistic Ewan had a tighter grip on Canadian reality. Before he visited Moscow and for a considerable time afterwards, he could see that the WUL was bedevilled by a dire shortage of experienced organizers, the best of whom had to be continually shuttled round the country on a more or less ad hoc basis. James Litterick, for example, a widely-experienced militant from Scotland who had been organizing the Vancouver unemployed since the late 1920s, was sent to Montreal as District Organizer early in 1931. He somehow surmounted the difficulty of speaking no French and was sufficiently impressive in his new post to be moved to Toronto as Acting National Secretary of the WUL when Ewan was swept up in the arrests of the CPC leadership in August 1931.[18] Harvey Murphy was despatched from the National Steel Car strike to work with lumber workers in Port Arthur, where most of the Finns who dominated the Lumber Workers' Industrial Union were as ignorant of English as he was of Finnish. But "somehow", Murphy remembered, "we got on." In 1930 he was moved again, this time to the Crow's Nest Pass, where he established his reputation as a dynamic organizer.[19]

In many instances organizers proved inadequate or inappropriate. It was frequently necessary to send them

into areas or industries of which they had no experience. Toronto housepainter Izzy Minster, for example, was sent to Winnipeg as a garment workers' organizer; he was conspicuously unsuccessful.[20] Hannes Sula, editor of the Sudbury Lumber Worker was appointed WUL organizer for Calgary. Sula, however, "was not a speaker ... and was actually afraid to do work" outside the city. He also tended to be rather brusque in approach, and his "lack of tact" led to a number of resignations from the party.[21] Not all party members chosen for uprooting accepted the decision. William Silanpaa, a Nanaimo Finn, doggedly resisted all Tom Ewan's efforts to have him move to Sudbury as National Secretary of the Lumber Workers' Industrial Union, eventually forcing Ewan to look elsewhere.[22]

New members often found themselves accelerated into positions of responsibility despite lacking any real grounding in marxist fundamentals or organizing methods. English immigrant Stan Lowe gained his first political experience as a rank and file member of the Vancouver National Unemployed Workers' Association (NUWA). After a year's apprenticeship he joined the Young Communist League (YCL) early in 1932, and thereafter his rise was meteoric:

> I became the organizer after about two meetings. I didn't know a damn thing really, I was just interested ... They were anxious to get hold of people and I was willing and wanted to do things ... and about two weeks later I found myself on the Provincial Executive, and then about one

> meeting after that Dishnitski quit and I became the Provincial Organizer.[23]

Pat Lenihan came to communism via Gustavus Myer's History of Canadian Wealth, the Worker, and observing communists at work among the unemployed in Vancouver. But he had never met a party member before he joined in Calgary in the spring of 1930. He was immediately pitched full-time into organizing for the NUWA and Mine Workers' Union of Canada (MWUC).[24] Other new members proved less adaptable. One Quebec communist wrote to Ewan expressing what must have been a common predicament. The first time he arranged a meeting at a contact's home, he didn't "know really how to approach him":

> you see, I didn't want to be misunderstood and lose this contact. I hope you will understand my situation ... I have no training, perhaps a little bit too 'timid', always afraid of making mistakes. I wondered how to approach him for - - - - hours!

When they finally met, he was so tongue-tied and disconcerted by his contact's silence that he achieved nothing.[25]

In a comradely reply Ewan observed that all organizers experienced feelings of inadequacy.[26] But he was rather less understanding when leading party members failed to meet their obligations. One such was Leslie Morris, who was removed from the editorship of the Worker to be sent as party District Organizer to Winnipeg, very much against his will. In Winnipeg he refused to fulfil his obligations,

which included organizing a training school (one of his main concerns was the absence of a national programme of Marxist education for new cadres), and demanded to be returned to Toronto. When this was rejected, he began a whispering campaign against the national leadership, Buck in particular. The outcome was his suspension from all party duties and the beginning of disciplinary proceedings. The August arrests seem to have saved him from ignominy. According to Ewan, Morris was an "unscrupulous liar" who was willing to work only "when he feels like it, and at what he feels like when the notion takes him." Unfortunately, he added in a letter to Sam Carr, there were others who shared Morris' outlook - Oscar Ryan for one - which was utterly intolerable when still others were "working their damn heads off; day and night trying to tackle the million and one jobs, seeing ourselves unable to capitalize on the favorable objective situation that can transfer our movement into a mass movement, and making a million errors simply because we have so much to do and so little to do it with."[27]

On another occasion, Ewan, swamped by overwork, pointed out to a Winnipeg correspondent: "This WUL office is A ONE MAN BUSINESS and the energies of one man are limited."[28] Virtually all that Ewan could offer organizers on the ground was encouragement to work harder. The organizers themselves

were thrashing around, feverishly trying one method after another to find "the link" to which Ewan had referred. Even experienced organizers such as George Drayton in Vancouver (widely considered the most advanced centre of WUL activity) sought "some simple directions and guide for the members as to how to form a shop group, taking cognizance of the shop spies, the Black-list system, the backwardness of the workers, the national prejudice of the Native born workers and British born, and all the other obstacles which are stacked against us."[29]

This range of obstacles prevented the WUL from becoming in its first year anything more than "an idealistic, imaginary centre of 'hopes'."[30] In fact, it barely got off the ground. In September 1930 Ewan returned from the RILU Congress to find that noone had assumed his responsibilities and organizing conferences for the new centre had still to be held in Quebec and most of Western Canada.[31] Although Ewan quickly rectified these omissions, by the February 1931 party plenum he could report little progress on the industrial front. Plenum participants admitted that trade union work remained "as always almost entirely of a propagandist nature." The WUL suffered from "a chronic lack of forces", admittedly, but the main reason for its parlous state was the resilience of "right wing passivity ... paralyzing links with the past." What was needed, the plenum

decided, was rapid assimilation of the "united front from below" strategy, which in its industrial application meant bolshevization plus a consistent rank and file approach to strike organization. During strikes it was essential that the WUL eschew "bureaucratic methods ... the authority of the Party and the 'Party Vote'"in favour of broadly based, democratic strike committees. The important thing was to let political lessons flow out of industrial struggle. For workers "still a long way from accepting the leadership of the CP", Ewan observed, "our road is not to try and cram it all down their necks at once, but to get them interested in the trade union movement ... Once started and firmly established, the political character of the struggle manifests itself."[32]

On paper it all looked so easy: first stage - economic struggle; second stage - political struggle. But the transition from conception to practice proved much more complicated. Simply reaching the first stage was hard enough, especially when organizers undermined their own strenuous efforts by adopting ultra-left positions. The YCL leadership had a well-deserved reputation for coming up with the demands it thought workers <u>should</u> be making, rather than the ones they were actually prepared to make. One 15-year old worker at the Dominion Textiles plant in Montreal pointed out, after "discussing [it] with a few of my

fellow workers", that shop papers and leaflets demanding a 35-hour week without wage reductions were not going to be taken seriously by workers who normally worked a 54-hour week.[33] His point was generally ignored. After the 1931 plenum the Toronto YCL turned enthusiastically "to the shops", and having established the textile industry as its primary area of "concentration", they rushed out to leaflet at the shop gates, collared workers as they entered and left the mills, and aggressively subjected them to a series of questions: why not organize? why not join the YCL? why not join the union? "Of course", YCL leader Paul Phillips later noted, "the comrades forgot that there is no such thing as a textile union."[34] As the Winnipeg YCL found when it concentrated on plant-gate meetings at the Wellwood Box factory, public agitation was of limited utility at a time when any worker seen speaking to an organizer was virtually asking to be fired.[35]

Impatience with the working class was typical. Toronto YCLers spent two years familiarizing themselves with the conditions and grievances of rubber workers in the Gutta Percha plant. When the latter refused to take the strike action demanded by the YCL, the Young Communists concluded that they were satisfied with their conditions, labelled them "reactionary" and pulled out of the plant: two weeks later they were out on strike, under the TDLC's leadership.[36] One of the main reasons why workers remained reluctant to

strike or even take any kind of industrial action was the very real possibility that they would lose and/or be victimized.[37] Yet when Swift Canadian moved promptly to dismiss three alleged WUL members at its Winnipeg packing plant (ironically, only one of the three was a unionist), Tom Ewan wrote heatedly to the organizer of the Packing House Workers' Industrial League that he should have called an immediate strike at the plant. Certainly, Ewan observed, you do not provoke a strike when you cannot win; but when provoked "by any action of victimization on the part of the boss ... Then we have on policy ... Strike." That was where "the parting of the ways" occurred between the "old" and the "new" unionism. Moreover, no strike was ever completely lost; in the long run every struggle developed new forces to carry the struggle on to a higher stage.[38]

This approach also influenced the WUL's response to the demands rank and file workers themselves proposed. The question of "seniority", for example, which became a major issue in the industrial union drives of the late 1930s, Ewan dismissed out of hand. Once a weapon against "boss-class discrimination", it was now simply "the henroost upon which all the old scabby birds seek protection while the industrial coop is being cleaned out."[39] This view effectively ruled out cooperation with a whole stratum of experienced skilled workers. The party took a similar stance on the question of work-sharing. In the Alberta

coalmines, where it was known as the "stagger-system", worksharing was seen by many miners as a class conscious alternative to mass lay-offs. As one MWUC local secretary put it, his members felt that "if we must starve then let us all starve together."[40] Some locals were even willing to strike for worksharing agreements.[41] What, then, was the communist viewpoint? Total rejection. Even after Malcolm Bruce was "roundly criticised without exception" for delivering a tirade against the "stagger system" at a May Day demonstration in 1931, the party stuck to its guns: work-sharing was a "quack remedy". As Harvey Murphy argued, the miners' only answer was to struggle for non-contributory unemployment insurance and a guaranteed weekly wage regardless of employment conditions.[42] He neglected to intimate how they should live while fighting for these demands.

Throughout this period there was a recurring tension between the "pure", "correct" demands of the WUL and the actual concerns of the unorganized workers it sought to mobilize. Over time, however, there was a gradual shift towards greater realism in rhetoric and tactics. Public agitation at shop gates was not abandoned - it remained the best way of showing that the union existed - but speakers learned not to approach individual workers in sight of the plant. When they suspected that a certain worker was beginning to respond, an organizer would be delegated to

visit the worker in his/her home. "In most cases", one organizer later noted, "they got nothing but fear ... but out of a lot of hard work they'd maybe get two or three workers in the plant."[43] Around these workers a shop group would be formed, often using the same "social" methods of work. An informal coffee party in a worker's home would be an occasion for drawing into the group new people whose reliability had been patiently established. Montreal and Toronto Young Communists ran "Textile Workers' Social Clubs" with dances, socials and sports, as transitional forms of organization. Though these broadened the base of union support in the industry, they remained hard to place on an "industrial basis".[44]

Organizers learned to tailor their agitational literature to immediate working class interests. They found that just one "Tom Thumb" article dealing specifically with shop conditions, even surrounded by "generalities with which they are not concerned", was capable of eroding some of the working class's fear and hostility.[45] Ewan reprimanded the Winnipeg communists who produced the Shopmen's Hammer for giving too much prominence to political issues. Its May 1931 edition actually carried a membership application for the CPC! "Never mind 'Join the CP'", he ordered, "When we get the Shopmen following us as a union, we will have a base for our Party."[46]

The position Ewan had taken over use of the strike weapon gradually gave way to an emphasis on winning strikes rather than simply exploiting spontaneous rank and file militancy. Ewan himself seemed to mellow, to the point where he insisted that "the greatest patience and tact" had to be observed in relations with workers.[47] The WUL by no means lost its idealism, and was always willing to step into situations where the "official" union movement feared to tread: the Estevan-Bienfait lignite mines, for example.[48] But more and more, organizers adopted deliberate, flexible tactics, hesitated to launch strikes without adequate preparation and refused to be bound by revolutionary purity. In British Columbia Provincial Organizer Arthur Evans had to convince Princeton miners not to strike in August 1932, when they were working only one day a week, but to wait until the mines were working full blast. He returned from Vancouver in November, spent two weeks organizing the mines and led the miners in a successful strike for wage increases, improved safety provisions and recognition of pit committees.[49] At the Bruck Silk Mill strike in Cowansville, Quebec, in March 1931 a significant feature of the WUL's intervention was the readiness of organizers Fred Rose and David Chalmers to play down the WUL's ties with the Red International of Labour Unions and, following the defeat of the strike, reject Ewan's criticism that they had hidden "the face of

the party" unnecessarily. In his view, the strike had always looked likely to fail, so Chalmers and Rose had nothing to lose by maintaining a high party profile. Rose thought otherwise. The inevitability of failure was not something they had seriously considered; they had done what seemed necessary to win the strike; their decision to omit reference to the RILU was one such necessity. Rose was sufficiently unrepentent to offer Ewan a political lesson:

> Let us take the WUL [membership] cards. According to a statement in the card, only those subscribing to the class struggle can be members of the WUL. The RILU or the Comintern have never put the question that way. We must learn not to be so mechanical and on every occasion, without consideration of situation, raise the phrase 'there must be no hiding of the face of the party'.50

One of the best examples of the WUL's growing concern for preparation is provided by the Dominion Wheel moulders' strike in St. Boniface, Manitoba, in September 1931. At this plant near Winnipeg the WUL established a small local of its Steel and Metal Workers' Industrial Union (SMWIU) early in 1931. The union made no open response to a wage cut imposed in July, but continued to recruit new members. By September, when management announced fresh wage cuts, a number of lay-offs and one discharge, around half of the plant's 85 workers were in the union. On 7 September, Michael Biniowsky, Secretary of the WUL District Council, politely informed the company that the union could not accept the recent changes, suggested that all of them be

rescinded, and asked that in future it deal with a union shop committee, through which any proposed changes in conditions of employment should be submitted for consideration thirty days in advance. When the company ignored this letter, Biniowsky wrote again, this time informing Dominion Wheel that if union terms were not granted by 11 September, the plant would be struck. For the first time management recognized the union's existence, but only to post a notice in the plant suggesting that the union "cease to function before September 15, 1931." Its demands rejected, the SMWIU proceeded to shut down the plant on the appointed date.[51]

It immediately became obviously that the WUL had prepared the strike well. On the first morning around 200 NUWA members arrived to set up a mass picket of the plant. This was maintained throughout the strike. On the second morning round-the-clock picketing was established, with small groups patrolling the perimeter of the plant and a larger group massing at the main gates. Attempts to bring in strikebreakers were repelled by extremely militant action, much to the dismay of the company and the Manitoba Provincial Police. The latter had to stand by watching their St. Boniface counterparts give the strikers virtually free rein to beat up strikebreakers, St. Boniface's mayor, David Campbell, having refused to cede police jurisdiction

in the strike to the provincial force.[52]

The union effectively integrated the strikers' wives and families into the struggle. Women were encouraged to participate in the relief effort headed by Rose Shelley. She organized a Workers' International Relief (WIR) strike kitchen in the Ukrainian Labour Temple, which was also used as temporary accommodation for pickets on the night-shift. Women and children were also encouraged to participate in mass meetings and public demonstrations, and were prominent in a parade of strikers and sympathisers who marched from the Ukrainian Temple to the City Hall to back up the strike committee then in conference with Mayor Campbell. The Manitoba Free Press was much impressed by their "orderly" deportment.[53]

In concluding the strike the union did not follow the WUL's official proscription of arbitration and conciliation procedures. It accepted Campbell's suggestion that his namesake, Dominion Conciliation Officer M. S. Campbell, be invited to attempt a settlement. Within hours of his arrival on 17 September agreement had been reached, with almost all of the strikers' original demands conceded. The only exception was that the dismissed moulder would be taken back as a labourer. The union duly rejoiced at this decisive victory.[54]

An interesting sidelight on the SMWIU's tactics is the presentation of the strike in the Worker. The party paper ignored the role of Mayor Campbell and the unusually cordial relationship between the strikers and the local police. It also omitted to mention that the strike had been ended by resort to state mediation. Instead, it exclusively emphasized the issue of unemployed solidarity. The strike "proved" that the contention that the unemployed would scab on strikes was a "fallacy": "the strike proved that not only will the unemployed not scab, but that they will actively help to win the strike."[55] The paper was surely justified in making this point, though whether it should have generalized so confidently from one positive example is another matter. If organizers elsewhere had assumed that militancy and solidarity would always be sufficient to win every strike, they would have left themselves open to defeat and demoralization. As the St. Boniface strike demonstrated, however, men and women with local knowledge and enough tactical boldness to manipulate official guidelines could lead successful strikes even in the depths of the depression.

Yet such successes were still rare. As reports from organizers throughout the country made clear, the WUL remained a paper organization in the summer of 1931. Its actual trade union membership stood at less than 7,000, of which perhaps little more than a thousand had been organized

since the WUL's formation, the vast bulk coming from unions which were in existence before 1930 (Table 4-III). It took a tremendous effort of will to launch Workers'

Table 4-III

WORKERS' UNITY LEAGUE TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP, JULY 1931

UNION	MEMBERS
MINE WORKERS' UNION OF CANADA*	3200
LUMBER WORKERS' INDUSTRIAL UNION*	1400
INDUSTRIAL UNION OF NEEDLE TRADES' WORKERS*	1200
METAL MINERS (Ontario)	250
FOOD WORKERS (Winnipeg, Toronto, Port Arthur)	117
DOMESTIC SERVANTS (Toronto, Montreal, S.S. Marie, Windsor, Kirkland Lake, Sudbury)	114
STEELWORKERS (Winnipeg, Hamilton)	99
RAILWAY WORKERS' OPPOSITION	72
MINERS' OPPOSITION (Nova Scotia)	69
BUILDING TRADES' OPPOSITION (Toronto)	49
	6570

Source: PAO-CPP, 3A 2310, Tom Ewan to James Sloan, 30 July 1931

* Unions existing before the WUL's formation

Unity as the League's independent mouthpiece in July. The claim in its first editorial that it would be "hailed by hundreds of thousands of exploited workers from mine, mill

and factory, as well as from that other permanent institution of capitalism - the bread line, AS THEIR PAPER" was belied by the fact that months of wheedling from the centre before its launch had failed to raise the necessary 3,000 subscribers for Post Office mailing privileges.[56]

There had been no automatic translation of economic crisis into working class militancy. In industries other than coal mining 1930 saw the lowest time loss in man-days since the turn of the century (67,614), the fewest strikes (52) and the fourth lowest number of strikers (7,540). There was an upturn in struggle in 1931, with 79 strikes, 8,609 strikers and 192,715 striker days, but most of it could be attributed to a relatively small number of long strikes in large workplaces; for example, almost 50,000 striker days were accounted for by two LWIU strikes in British Columbia.[57] 1932 saw more strikes (83), many more strikers (14,850) but fewer striker days (122,234). Thus there was an upward trend in the level of struggle since the onset of mass unemployment, but one that hardly represented a mass counter-offensive against capitalist attack. For the most part workers still lacked the confidence to engage in open struggle. They undoubtedly also lacked confidence in the WUL, not just because it was a new and untried force, but also because of the atmosphere of sectarianism and state hostility that surrounded the

communist movement.

The arrest of the CPC's leaders in August 1931, followed by their trial and incarceration under Section 98 of the Criminal Code, was only the high-point of an official campaign of anti-communist repression launched in Toronto towards the end of 1928.[58] This campaign was at its height between 1930-1932 when it reached into every region of the country and took a variety of forms, ranging from the confiscation of imported reading matter such as the RILU Magazine to more debilitating kinds of physical harassment.[59] Whatever its purpose, its function was to expose the riskiness of flirting with communism.

Most provincial and major city police forces were keeping files on radical activities by the early 1930s, augmenting the well-established intelligence gathering resources of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and Department of National Defence (DND). Although, as one historian has argued, the operational autonomy of the various coercive forces prevented the development of "a uniform approach" to the communist threat, whenever communists seemed to pose a challenge to the established order, national, provincial and municipal forces were usually able to coordinate their forces to good effect. The state's failure to carry out a more comprehensive purge

was determined less by the "jealously guarded jurisdictions" of the different forces than by the political context in which the Canadian state exercised its overall "coercion function". While total suppression of the small revolutionary left was physically possible, the political implications were too unpredictable to take conclusive action.[60]

It scarcely mattered which level of the state was in action at any given moment: the end result was invariably to throw the party on the defensive. At times it almost seemed as if city police forces were vying to contest the championship won by the Toronto force in 1928-29. In Winter 1930-31 the Montreal Police Department imposed a total ban on communist meetings and launched a massive campaign, in Eugene Forsey's phrase, "to preserve the city's intellectual virginity from the perils of free speech."[61] The Vancouver Police Department was at the same time engaged in ferocious struggles with the unemployed movement, still vividly recalled by participants almost fifty years later. In April 1931 a raid on the headquarters of the WUL and NUWA resulted in the seizure of all correspondence and records, masses of literature and the office mimeograph machine![62] Similar raids were carried out in June by combined city, provincial and RCMP forces in Calgary and Victoria.[63] In all probability these were tied up with

preparations for the August arrests.[64]

These crack-downs successfully intimidated party members. While the Vancouver Unemployed Worker hurled defiance at the state, local leaders privately admitted their reluctance to defy bans on public meetings.[65] In Victoria, with the best known leader of the unemployed movement, Ronald Stewart, in prison on "sedition" charges, the movement was driven underground.[66] In Calgary there was total confusion: "everything is in the air ... everyone is suspicious of everyone else and comrades can't trust anyone."[67] Then, of course, came the August raids, which had an even more traumatic impact on the party. The decapitated party prepared for mass arrests, launched an internal purge of "unreliable" elements and rigorously tightened discipline.[68]

Deportation was another useful disciplinary weapon. In the 1925-30 period deportations averaged 2,223 a year. Between 1930-36, however, the annual average was 4,126 deportations.[69] Precisely how many of those deported were communists is unclear, but at least four prominent French or British-born organizers were deported at this time: George Dubois (Montreal to France), Allen Campbell (Vancouver to Scotland), David Chalmers (Montreal to Scotland) and Jim Barker (Port Arthur to England).[70] The Department of Immigration kept special files on foreign-born communists,

and there was pressure on it from various quarters to facilitate and expedite deportation proceedings, although all Immigration Minister Wesley A. Gordon would consent to was intensified RCMP surveillance of suspected communists.[71] As various commentators observed, fear of deportation effectively cowed many foreign-born workers. Montreal policemen regularly interrupted dances and socials at Ukrainian and Russian left wing clubs to interrogate those present on their citizenship status.[72] On one occasion the Toronto "Red Squad" apprehended the communist cartoonist Avron Yanovsky and threatened him with "deportation, jail and 'throwing in the river'" if he continued to produce his irreverent drawings.[73]

If the number of active organizers lost to the CPC through deportations was relatively small, many more were temporarily lost to the movement as a result of jail sentences. Canadian courts were inhospitable places for radicals in the early 1930s. Apart from the "Kingston 8", party members who served at least a year in jail included Harry Binder, Annie Buller, Allan Campbell, Arthur Evans, David Kashtan, Izzy Minster, Fred Rose and Sam Scarlett. Given the prevailing ideological climate communists could not always be certain of a scrupulously fair trial. As Stanley Hanson shows in his study of the Estevan strike trials, prosecution evidence was used creatively; judges

rarely hesitated to give prejudicial summations; and the Saskatchewan Attorney-General's Department never felt sufficiently constrained by sub judice conventions to desist from making hostile anti-communist statements. In most of the trials, Hanson concluded, "certain circumstances are puzzling, while others make their fairness suspect."[74] MWUC organizer James Bryson was convicted on a "vagrancy" charge after Judge Ousley ruled that his job did not exist, since the MWUC was not a bona fide labour organization.[75] In Montreal five prominent YCL leaders were convicted of "seditious utterance" despite the admission of three different courts that the Montreal Police Department had failed to produce the specific examples of verbal sedition needed for conviction.[76]

Not every communist who came before the courts had no chance of acquittal. As the Canadian Labor Defender (organ of the CLDL) shows, communists often won cases on appeal or were found guilty of reduced charges. Yet it seems highly likely that persecution discouraged the growth of the left. We must then ask the question: why was there so little popular resistance to anti-communist attacks? One partial explanation is the isolation of the left brought about by its own sectarianism, a feature that was coming strongly to the fore precisely when repression was approaching its climax.

Third period sectarianism was a phenomenon most Canadian Communists would prefer to forget. One hardly gains any real sense of the polemical temper of the early 1930s from the CPC's recent official history, for example.[77] Nor is the published version of Tim Buck's memoirs any more helpful. Buck admits that "rather serious errors" were made, but calmly disassociates himself from any responsibility for them, implying that they were made during his stay in Kingston Penitentiary.[78] In fact, the Canadian party moved swiftly into line behind the Comintern's designation of social democratic parties as the "main threat" to the working class during the period of revolutionary upsurge. Socialists and trade union leaders, international and national, became the "fascist shock troops of the capitalist class entrusted with the task of crushing the workers by traitorous double-dealing, strike-breaking and support to the police-terror ... under the guise of 'combatting communism'."[79] Occasionally, violence of the tongue was matched by violence of the act. Ewan congratulated Windsor communists who had broken up a J. S. Woodsworth meeting: "Glad to see you gave Jimmy such a hot time; those bastards should be howled out of every working class meeting, not only because they are fakers but because they are the worst type of traitor to the unemployed and employed alike."[80] Those supreme "traitors", the tiny band of Canadian Trotskyists learned to expect physical harassment.[81] Some

party members did show concern at the indiscriminate abuse of "social fascists"; the vast majority considered their attacks totally justified.[82]

Party leaders actually professed to welcome repression. It proved they were a force to be reckoned with, a "definite power and a challenge".[83] In part this was a case of whistling in the dark, but it also helped preserve sectarian attitudes. With events apparently unfolding according to Comintern predictions, it was easy to overlook the element of self-fulfilling prophecy in designating non-communist opponents as social fascists then subjecting them to continuous vilification. After 18 months of taking one insult after another, even the saintliest of labourites would have had difficulty in dredging up the spirit of forgiveness when the iron heel fihally dropped on the party's neck.

Labour's muted response to the August arrests was pre-figured in the justifiable resentment shown by some of the party's prime targets. J. S. Woodsworth considered that communist tactics not only reflected total disregard of "honour and fair play", but sorely weakened the struggle against capitalism and unemployment.[84] Veteran Vancouver socialist Ernest Burns voiced what must have been a particularly perplexing complaint for many in the non-party left: that the closer an individual was to the party

politically, without actually joining it, "the more vigorous are the denunciations of that particular individual by these self-appointed saviors of the working class."[85] When the arrests took place, a sense of good-riddance must have clashed with the basic appeal of solidarity. The Vancouver Labor Statesman may well have voiced a general feeling when it stated that, while every working class group under state attack deserved automatic support, "our Communist friends make it next to impossible for us to give them any assistance."[86] Many unions and labour organizations did in fact sign CLDL petitions against the arrests and for the repeal of Section 98 of the Criminal Code, but that was the limit of solidarity for the vast majority.[87]

Working class movements are based on the instincts of unity and solidarity, a fact the CPC recognized when it gave the Workers' Unity League its name. In its practice, however, the WUL must have seemed to many a negation of these instinctive virtues. The WUL's intention was not just to complement the existing trade union movement by organizing the unorganized, but to replace it with a revolutionary alternative. As early as November 1929, party discipline had to be imposed against members in the garment industry who had not yet abandoned their unions for the IUNTW.[88] A few months later, the party itself was called to task by the Comintern for its tardiness in setting up a

revolutionary rival to the 'social fascist" MWUC.[89] The elite of party activists chosen for RILU training (by correspondence) early in 1930 were disabused of any residual doubt they might have possessed about breaking decisively with united front tactics. The RILU, they were informed, had never "created a fetish" of trade union unity. The latter was only a means to an end: "The object is the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat, and the conquest of the majority of the working class for that struggle."[90] And since the working class was inexorably moving towards communism, there was no need to prop up moribund unions any longer.

Trade unionists who opposed the revolutionizing of the trade union movement were "objectively" class traitors. This meant not only the Moores and Moshers, or sceptical party activists like Salsberg and Stokaluk, but also rank and file trade unionists. The President of the MWUC Coalhurst local, J. Pantorolo, on voicing his opposition to the MWUC's proposed disaffiliation from the ACCL was accused of having sold out the Lethbridge miners some years earlier. When he then changed his mind, it was immediately discovered that the accusation was false.[91] The facility with which communists slipped into and out of character assassination may well have boosted their opponents' status. It certainly gave the left a reckless image which boded ill

for its capacity to meet the challenge of the moment.[92]

The struggle against reformist trade unionism caused numerous complications. From the centre, the troubles of the reformist unions could be regarded with delight; on the ground, communist organizers were more ambivalent. While Ewan considered that the inability of the railroad unions to protect conditions and maintain their memberships created exceptional opportunities for launching a revolutionary railroad workers' union, Ben Winter reported from Winnipeg that the drift of members away from the unions reflected a general feeling of impotence rather than any groundswell of support for militant unionism. Ewan gave the matter some thought and decided on a rather complex policy: stop encouraging unorganized workers to join the reformist unions; discourage disaffected workers from leaving them; encourage both groups to join WUL Oppositions.[93] On occasion, the party recognized the WUL's inability to organize the unorganized independently. In February 1931 the party fraction in the WUL was deadlocked over its policy regarding metal miners, smelter workers and oil workers; whether to create a new industrial union or form oppositions in the MWUC (which had not yet affiliated to the WUL) and UMWA.[94] The MWUC example actually underlined how an orientation on oppositional work in "social fascist" unions could produce rewards. The party defied a direct order from the Inter-

national Committee of Revolutionary Miners to establish a new revolutionary miners' union in opposition to the MWUC and by patient solicitation gradually won its affiliation in May 1931.[95] Yet despite this example, the general line remained one of drawing workers out of the reformist unions and into new revolutionary industrial unions. As the WUL programme issued after the organization's First National Convention in August 1932 stated, the object of opposition work was to smash the influence of the trade union bureaucracy while "resolutely fighting the illusions that the reactionary trade union apparatus can be won over to the class struggle and winning the workers for the revolutionary trade union movement."[96] Ultimately, the difficulties of carrying the sectarian line inside the established unions produced widespread disablement, as numerous official statements on the "weakness" and "underestimation" of oppositional work made clear.[97]

Sectarianism lost the communist movement the automatic solidarity it could have expected when faced with the full coercive power of the state. It also masked the WUL's practical incapacity to organize the unorganized independently and actually diverted communists from the task: it was always easier to deride an opponent's failings than to analyse their own in a realistic way. Nevertheless, communists were capable of learning from experience, and

when they integrated practical lessons with their unparalleled energy, they were able to carry the struggle forward. Concrete examination of campaigns in the Nova Scotia mines and the British Columbia lumber industry demonstrates this point.

The decline of the CPC in Cape Breton in the late 1920s was noted in the previous chapter. By January 1929 about 10 communists were meeting occasionally, "but only as a labor club, and not very active at that."[98] By the middle of the year, however, Murdoch Clarke, a young miner from the large Phalen local in Glace Bay had come to the fore as local organizer of the YCL. He began carefully to seek out militants, organize left wing pit groups and rebuild the party.[99] By the end of the year Clarke was working towards a new secessionist movement in concert with the recently appointed District Organizer, Jim Barker, and a rejuvenated J. B. McLachlan. According to Barker, McLachlan was the first to urge an open campaign of secession, a suggestion opposed by the majority on the grounds that a more patient approach would allow "the machine of Lewis" to discredit itself and protect the militants from isolation "as disrupters, etc." When Barker's report was read to the CPC Political Committee, the Cape Bretoners' analysis of the situation was rejected as displaying, in Malcolm Bruce's phrase, an "attitude of

passivity". The Political Committee duly ordered Barker to make a "sharp clear policy of attack upon the district fakers" and sent him $100 to get on with the job.[100]

December 1929 saw the simultaneous launching of the "Left Wing Movement" and its organ, the Nova Scotia Miner.[101] By February the NSM was openly advocating the creation of a Mine Workers' Industrial Union (MWIU) under rank-and-file control.[102] The party probably wanted to announce the advent of the WUL with as big a bang as its resources would allow. In the first six months of the WUL,

Table 4-IV

WORKERS' UNITY LEAGUE EXPENDITURES FOR THE PERIOD 1 NOVEMBER 1929 TO 1 JULY 1930

Industry	Expenditure	Percentage
GARMENT	$942.25	34.8
COAL (1) NOVA SCOTIA	592.25	21.6
COAL (2) ALBERTA	236.00	8.9
RAILWAY SHOPMEN	202.00	7.5
LUMBER	93.00	3.5
OTHER (office expenses)	639.00	23.7
	$2705.00	100.0

Source: PAO-CPP, 10C 1797-8

the Cape Breton drive was its second largest industrial expenditure (Table 4-IV). At the party's urging the Cape Breton comrades issued a call for the MWIU convention on 15 March 1930, coincidentally the date on which the WUL's existence was first acknowledged in The Worker.[103]

Despite Barker's and Clarke's optimistic predictions to the centre that the UMWA was finished, not all left wingers in Glace Bay were so certain. One wrote to the NSM agreeing with the idea of a new union as "a good thing for everyone who is prepared to follow". In his opinion, however, very few were so prepared.[104] But the party was now committed to an immediate launch of the MWIU. Ewan travelled to Cape Breton to attend the convention in person, bearing a letter from the WUL Provisional Executive Committee calling for the miners to forge "new weapons of struggle" against capitalist rationalization and the UMWA, an irredeemably corrupt organization which relied on "bribery, gangsterism and betrayal" to survive. It further called for a revival of the spirit of 1922 (when the Truro convention of District 26 voted to affiliate to the RILU) and organization of a union standing "squarely on a programme of relentless struggle and working class UNITY against all the enemies of the working class."[105] The Sydney convention, dominated by left wing delegates from the Phalen and 1B locals, voted to give Ewan "voice and vote" and elected

McLaohlan and Clarke chairman and secretary of proceedings.[106]

It should have been obvious that the Sydney delegates represented no-one but themselves. Only Phalen and 1B were officially represented, which meant effectively that the remaining 23 locals in District 26 repudiated the affair. It was also clear that even some of those present were leery of the convention's ultra-radical tone. One delegate from the Glace Bay Mechanics' Local opposed the prominence being given to Communist Party members, on the grounds that the prevailing national atmosphere of anti-communism would militate against the secession's future prospects. He was willing to work with Communists, but was most in favour of linking up with the MWUC, and even then only if the entire district was ready for a clean break. A small delegation from the Westville local of the MWUC (that organization's sole local outside Alberta) predictably supported this position, adding that the slurs against the MWUC were unjustified; it, too, was a fighting organization, not the "narrow chauvinistic" body Ewan portrayed. The Westville intervention was immediately followed by heated speeches from Clarke and Ewan, the former emphasizing that the miners had "no choice, they must fight if they are to survive ... Nothing can be gained by conciliation, as the present conditions of the miners prove",

the latter adding that a purely class struggle policy was gaining in mass appeal, as the solidarity given to recent strikes of Port Arthur lumberworkers and Hamilton steel car workers had demonstrated.[107]

At this point McLachlan intervened, noting probably as much for the benefit of Clarke and Ewan as for the non-Communists present: "We are not here to build a Communist Party." At the same time he criticised attacks on Clarke, who as a young miner blacklisted by Dosco needed full support and who was correct in emphasizing that the new union should have no truck with class collaboration. Only a rank and file union controlled by pit committees, McLachlan concluded, was worth considering.[108] Thus McLachlan expressed his support for a split, while quietly suggesting that his comrades curb their rhetorical excesses and show more sensitivity to rank and file sentiments. This had little impact on Clarke and Ewan. As soon as the convention voted to launch the MWIU, they moved to have McLachlan and Clarke elected President and Secretary. McLachlan, however, declined the nomination, saying that he would only accept union office if the rank and file supported him - a scarcely veiled hint that he had doubts about the convention's representative character. Clarke immediately rose to express his "entire disapproval" of McLachlan's position. Missing most of McLachlan's point,

he held that the stage had long been passed when public opinion was of any account. Ewan agreed, not only because McLachlan had consistently carried rank and file support until his removal by the "Lewis machine", but also because "whatever we anticipated might be said by certain elements in opposition to the union, would be said anyway."[109] In the end a compromise was reached, with the election of a three man Provisional Executive (McLachlan, Clarke and Rankin MacDonald, another Communist), none of the three having a specific office.

The triumvirate quickly issued a provisional constitution claiming that the MWIU already represented "the majority of the rank and file miners in District 26."[110] This was sheer fantasy. In the ensuing months the revolutionary union failed "to get a single UMWA local to go over", and when the UMWA proceeded to expel every known MWIU member, no mass protest developed. Instead a vigorous red-baiting assault on the MWIU and CPC began, with the UMWA, Catholic church and local press combining to present the leaders of the new union as "men with a gun in each hip-pocket, a dagger in one hand and a torch in the other to burn all the churches, and create havoc in general."[111] Such strong disagreements developed between McLachlan and Barker that the centre decided to send McLachlan on a trip to the Soviet Union to "save" him - although Ewan wondered

whether he was worth the trouble.[112] Meanwhile, Barker was the main target for systematic police harassment. When he asked Toronto for advice on how to respond, Buck suggested only that he console himself with the thought that attacks represented proof of "the rapid sharpening of the struggle and the general crisis in Nova Scotia."[113] Such cold comfort was not good enough for Barker, who by the summer had become (by his own description) the "most hated individual in Nova Scotia". Even local comrades preferred to send their subscriptions "direct to the centre rather than allow me to do so." Unemployed and pennniless, he decided to pull out of Cape Breton whether the centre approved or not.[114] The MWIU adventure was over.

District 26 remained "the most decisive [section] of the miners of Canada", and hence too important to abandon. But, one comrade warned, if progress was to be made there in the future, it was essential that the party learn not to "make the mistake ... of jumping in and laying down a rigid bolshevik rule, saying to the miners 'accept this or go back to the reformists'." That way lay the certainty of "abject defeat".[115] Fortunately for the WUL, its anti-UMWA policy in Cape Breton was simplified by its success in winning over the MWUC. In future, in any fresh attempt to split the UMWA the WUL could offer a genuine mass organization as its replacement. After the Alberta union held its first convention as a WUL affiliate in September 1931, the

WUL launched a drive to unify the two unions.[116]

In the year after Barker's ignominious departure, the party did much to restore its influence. It revived some left wing pit groups, appointed an effective new District Organizer in Bill Matheson, and perhaps most important of all, repaired its strained relationship with J. B. McLachlan.[117] In June 1931 McLachlan resumed the editorship of the NSM, which had folded in the aftermath of the MWIU fiasco. Despite shaky finances, the paper acted as the organizing nucleus for the left's new drive against the UMWA.[118]

Rank and file antagonism against the UMWA was underpinned by the steady decline of the Nova Scotia coal industry (Table 4-V). Between 1929-1933 coal production in the province declined by 43 per cent, and although this resulted in a relatively low unemployment level of 9 per cent, by 1931 most of those still in work were subsisting on three shifts a week; in other words, underemployment was the standard experience of the Nova Scotia miner.[114] By itself, however, economic hardship would not necessarily have been a sufficiently compelling argument to support breaking the UMWA. McLachlan knew that unity remained a key concept with the average miner, and that the UMWA leadership would not hesitate to play on an essentially admirable sentiment. He therefore had to break the

authority of the UMWA district executive and convince the miners that, far from endangering unity, a split would actually strengthen it. Successive issues of the Miner were devoted to these two basic tasks.

Table 4-V

UNEMPLOYMENT, UNDEREMPLOYMENT AND COAL PRODUCTION IN THE NOVA SCOTIA COAL INDUSTRY, 1929-1933

Year	No. employed	Total days worked	Per capita days worked	Annual output (m tons)
1929	13,060	3.26 m	249.6	6.34
1930	12,708	3.00 m	235.3	6.45
1931	12,987	2.57 m	197.0	4.75
1932	12,711	2.06 m	162.0	3.77
1933	11,884	1.86 m	156.5	3.66

Source: Province of Nova Scotia, Department of Public Works, Annual Report on Mines, 1929-1933

It was a given of Communist theory that members of the trade union bureaucracy no longer shared the material interests of the working class. To illustrate this thesis, McLachlan published a table of the annual incomes of District 26 executive members. This disclosed that the average for the eleven men was $2,800, most of which came from "the looted and ravaged pay envelopes of men who have been earning between four and six hundred dollars during

the same period." He cited in particular the case of District 26 President Dan Willie Morrison, who added to his union income of $3,499.10 the Glace Bay mayor's stipend of $1,000 and $1,145 in expenses from the federal government for his work on the Canadian delegation at the International Labour Organization in Geneva. "Verily", McLachlan observed, "the crisis has not reached him."[120] Yet this was the man who had the temerity to preach working class unity as an unbreakable principle. McLachlan agreed that when miners were faced with unemployment, short-time and deteriorating working conditions unity was absolutely fundamental. But unity was only meaningful when it was used to defend workers' interests. All the UMWA could offer was compulsory arbitration of major disputes, a form of unity that played into the hands of Dosco by leaving the "broad rank and file":

> unitedly chained to prevent effective action, unitedly gagged to prevent effective protest, unitedly sold by labour fakers and Tories to increase the profits of the boss. United in poverty, united in docility, united in slavery, while the food is stolen from [their] children and the clothes off their backs, to enrich idlers.

The inescapable decision for all miners who valued the life and happiness of their families was to form a fighting union.[121]

While McLachlan polemicised against the UMWA, he was simultaneously rebuilding the party. Some of the old

vigour of the early 1920s returned to left wing life. The Glace Bay Workers' Educational Club revived and the NSM further assisted the dissemination of radical ideas by pushing sales of titles from the CPUSA's International Publishers. Among titles of obvious local interest were Anna Rochester's Labor and Coal and Anthony Bimba's The Molly Maquires. Other titles, such as John Reed's Ten Days That Shook The World and Nadezhda Krupskaya's Memories of Lenin reflected a revival of interest in the Soviet Union (something of a general phenomenon at this point), as did the formation of a Friends of the Soviet Union (FSU) branch in September 1931, with McLachlan as Secretary, and the emigration of a party of eight Slavic miners, one with his family, to the Soviet Union's Donbas region.[122] McLachlan, himself, finally visited Russia in the winter of 1931-32. He sent back several enthusiastic reports of his Soviet experiences for the NSM, and returned in mid-January to provide a number of packed meetings with glowing accounts of the land where "Socialism lives and grows."[123]

McLachlan's return from the USSR coincided with the climaxing of the secessionist movement that produced the Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia (AMW) in June 1932. The Communist role in this process has hitherto been erroneously presented, as in the claim that Tom Ewan made a

personal trip to Cape Breton in a last-ditch attempt to stifle at birth a union it had always opposed.[124] Ewan was actually in Kingston Penitentiary at the time, and the party was now much more sensitive to developments at the periphery. By March 1932 the WUL was aware that Nova Scotia dissidents planned to form a union that would reflect their sense of regional identity. This was not what it wanted, now that its own MWUC was ready and willing to accommodate the Nova Scotia secessionists. McLachlan urged affiliation to the MWUC and managed to convince several UMWA locals to invite the Alberta union's President, James Sloan, to make a personal appeal for affiliation. In April and May Sloan and new WUL Secretary James Litterick toured the Cape Breton coalfield and according to the Nova Scotia Miner were warmly received. The two men made a strong pitch for affiliation to the MWUC, but were scarcely in a position to insist that this be done. Instead, they restricted themselves to an appeal that whatever name or affiliation the secessionists gave their union, the union itself should have a class struggle orientation and be an inhospitable place for careerists.[125]

The AMW never did become an affiliate of the WUL, despite several attempts to have it merge with the MWUC. Within the dissident group there was a parochial particularism of which communists were disapprovingly aware, but were

willing to accept simply to get rid of the UMWA. There were also political differences among the secessionists. Clairie Gillis, later a prominent CCFer, was accused of being a Tory cipher by the Nova Scotia Miner, and there was undoubtedly a range of political opinion that had to be kept united. Nevertheless, in its day to day practice the AMW acted and was perceived as a "red" union.[126] Shortly after its formation, the AMW's communist Secretary Bob Stewart wrote to Litterick thanking him for the invaluable assistance rendered by Bill Matheson and expressing "trust that the friendly relations between our organizations will continue and that in future we will be found fighting side by side in the common struggle."[127] The AMW subsequently proved a rather more hospitable place for communists than the UMWA had been since 1925. The independent union assisted CLDL and FSU campaigns, and sent at least moral support to WUL unions on strike. When it was on strike, the WUL reciprocated with considerable financial support.[128] For present purposes, the important point is that the WUL proved its flexibility and willingness to compromise. In doing so, it regained influence among the miners and enhanced their capacity for struggle.

When the Lumber Workers' Industrial Union (LWIU) was launched in British Columbia in 1929 there had been no substantial union activity in the logging and sawmill

industries since the demise of the OBU in 1921.[130] As with every new communist union, it came into the world facing an uncertain future. It had no funds and its single full-time organizer had to subsist on whatever dues he could extract from new recruits. Yet before the union lay an industry of huge geographical scope and a labour market giving every advantage to capital. By 1931 unemployment in the sawmills stood at 30 per cent and in the logging sector, which had been particularly affected by the Smoot-Hawley tariff, at around 50 per cent.[131]

The enormity of the task facing the LWIU can best be grasped by noting that union membership at the end of 1930, in an industry normally employing around 11,000 loggers and 8,000 mill workers, stood at 77.[132] The CPC reconciled this tiny figure with its thesis of imminent mass radicalization by finding the union's original leadership guilty of "confusion and inactivity" in the face of the workers clearly expressed "spirit of militancy and determination to fight." The new leadership elected at the union's provincial convention in February 1931 immediately adopted a more forceful approach.[133] By June it had four organizers touring Vancouver Island, from where they reported an enthusiastic response from loggers "broke for the most part ... [but] becoming more radical and looking to the revolutionary leadership of the CI."[134] But despite

this burst of activity in the logging camps, it was in the sawmills of the lower mainland that the union enjoyed its first organizational breakthrough.

The annual report of the B.C. Department of Labour for 1931 showed that 49,715 of the 79,310 days lost in strikes that year were the responsibility of the LWIU, "an unaffiliated union [this was incorrect], which has been very active in the industry."[135] Almost all of the LWIU's total was accounted for by two sawmill strikes, of which the largest, at the Canadian Western Lumber Company complex (usually referred to as Fraser Mills) near Coquitlam, represented the real birth of the union.[136]

LWIU organizers had always considered Fraser Mills one of the "key" mills in the industry. They had tried to organize it in 1930, but the attempt ended in failure with the firing of several unionists.[137] They nevertheless managed to keep a number of contacts there under cover. In July 1931 the contacts were able to report that the fourth wage-cut in a year had provoked widespread anger on the shopfloor. Again the union sent in organizers to sign up new members, and this time workers flocked into the organization, perhaps encouraged by the knowledge that it had recently carried out a successful strike at the Barnet Mill in nearby New Westminster, for the removal of an unpopular bonus system.[138] Within two months the union was

claiming that 75 per cent of the thousand-strong workforce had taken out cards. Early in September the union submitted a list of demands - union recognition, equal pay for equal work regardless of race or marital status, overtime at time and a half, and the abolition of Asian contract labour. When the company responded by ignoring the demands and firing several unionists, the LWIU called a strike on 16 September. Ten weeks later, on 23 November, the workers accepted a compromise settlement granting wage increases and recognition of a mill committee.[139]

In winning its limited victory the LWIU had to overcome numerous difficulties. One of the most serious was the racially and ethnically divided character of the workforce. The largest single group in the mill were French Canadians from the adjacent company town of Maillardville, while a substantial minority were Chinese, Japanese or East Indian, many of whom lived in dormitories on the site. Racial division was consciously manipulated by wage discrimination against the "orientals". (This was standard throughout the industry.) In addition, Chinese and Japanese workers were in many cases isolated by the contract labour system, and all Asian workers were "very, very afraid of being shipped back" to their native countries. The French Canadians' Roman Catholicism was a similar problem. The church, virtually a client of the company, was

Maillardville's dominant community institution. During the strike the local curé's strongly anti-union line was a constant threat to solidarity.[140]

The workforce was also sectionalized along skill lines. The skilled shingle weavers formed a definite aristocracy of labour. Some had union experience as members of Vancouver's Shingle Weavers' Federal Labour Union No. 17813 (SWU), an exclusively white craft organization. These sawyers and packers retained a strong degree of craft control even during the depression; the most highly skilled could earn up to $6 a day in 1931.[141] For common labour, on the other hand, "there was no set wages ... it was more or less so, if you got on with the boss he proposed that you get a raise."[142] Notwithstanding their capacity to preserve their corporate interests, some of the Fraser Mills shingle weavers were beginning to break with the exclusivist, racist traditions of their craft. One who was considering the possibility of inclusive industrial unionism was Harold Pritchett, a young, highly skilled sawyer with considerable trade union and political experience. At the time of the strike he was a member of the ILP (Socialist), but soon after its commencement he joined the CPC. The winning over of this "key" worker was a minor coup for the party and the industrial union.[143]

The key to the LWIU's ability to maintain high morale throughout most of the ten weeks of the strike was its undogmatic tactical approach. At no time, for example, did it go out of its way to "expose the labour fakers" of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council. One of the union's soundest moves was to lobby and win VTLC support early in the strike. This did not amount to much in material terms, but in successfully inducing VTLC President Percy Bengough to protest against the excessive "anxiety displayed by the authorities to take sides with this notoriously unfair company", the union neatly engineered an escape from isolation and the predictable accusations that the LWIU was not a bona fide trade union. Union organizer Glen Lamont publicly insisted that politics had nothing whatever to do with the strike: "the real issue was the right to organize and bargain collectively."[144] Every trade unionist could sympathize with aims such as these.

Lamont and his colleagues were equally flexible on the religion issue. While they refused to conceal the union's affiliations with the WUL and RILU, they were sufficiently aware of the dangers of clerical anti-communism to refrain from gestures that might provoke a clash of loyalties. When the Archbishop of Vancouver condemned the strike and had the local priest deny religious ministrations to strikers, the union left any political inferences

implicit and instead successfully sought a priest willing to defy the Archbishop's dictat. Every Sunday thereafter a convoy of cars ferried French Canadian strikers to mass in nearby Sapperton.[145]

Union organizers were brilliantly successful in mobilizing the community behind the strikers. Despite a massive presence of provincial police that made Fraser Mills look "more like an army camp than anything else", the union managed to maintain enthusiasm on the picket lines and prevent all but a small amount of strikebreaking. It was able to call on several hundred members of the Vancouver and New Westminster unemployed movement for picket duty and won the overwhelming support of the strikers' families. Many French Canadian women were active not only in the traditional roles of running the strike kitchen and raising funds but also as some of the most militant pickets. A branch of the Women's Labour League was formed during the strike. It organized a "sympathy strike" of schoolchildren on the day that the first strikers charged with picket-line offences came before the Coquitlam magistrates. Women and children formed a noisy throng as the heroes and villains of the struggle entered and left the courthouse. As Workers' Unity hopefully observed, the children learned "at a very early age what a strike and a scab means".[146] This high degree of family participation neutralized the potentially

damaging impact of domestic discord and thereby prevented rapid demoralization. Similarly, the union's anti-racist principles earned the support, albeit for the most part passive, of the Asian workforce. With the partial exception of some Japanese workers, one French Canadian has remembered, Asians "didn't come very strong on the picket line ... [but] they never scabbed and ... never bumped the union."[147]

Despite these successes the union was unable to gain total victory, largely because an important minority of the strikers, clustered around an anti-communist employee and local councillor named Allard, opposed the LWIU's militant leadership and argued for consideration of a compromise offer made by the company as the strike entered its second month. This consisted of wage increases ranging between 4 per cent and 7½ per cent and recognition of a mill committee, and was to be decided by a ballot, supervised by Coquitlam municipal council and F. E. Harrison, provincial representative of the federal Department of Labour. The company sent out ballot papers to the workforce, and although the strikers immediately turned them over to the union organizers, the first breach in the wall of solidarity had been made. By the sixth week of the strike the New Westminster British Columbian was alleging that only the union's politically motivated insistence on recognition stood in the way of an immediate return to work. When the LWIU responded by denying that it had ever

insisted on recognition, it showed itself to be on the defensive; its further claim that union recognition was in any case "a meaningless phrase" to unions which genuinely fought for their members' interests was a rationalization of retreat. Its subsequent decision to recommend acceptance of the company's offer was therefore a necessary tactical retreat. The strikers voted by 406-56 to accept.[148]

According to Harold Pritchett, this "militant, well-led strike ... augured well for the Workers' Unity League."[149] In fact, it represented the apex of industrial conflict in the sawmills in the entire WUL period. That it was not destined to be the signal for struggle on an ascending scale was demonstrated by the defeat of a second strike at Barnet Mill at roughly the same time. On that occasion the company simply suspended operations and starved the strikers out.[150] At Fraser Mills, moreover, the company ignored the mill committee and let the still slumping depression take its toll. When the union tried to mobilize against a mounting list of grievances, the company seized the opportunity to fire several leading militants, including Pritchett and French Canadian communist Elio Canuel. In February 1932 an anonymous report from Fraser Mills in the Unemployed Worker described conditions as worse than before the strike: the company was enforcing speed-up with impunity and workers were too afraid to resist. By August

the LWIU had "almost completely lost out" in its earliest bastion.[151]

If struggle in the sawmills in 1932-33 never reached the Fraser Mills level, the LWIU was by no means inactive. Rather, it adopted a more realistic approach to what could be achieved in the prevailing conditions. The union's national convention held in Sudbury in August 1932 identified a "strike for strike's sake" attitude as the main weakness of the union in British Columbia, and suggested that the B.C. comrades "take into consideration the other forms of economic struggle" that could be used to build rank and file morale and strengthen the organisation: for example slow-downs, "strikes on the job", intentionally poor work, and shop strikes. The full-scale strike remained "the highest form of struggle", but it had to be used with discrimination.[152]

Arne Johnson, who became B.C. Secretary of the union in 1932, absorbed the lesson that "you could never win the strike completely under those conditions."[153] Under his stewardship the union adopted a more sober approach, patiently gathering together contacts in a number of sawmills by visiting likely militants in their homes. On at least one occasion it used the workforce's support for work-sharing to build collective solidarity among the rank and file and prevent the firing of activists. On other

occasions, it resisted the temptation to strike against management's first provocation and called strikes only when support for action - and the union - was strong enough. When possible, it won improved conditions by negotiation alone.[154]

But even the most cautious tactics were no guarantee of success, as the union's experience at the Timberland Mill in New Westminster demonstrated. The union first established a base in the mill early in 1932. Some four months later management imposed a substantial wage-cut, and the union took no action, preferring to wait until it could test the company's promise to rescind the reduction when it received a major order. By September around 85 of the mill's 100 employees, divided almost equally between Asians and whites, had been recruited. Moreover, one Hindu worker at least was in a leading position in the union shop committee. Early in that month the shop committee attempted to open negotiations on union demands for a 10 per cent increase (substantially less than the original cut), recognition of the shop committee and no discrimination against union members. The company refused to negotiate, and the union was forced to call a strike on 13 September.

Despite careful preparations, the strike ended in total defeat. The first indication that victory was unlikely came when the workforce scattered and refused to accept

picket duty, leaving it to the large force of unemployed the union brought in from New Westminster, Burnaby and Vancouver. In all probability many of the unemployed pickets would have thought hard about this rather anomalous situation, especially when they fought a pitched battle with 50 scabs and 100 provincial policemen and RCMP. This resulted in the arrest of one picket and the re-opening of the mill. Three days later the union capitulated.[155] Johnson explained the defeat by pointing to the failure of the labour movement to respond to the union's appeals for financial support and suggesting that the union may have waited too long in calling the strike; workers may have lost interest in the union through 8 months of relative inactivity. Another comrade, however, pointed out that the union could have avoided reliance on external solidarity by building a strike fund.[156] Whatever the real reasons, it should have been obvious that no strike can exist without strikers. Evidently, though, the union learned that it was misguided to substitute itself for the rank and file. When a strike at New Westminster's Mohawk Mill in November looked weak from the outset, the union called it off after three days.[157]

The recriminations that invariably ensued after each lost strike suggested that the union never really accepted the necessity of patient union-building or the reality that successful industrial action would be exceptional. Yet its

very refusal to submit to prevailing conditions was responsible for its undertaking difficult work that laid the long term basis of a union constituency. It built links between the employed and unemployed, for example. When union activists such as Pritchett and Canuel were victimized, they automatically gravitated towards the unemployed movement. The presence of a leavening of experienced industrial militants with left-wing views within the unemployed movement clearly improved the chances of successful strike action.[158] Another aspect of union activity with long-term significance was its campaign against racism. Given that racism was materially rooted in wage differentials, easier access to employment, job security and not least tradition, this was no easy task. Nevertheless, in common with all WUL unions in the province, the union explicitly solicited members "regardless of race or color" and waged "quite a stiff campaign" for the idea of multi-racial unionism. It also encouraged Asian workers to participate in the running of the union, produced union literature in Chinese, and on three occasions in 1932 struck or threatened to strike against the dismissal of Chinese or Japanese workers. Arne Johnson claimed that the first time this happened, at Vancouver's Sterling Shingle Mill in July, was the first time white workers in B.C. had <u>ever</u> struck over this issue.[159] Positive results from this

ideological struggle were patchy and slow to develop, but it is instructive that the first job Harold Pritchett was able to obtain on the lower mainland after his victimization at Fraser Mills was at a mill owned by East Asians.[160]

In the winter of 1932-33 the LWIU made an unexpected tactical re-orientation. It decided to split itself and send its sawmill members back into the Shingle Weavers' Union. This decision was part of a general reappraisal by the WUL in the province of its relations with the reformist unions. In February 1933 the WUL Vancouver District Council asked the VTLC and the much smaller ACCL National Labour Council to consider a joint conference "for the purpose of formulating plans to combat the attacks on the living standards of the workers." The ACCL's response is not known, but the VTLC rejected the appeal out of hand and made the same response when the WUL repeated its suggestion in May.[161] Undeterred, the WUL abandoned its independent attempt to organize the sawmills (it also increased its oppositional work in the Vancouver & District Waterfront Workers' Association, a semi-company union affiliated to the ACCL) and set about exploiting the "growing disenchantment" of the remaining SWU membership from within the union.[162] The SWU had refused to fold in the early 1930s despite losing most of its members, and its very existence remained a threat to the LWIU, since

employers offered recognition of the SWU to undercut the industrial union. Pritchett rejoined the SWU in 1933 "to carry forward the policies of militant unionism", successfully built a "progressive" bloc, and by the spring of 1934 was union Vice President and VTLC delegate.[163] Meanwhile, the LWIU was laying the basis for its first major incursion into the logging camps.

By the winter of 1932-33 the WUL could claim limited but real advances, evidence of which is provided by a comparison of its mid-1931 membership figures with those claimed in the Annual Report on Labour Organizations in Canada for 1932. The latter admitted a drop in MWUC membership of 200 (3200 to 3000), but claimed increases of 1300 for the IUNTW (1200 to 2500) and 5600 for the LWIU (1400 to 7000). No membership figures were provided for the WUL's smaller organizations, but there were many more of them than in 1931. In addition to the three relatively well-established unions there were: Fishermen's and Cannery Workers' Industrial Union (B.C.); Food Workers' Industrial Union; Marine Workers' Industrial League; Metal Workers' Industrial League; Domestic Servants' Union; and scattered locals of furniture, boot and shoe, cleaning and dyeing, fur dressing, and textile workers.[164] A liberal estimate of total WUL membership in the early months of 1933 would be 15,000 industrial workers, to which we would

have to add perhaps as many as 20,000 members of unemployed organizations also under WUL authority.

One decisive weakness in the WUL remained its exclusion from the "basic industries and ... war industries": steel, engineering, automobiles, metal mining and so forth.[165] Yet organizers thought they now possessed sufficient practical experience to penetrate these industries. When the WUL National Executive Board met in January 1933 it agreed that the way forward lay with a generalization of the "methods of personal work" that had already been proven effective in light industry: identify the "key" worker/s in a shop; develop them as contacts without exposing them to victimization; and slowly build up functioning shop groups capable of leading limited struggles.[166] Of equal importance was the presentation of a positive image of communist trade union work. According to Alex Gauld many decent rank and file workers considered communists "splitters ... noisy disrupters." The WUL therefore had to establish its right to speak for the masses by struggling for "real lifelike demands, corresponding to the needs of the situation."[167] Joe Gershman, who had become one of the central figures in the WUL since the incarceration of the party leadership in February 1932, underlined Gauld's point. "In some of the [WUL] unions", he admitted, "there are elements of indifference as to whether demands are won or lost. To be

successful, every exertion must be made to win some material gain from every struggle."[168] Charles Sims, who returned from Moscow early in 1933 to assume the WUL secretaryship, emphasized that participation in "actual everyday struggles" was not only a test of leadership, but also part of a "very definite" struggle for socialism.[169] Sims' comment hinted at the persistence in his audience of ultra-left ideas - hardly surprising given the previous three years' experience - and was indicative of the beginning of the international movement's cautious reversion to united front tactics. Instructively, at this precise moment the WUL published a pamphlet by Lozovsky which, without a blush, disinterred 'Left Wing' Communism: An Infantile Disorder, since 1929 a virtually forgotten text.[170]

Another indication of a rightward movement of the WUL was its abrogation of affiliation to the RILU. As late as its First National Convention in August 1932 the WUL continued to describe itself as part of "a world-wide organization which is gathering strength day by day ... the Red International of Labour Unions", and confirmed this relationship in a pamphlet issued immediately after the Convention, Workers' Unity League: Policy-Tactics-Structure-Demands.[171] However, between then and the end of the year, it modified its relationship to one simply of a "fraternal" nature and with no "organic connection". It

also withdrew the Workers'Unity League pamphlet from circulation.[172]

Organizers had, in any case, regularly demonstrated a willingness to be flexible with tactics. Regionalism seems to have played a particularly important part in bending "the line". As the Cape Breton and British Columbia experiences demonstrated, the centre had to defer to local knowledge in certain circumstances. Distance from the centre may have made it relatively easier for comrades in Glace Bay or Vancouver to tailor their interpretation of the line to meet their superior understanding of the local situation. It so happened that these two particular experiences shifted the emphasis of the line towards greater concern for working class unity, which may in the long run have insinuated a general tendency in this direction. Nevertheless, neither these tactical adaptations nor the WUL's formal severing of its ties from the communist movement implied in 1933 that it had surrendered its distinctive militancy, opposition to trade union bureaucrats or its belief in the political character of industrial struggle. Its perspective remained predicated on an inevitable eruption of class struggle. And while leadership of that eruption might prove more "difficult and complicated" than once thought, the revolutionary movement was "assured of victory" as long as it had "a correct

program, a clear, firm line and fighting courage and determination."[173] If this obligatory triumphalism sat uneasily with the left's increasingly realistic mood, the combination of realism with all the qualities demanded of revolutionary unionists made it possible for the WUL to exploit the possibilities that finally arrived in the summer of 1933.

Footnotes

1. C. H. Burgess, "Conditions in Canada", New Statesman, 33 (27 July 1929), financial supplement ix-x; 34 (15 February 1930), financial supplement vii; A. Morgan, "Canada and the Empire", Labour Monthly, 12 (November 1930), 676-83

2. "Sir Robert Borden on Saving", The Times (London), 16 November 1932, 20. Borden was speaking at the Annual General Meeting of Barclay's Bank (Canada) in Montreal.

3. For the general background of the world depression, see C.P. Kindelberger, The World in Depression 1929-39 (London, 1973)

4. "Disputes Within the Empire", The Times, 25 May 1932, 13; Harold A. Innis, "Economic Conditions in Canada in 1931-32", Economic Journal, 42 (March 1932), 1-16; Escott Reid, "The Effect of the Depression on Canadian Politics", American Political Science Review, 27 (June 1933), 455-65; S. A. Saunders, "Nature and Extent of Unemployment in Canada", in L. Richter, ed., Canada's Unemployment Problem (Toronto, 1939), 1-58

5. Desmond Morton with Terry Copp, Working People: An Illustrated History of Canadian Labour (Ottawa, 1980) 142

6. Sally F. Zerker, The Rise and Fall of the Toronto Typographical Union: A Case Study of Foreign Domination (Toronto, 1982), 205-22. Between 1931-33 the Canadian National Railway reduce the numbers of shop craftsmen by 27.7 per cent, of maintenance-of-way workers by 21.1 per cent, and of engineers and trainmen by 19.4 per cent. In addition, per capita wages of these three groups were cut by 15.2 per cent, 15.8 per cent and 15.2 per cent respectively. International Labour Office, Studies on Industrial Relations III (Geneva, 1935); see also Toronto Labor Leader, 15 April 1932, 2.

7. Innis, "Economic Conditions in Canada", 10. Innis was referring specifically to the newsprint industry, but the trend was general.

8. See below, chapter 8

9. PAO-CPP, 4A 2728ff, Sam Carr to Comrade Vasiliev, 25 March 1931; Stewart Smith, Speech to the 7th Convention, CPUSA, reprinted as "Right Wing Mistakes and the Necessity of Correction", The Worker, 30 July 1930, 4

10. PAC, Tim Buck Mèmoirs, 223-44, contains biographical notes on early party leaders.

11. Ian Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada (Montreal, 1981), 289-316.

12. The Militant, 1 February 1929, 8

13. PAO-CPP, 1A 0741-2, Tim Buck, "Statement of the Political Committee of the Communist Party of Canada on the Expulsion of Salsberg", undated [c. November-December 1929]; "Statement of the Communist Party of Canada on the Expulsion of John Stokaluk", Western Miner, 4 April 1930, 1. Angus states that Salsberg's expulsion resulted in the virtual extinction of the IUNTW; in fact, Salsberg resigned (the party maintained the fiction of expulsion) mainly because the party, having launched the IUNTW in 1928, had done little to support it, and as late as July 1929 had transferred two of its organizers, Joe Farbey and Norman Freed, to the YCL bureaucracy. Cf. Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks, 290; PAO-CPP, 8C 0171, CPC, Central Executive Committee, Minutes, 12 July 1929; 8C 0209, CPC, Political Committee, Minutes, 16 November 1929

14. For a variety of perspectives on the Lenin School, see John Hladun, "They Taught Me Treason", McLean's Magazine, 60 (15 October 1947), 18, 46-8; Harry McShane with Joan Smith, Harry McShane: No Mean Fighter (London, 1978), 212-3, 237; Harry Heywood, Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist (Chicago, 1978), 198-217. For a brief case study of the relationship between the Comintern and one national YCL, see Gilbert Allardyce, "Communism and Youth: The Role of the Jeunesses Communistes in the Development of French Communism", Paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association, Halifax, 1981

15. Leslie Morris, "The Unemployment Crisis and Our Party", The Worker, 19 April 1930

16. PAO-CPP, 3A 1789-90, Tom Ewan to Ben Winter, 30 March 1931

17. PAO-CPP, Ewan to Joe Gershman, 28 December 1930

18. PAO-CPP, 2A 0988, James Litterick to Sam Carr, 11 May 1931

19. Multi-Cultural History Society of Ontario, taped interview with Harvey Murphy; Allen Seager, "A History of the Mine Workers' Union of Canada, 1925-1936" (M.A. thesis, McGill, 1977), 84ff.

20. PAO-CPP, 3A 1694-6, Ewan to Victor Friedman (Ben Winter), 26 January 1931; 3A 1852, Ewan to I. Minster, 13 May 1931. Minster was later involved in the Estevan miners' strike, but distinguished himself as co-organizer (with Fred Collins) of the Stratford furniture workers in 1933.

21. PAO-CPP, 1A 0116, Hannes Sula to 'Dear Comrade', 14 April 1929; 3A 2259-61, Sula to Ewan, 23 June 1931; 3A 2265, Mike Gilmore to Ewan, 3 July 1931

22 PAO-CPP, 4A 2343-51, 4A 2371-73, Ewan to A. Silanpaa, 27 February 1931; W. Silanpaa to Ewan, 12 March 1931; Ewan to Silanpaa, 18 March 1931; Silanpaa to Ewan, 26 March 1931; Ewan to A. Hautimaki, 2 April 1931.

23. Taped interview with Stan Lowe, personal holding

24. PAC, Sound Archive, taped interview with Pat Lenihan.

25. PAO-CPP, 2A 0950, P. Moisan to Ewan, 5 April 1931

26. PAO-CPP, 2A 0953, Ewan to Moisan, 9 April 1931

27. L.M., "The Question of Party Education", The Worker, 21 March 1931, 4; CPP-PAO, 3A 1940-41, Carr to Ewan, 8 July 1931; 3A 1971, Buck to Morris, undated; University of Toronto, Kenny Collection (UT-K), Box 2, Ewan to Sam Carr, 12 July 1931

28. PAO-CPP, 3A 1710, Ewan to Winter, 30 January 1931

29. PAO-CPP, 4A 2385-6, George Drayton to Ewan, 11 April 1931

30. "Economic Struggles and the Revolutionary Unions", The Worker, 3 January 1931, 3

31. Conferences were held in Winnipeg (13-14 September), Calgary (28-29 September), Port Arthur (5 October), and Montreal (19-20 October). They were designed mainly to explore the industrial strengths and weaknesses of the left (and right), thereby identifying the areas for earliest attention. See, for example, PAO-CPP, 10C 1817-8, "Minutes of the Organizing Conference of the WUL", Winnipeg, 13-14 September 1930, where the 43 delegates isolated the garment, metal and meat packing industries as priorities, in preference to the lumber, printing, construction and railroad industries.

32. "Economic struggles and the Revolutionary Unions", The Worker, 3 January 1931, 3; PAO-CPP, 10C 1747, Workers' Unity League, Internal Bulletin No. 1, 3 December 1930; 2A 0953, Ewan to Moisan, 9 April 1931; PAC, J. S. Woodsworth Papers, Vol. 10, file 4, Comintern

Memorandum, "Face to the Shops!", enclosed with Central Organization Department, CPC, circular letter to All Party Functionaries, 21 April 1931; PAO-CPP, 10C 1807-10, "The Base of the Economic Struggles Must Be the Factory and the Trade Union", undated memorandum [c. March-April 1931]

33. "'Textile Worker', letter to the editor, Young Worker, 2 January 1931

34. Paul Phillips, "Experiences in the Textile Field", Young Worker, 19 May 1931, 5. The YCL paper is a particularly useful source of information on organizing methods, much more so than the parent Worker. This perhaps stems from the strong contribution made by the YCL to the WUL's organizing drives.

35. M.S. [Mitchi Sago?], "Some Lessons in Shop Work", Young Worker, 5 January 1932, 5

36. Young Worker, 6 June, 21 October 1932

37. Jim Barker, "How Strike at Frood was Voted Down", The Worker, 1 November 1930, 2; PAO-CPP, 2A 0950, Moisan to Ewan, 5 April 1931; 2A 1014, Saul Cohen to Ewan, 23 June 1931; 3A 1741-3, Winter to Ewan, 25 February 1931

38. PAO-CPP, 3A 1747-8, CPC, District 7, Industrial Department, Minutes, 27 February 1931; 3A 1749-50, Winter to Ewan, 8 March 1931; 3A 1939, Michael Biniowsky to Ewan, 7 July 1931

39. PAO-CPP, 3A 1892, Ewan to Winter, 8 June 1931

40. Letter to G. G. Coote, quoted in House of Commons, Debates, 1931, I, 21 April 1931, 769-70

41. Canadian Miner, 30 January 1932 (strike at Coleman, 26 January)

42. Malcolm Bruce to Tom Ewan, 2 May 1931, quoted in Allen Seager, "The Mine Workers' Union of Canada, 1925-1936", M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1977, 142; Harvey Murphy, "The Stagger System - A Quack Remedy for Unemployment", The Worker, 7 November 1931

43. Multi-Cultural History Society of Ontario (MCHSO), Oral History Archive, interview with Jack Scott.

44. PAO-CPP, 3A 1857, Winter to Ewan, undated; Phillips, "Experiences in the Textile Field"; "French Unit Established", Young Worker, 20 October 1931

45. M.S., "Some Lessons in Shop Work"

46. PAO-CPP, 3A 1882-3, Shopmen's Hammer, May 1931; 3A 1884-5, Ewan to S. Black, 2 June 1931. On WUL fractional work in the railroad shops, see also Public Archives of Manitoba (PAM), John Bracken Papers, Box 85, file 892, Report on "Red Trade Union Groups and their Effect on the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council", undated [c. mid-1933]. On shop papers see also PAO-CPP, 2A 1164-5, "Report of Work and Situation in the Border Cities, No. 2" 11 April 1931

47. PAO-CPP, 3A 1847-48, Ewan to Winter, 7 May 1931

48. S. D. Hanson, "Estevan 1931" in Irving Abella, ed., On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949 (Toronto, 1974), 42. See also PAO-CPP, 3A 1872, Ewan to A. Konopaki, 26 May 1931

49. Ben Swankey and Jean Evans Shiels, "Work and Wages!": A Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans, 1890-1944 (Vancouver, 1977) 39-46

50. PAO-CPP, 2A 0922-26, Fred Rose, "Report of the Cowansville Strike" (2-10 March 1931); 2A 0908, Ewan to A. Rosenberg, 19 March 1931; 2A 0912, Ewan to Jeanne Corbin, undated; Young Worker, 16, 31 March 1931. An abbreviated version of Rose's "Report" is reprinted in Irving Abella and David Millar, eds., The Canadian Worker in the Twentieth Century (Toronto, 1978), 260-64

51. PAO-CPP, 10C 1830, 10C 1835, WUL Winnipeg District Council, Minutes, 11 April, 2 May 1931; Manitoba Provincial Archives (MPA), Attorney-General's Papers (AGP), file 43, M. Biniowsky to Dominion Wheel and Foundry Ltd., 7, 9 September 1931; G. J. Baetzhold, Superintendent, DWF Ltd., Notice, undated.

52. MPA, AGP, file 43, Inspector J. A. Browne, Manitoba Provincial Police (MPP), memo re "Dominion Wheel and Foundry Ltd., St. Boniface", 16 September 1931; Unidentified report, 14 September 1931; MacDonald Detective Agency Reports, 21 September 1931; Manitoba Free Press, 14 September 1931; The Worker, 19 September 1931

53. Manitoba Free Press, 15 September 1931

54. Manitoba Free Press, 18, 19 September 1931; The Worker, 26 September 1931; "Settlement of Strike of Foundry Employees at St. Boniface, Manitoba", Labour Gazette, XXXI (October 1931), 1068

55. The Worker, 26 September 1931.

56. PAO-CPP, WUL Bulletin, "The Next Step - A Trade Union Press", 28 April 1931; WUL Bulletin, "Plan of WUL Press Campaign", undated; Annie Buller, flier re "Workers' Unity", 29 May 1931; Buller to 'ALL Labour Organizations', 20 July 1931; UT, Kenny Papers, Box 2, Ewan to Carr, 12 July 1931; "Our Paper", Workers Unity, 15 July 1931

57. See below

58. Donald Avery, 'Dangerous Foreigners': European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932 (Toronto, 1979), 133-41; Lita-Rose Betcherman, The Little Band: The Clashes between the Communists and the political and legal establishment in Canada, 1928-1932 (Ottawa, 1982), passim

59. PAC, J. L. Cohen Papers, Vol. 1, file 11, A. E. Smith to J. L. Cohen, 6 January 1930

60. Ronald A. Adams, "The Anti-Communist Role of the RCMP in the Depression", Paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association, London, Ontario, June 1978, 17-18. The term "coercion function" and the way it is used here is taken from Leo Panitch, "The Role and Nature of the Canadian State", in Panitch, ed., The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power (Toronto, 1977), 3-27

61. E. A. Forsey, "Montreal Is a Quiet City", Canadian Forum, XI (June 1931), 327-29; Bella Gordon, "Smash the Police Terror in Montreal", Canadian Labour Defender (CLD), I (March 1931), 11-12

62. Unemployed Worker, 4 April 1931; PAC, Sound Archive, interview with Pat Lenihan; interview with Stan Lowe, personal holding. See also City of Vancouver Archives, Board of Police Commissioners' Records, Vols. 13-15 for correspondence on unemployed agitation and police brutality. In particular, see Vol. 15, Chief Constable W. J. Bingham, Report re "Unemployed Situation and Agitation 1930-1931", 21 January 1931

63. PAO-CPP, 4A 2490, James R. Berry to Ewan, 6 July 1931; 3A 2265-68, Mike Gilmore to Ewan, 14 July 1931

64. UT-K, Box 2, Hugh Guthrie to W. H. Price, 18 March 1931. This letter from the federal Attorney General to his provincial counterpart in Ontario describes Guthrie's plans to use the RCMP, provincial and municipal police forces to obtain a "mass of information" on Communist activity. It also shows how the decision to prosecute the party in Ontario rather than nationally was a conscious choice, designed to mask the national character of the campaign.

For an excellent study of the course of events in this campaign, see Ronald A. Adams, "The 1931 Arrest and Trial of the Leaders of the Communist Party of Canada", Paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association, Fredericton, June 1977. (Unfortunately, Adams' painstaking empirical research is vitiated by his special pleading on behalf of the RCMP and an incapacity to read his sources critically.) It was reported in November that W. H. Price planned to make all the evidence collected for the trials available to his various provincial counterparts. The Times, 14 November 1931

65. PAO-CPP, 4A 3667, Tom Bradley to Ewan, undated; 4A 2360, George Drayton to Ewan, 3 March 1931

66. PAO-CPP, 4A 2490, Berry to Ewan, 6 July 1931; A. E. Hetherington, "Ronald Stewart Framed at Victoria", CLD, II (October 1931), 13

67. PAO-CPP, 3A 2265-68, Gilmore to Ewan, 14 July 1931

68. Department of National Defence, Directorate of History (DND-DH), file 161.009 (D63), W. Griesinger to District Officer Commanding, Military District No. 1, 17 September 1931; PAM, Attorney General's Papers, file 43, J. A. Browne to W. J. Major, 6 November 1931; PAM, Bracken Papers, Box 85, file 892, Manitoba Provincial Police, "Report re Communist Activities", 25 February 1932; "The Canadian Party Organizer", Communist International, IX (15 March 1932), 171-2

69. Donald Avery, 'Dangerous Foreigners', 197

70. On Allan Campbell, see Stuart MacIntyre, Little Moscows: Communism and Working-Class Militancy in Inter-War Britain (London, 1980), 95-9 and Harry McShane with Joan Smith, No Mean Fighter, 160-64; on Barker (alias Sam Langley), see A. E. Smith, All My Life: An Autobiography (Toronto, 1977), 109-10 and John Halstead, Royden Harrison and John Stevenson, "The Reminiscences of Sid Elias", Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, 38 (Spring 1978), 45. On Dubois, see Canadian Labour Defender, 1 (July-August 1930), 12; (September 1930), 112; (February 1931), 5. On Chalmers, Young Worker, 21 August 1933.

71. PAC, Department of Immigration Records, Vol. 219, file 95027, R. J. Manion to W. A. Gordon, 20 April 1932; Gordon to Manion, 27 April 1932; ibid., Vol. 738, file 513057, S. T. Wood to Commissioner MacBrien, 3 March 1933. Vols. 738 and 739 contain

several files relating to deportation proceedings against Communists.

72. The Worker, 30 April 1932, 4; Metropolitan Toronto Public Library, taped interview with John Boychuck.

73. Young Worker, 30 April 1932, 6; Canadian Labor Defender, 3 (May 1932), 8; Metropolitan Toronto Public Library, "Toronto between the Wars" Collection, interview with John Boychuck.

74. Stanley Hanson "Estevan 1931" in Irving Abella, ed., On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada, 1919-1949 (Toronto, 1975), 58-60. See also Ben Swankey and Jean Evans Shiels, "Work and Wages!": A Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans 1890-1944 (Vancouver, 1977), 48, 62-3

75. UT, Victoria College, United Church Archives, A. E. Smith Papers, Reel 2, Hugh MacDonald to Canadian Labour Defense League, 22 December 1931; Seager, "The Mine Workers' Union of Canada", 118-19

76. Bella Gordon, "'Sedition' in Montreal", Canadian Labor Defender, 3 (April 1932), 2. This monthly journal provides a fairly reliable account of cases won and lost.

77. Communist Party of Canada, Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada 1921-1976 (Toronto, 1982), 109, 112-13

78. William Beeching and Phyllis Clarke, eds., Yours in the Struggle: Reminiscences of Tim Buck (Toronto, 1977), 250-51.

79. PAO-CPP, 10C 1754, Workers' Unity League, Bulletin No. 4, 2 February 1931

80. PAO-CPP, 2A 1200, Ewan to Arthur Seal, 8 June 1931

81. MCHSO, Oral History Archive, interview with Harry Clairmont. See also Metropolitan Toronto Public Library, "Toronto Between the Wars" tape collection, interview with John Weir; MPA, R. B. Russell Papers, Box 6, File 28, OBU Winnipeg Central Labour Council, Minutes, 16 June 1931. Communists sometimes were on the receiving end of beatings. See PAO-CPP, 2A 1014, Saul Cohen to Ewan, 23 June 1931

82. MCHSO, Harry Binder interview. See also Francis Graham Stevens, "A History of Radical Political Movements in Essex County and Windsor, 1919-1945" (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1948), 89-90.

83. UT, Kenny Collection, Tim Buck Correspondence, Buck to All CPC District and Language Fraction Bureaux, 19 August 1931

84. PAC, J. S. Woodsworth Papers, vol.6, file 8, Woodsworth to A. E. Smith, 23 April 1931

85. Ernest Burns, letter to the editor, Labor Statesman, 24 July 1931

86. "Those Strongly Vocal Persons", Labor Statesman, 11 September 1931

87. J. Petryshyn, "Class Conflict and Civil Liberties: The Origins and Activities of the Canadian Labour Defense League, 1925-1940", Labour/Le Travailleur, 10 (Autumn 1982), 48-51

88. PAO-CPP, 8C 0209, CPC Political Committee, Minutes, 16 November 1929

89. Arthur S. Horner to Tim Buck, undated [c. May 1930], reprinted in Agents of Revolution: A History of the the Workers' Unity League, Setting Forth Its Origins and Aims (n.p., n.d., Published by direction of Hon. W. H. Price, K.C., Attorney General for Ontario [Toronto, 1934]. This publication is sometimes said to have appeared in 1931, in the mistaken belief that it was published to coincide with the party trials. The documents it quotes were indeed taken from those seized in the arrest period, but the pamphlet itself was not issued until 1934, when an attempt was made to renew interest in banning the WUL. This is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.
An interesting feature of Horner's letter to Buck is that Horner, then writing from Moscow as Secretary of the International Committee of Miners for Propaganda and Action, was himself an opponent of the "new line" when it was made to apply to Communist activities around the South Wales' Miners' Federation. When he returned to Wales he became embroiled in disciplinary problems as the alleged instigator of a "right deviation" commonly termed "Hornerism". See Arthur Horner, Incorrigible Rebel (London, 1960) 109-11 and Hywel Francis and David Smith, The Fed: A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century (London, 1980), chapters 5, 6

90. PAO-CPP, 10C 1974, Memorandum re "International Trade Union Correspondence Courses", October 1929; 10C 1964ff, "RILU Correspondence Course", brochure, Toronto, February 1930. PAO-CPP, 1A 0067, CPC, District 3, "Report to Central Agit-Prop Department", 15 September 1929, and 1A 0071-8. "B.C. Applicants for RILU Correspondence Course", undated, provide useful biographical information on the Ontario and British Columbia participants on this course, designed to give "a Marxist-Leninist training to the active revolutionary

unionists on the most important questions of the international labour movement, and likewise on the organization and methods of trade union propaganda and education."

91. Western Miner, 6 March, 18 April, 8 May 1930

92. On this point, see Trotsky's pertinent comments in "The Unions in Britain" (1933) in Leon Trotsky On The Trade Unions (New York, 1975), 54. In general, Trotsky's analysis of Comintern policy at this juncture was exceptionally acute.

93. PAO-CPP, 3A 1847-8, 3A 1853-56, 3A 1868, Tom Ewan to Ben Winter, 7 May 1931; Winter to Ewan, 14 May 1931; Ewan to Winter, 26 May 1931

94. PAO-CPP, 10C 1823, WUL National Party Fraction, Minutes, 23 February 1931

95. See note 91 above; also Seager, "The MWUC", 106-7; A.R.L.O.C. 1930 (Ottawa, 1931), 165; A.R.L.O.C. 1931 (Ottawa, 1932), 174-75

96. Workers' Unity League: Policy-Tactics-Structure-Demands (Toronto, 1932), 26.

97. UT, Kenny Collection, Buck to All CPC District and Language Fraction Bureaux, 19 August 1931; "RILU Greets 1st National Congress of the Workers' Unity League", Workers' Unity, August-September 1932; D. Miner, "Our Tasks in the WUL March Campaign", The Builder, March 1933; "Lessons of the Recent Executive Board Meeting", Workers' Unity, March 1934.

98. PAO-CPP, 5B 0096, Jim and Annie Whitfield to Buller, 30 January 1929

99. PAO-CPP, 1A 0049-50, Murdoch Clarke to Tim Buck, 8 April 1929; 1A 0051, Clarke to Stewart Smith, 19 June 1929

100. PAO-CPP, 8C 0208, CPC, Political Committee, Minutes, 16 November 1929

101. Paul MacEwan, Miners and Steelworkers: Labour in Cape Breton (Toronto, 1976), 156-59; William J. White, "Left Wing Politics and Community: A Study of Glace Bay, 1930-1940", (M.A. thesis, Dalhousie, 1977), 52-3

102. Nova Scotia Miner, 22 February 1930, 1

103. The formation of the WUL had already been mentioned in the NSM (15 February) and Western Miner (20 February) before Ewan first referred to its existence in "The Tasks Confronting the Canadian Trade Unionists", The Worker, 15 March 1930

104. Nova Scotia Miner, 15 February 1930, 1; PAO-CPP, 1A 0229, Jim Barker to Ewan, 1 March 1930; 1A 0228, Murdoch Clarke to All Left Wing Contacts, 28 February 1930

105. Ewan's visit in 1930 is the one mistakenly referred to by White and MacEwan (above, footnote 101) as having taken place in June 1932, allegedly in a last-gap attempt to prevent the formation of the Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia (AMW), of which there is more below. Their mistake appears to stem from relying on C. B. Wade's unpublished manuscript "History of District 26, UMWA, 1919-1941" unpaged manuscript (1950), microfilm copy in Public Archives of Nova Scotia (PANS). Ewan had been in jail since February 1932; PAO-CPP, 4A 2539-40, Provisional Executive Committee, WUL, to Miners' Conference, Sub-District No.1, UMWA, undated.

106. PANS, UMWA District 26 Papers, microfilm reel 13, "Minutes of District Convention Convened by Sub-District No.1, UMWA, Disctict 26", Sydney, 15-16 March 1930

107. This is a good example of the nonsensical attempts at generalization CPC leaders were driven to during the "third period". The relative failure of the working class to solidarize with the Hamilton Steel Car strike has already been demonstrated. The lumber strike referred to occurred towards the end of 1929 in the Shabaqua Pulpwood district near Port Arthur. It was no more successful. See Wayne State University, Reuther Library, IWW Collection, Box 26, file 26; Satu Repo, "Rosvall and Voutilainen: Two Union Men Who Never Died", Labour/Le Travailleur, 8/9 (Autumn 1981-Spring 1982), 80-5. This strike was supported in the traditional manner by the left wing Finnish community. It could scarcely be used to support the thesis of growing mass radicalization.

108. "Minutes of District Convention", 7

109. "Minutes of District Convention", 13

110. PANS, UMWA District 26 Papers, m/f reel 13, Provisional Constitutional and By-Laws of the Mine Workers' Industrial Union of Nova (March 1930), 1

111. PAO-CPP, 10C 2139-41, "The Situation in Nova Scotia and Report of Left Wing Activities", undated; Nova Scotia Miner, 12 April 1930, 1

112. PAO-CPP, 1A 0234-6, Acting General Secretary to Jim Barker, 13 June 1930; J. B. McLachlan to Tim Buck, 13 June 1936 (reference courtesy of David Frank: photocopy in my possession)

113. Quoted in White, "Left Wing Politics", 97

114. PAO-CPP, 5B 0105-6, Barker to Annie Buller, undated [c.August 1930] Compare this with Jim Barker, "Miners Rally to the CLDL", CLD, I (July-August 1930), 7

115. PAO-CPP, 10C 2142, Thomas Rankin, "Tasks of the CPC and the Workers' Unity League in the Organization of the Canadian Miners' Union", 6 October 1930

116. T. A. Ewan, "Sixth Convention Mine Workers' Union of Canada", The Worker, 7 November 1931

117. Not much is known about Matheson. It is possible that he was the Bill Matheson who wrote an article for the Trotskyist Vanguard, November-December 1932, on "Revolutionary Strategy in the Trade Unions: The Balance of 'Third Period' Sectarianism". He had undoubtedly been replaced as District Organizer by winter 1932-33. Someone of that name also turns up in the Amalgamated Mine Workers' records as a rank-and-file activist.

118. PAO-CPP, 2A 0850, J. B. McLachlan to Tim Buck, 7 June 1931

119. On social conditions in industrial Cape Breton in 1931 see PANS, Provincial Secretary's Papers, Vol.229, folder 18, Proceedings of Conference in Regard to the Unemployment Problems of the Municipality, City and Towns of the County of Cape Breton, Sydney, N.S., 30 July-1 August 1931

120. "The UMWA Lewis Racket in N.S.", Nova Scotia Miner, reprinted in Workers' Unity, 15 July 1931, 2

121. "What History Says", and "The Unity of Cowards", editorials, Nova Scotia Miner, 18 July 1931, 2

122. "More Miners Leave Glace Bay for USSR", Nova Scotia Miner, 12 September 1931, 4. See J. S. Woodsworth's comments on his 1931 trip to the USSR in House of Commons, Debates, 1932, I, 11 February 1932, 114-20

123. J. B. McLachlan, "Leaving the Old to Visit the New", Nova Scotia Miner, 21 November 1931, 2; McLachlan, "When the Red Army Sings", ibid., 23 January 1932, 3; McLachlan, "Ah! The Shortages Found in the USSR", ibid., 30 January 1932, 4; "Record Crowd Packs Hall to Hear McLachlan at Florence", ibid., 13 February 1932, 1

124. MacEwan, Miners and Steelworkers, 169-70; White, "Left Wing Politics and Community", 59-60

125. "Some Questions Connected with the Coming Struggles of the Canadian Miners", The Worker, 5 March 1932, 4; Nova Scotia Miner, 27 February, 5 March, 9 April 1932; James Litterick, "Nova Scotia Miners Fight Reactionary UMWA", Workers' Unity, June 1932

126. Information from oral sources in mainland Nova Scotia mining communities, as related to me by Ian McKay.

127. Robert R. Stewart to James Litterick, reprinted in The Worker, 29 October 1932

128. P.A.N.S., District 26 UMWA Papers, m/f reel 13, R. R. Stewart to AMW Local Unions, 2 March 1934; AMW, Minutes of Sub-District Council Meeting, Glace Bay, 3 February 1934; AMW, Minutes of District Council Meeting, 10 February 1934; R. R. Stewart, Secretary-Treasurer's Financial Reports, November 1933-April 1934; Bob Stewart to Flin Flon Metal Miners, Winnipeg Free Press, 20 June 1934

129. I make some tentative suggestions in "Red Unionism in Cape Breton: J. B. McLachlan and Communist Industrial Policy in the 1930s", unpublished research paper, Dalhousie University, 1979, 12-13, 16-18. At the end of 1932 the AMW embraced almost 8,000 of the 14,000 miners in District 26. By 1933, however, its membership had fallen to 5,363 and although it rallied to 6,059 in 1935 it never again led the UMWA.

130. On the 1920s background to WUL organization in the lumber industry, see the following: M. Palmgren, "A Historical Review of B.C. Loggers' Organization", Workers' Unity, 15 July 1931; University of British Columbia Archives (UBC), transcribed interviews with Alex Fergusson and Arne Johnson; Myrtle Bergren, Tough Timber: The Loggers of British Columbia - Their Story (Toronto, 1967), 25-27; Paul Phillips, No Power Greater: A History of Labour in B.C. (Vancouver, 1967), 82; David J. Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union (Toronto, 1978), 165-70

131. D. E. Andrews, "The Growth of Organized Labour in the Lumbering Industry of British Columbia", (B.A. Essay, UBC, 1944), 105-6

132. "Report of the Deputy Minister", in British Columbia, Annual Report of the Department of Labour, Year Ending 31 December 1934 (Victoria, 1935), 20; PAO-CPP, 4A 2389-92, M. Palmgren to Ewan, 11 April 1931

133. J. Brown and A. Haugaard to the editor, The Worker, 9 August 1930; W. Woodhead to the editor, The Worker, 23 August 1930; PAO-CPP, 4A 2389-92, Palmgren to Ewan,

11 April 1931

134. PAO-CPP, 4A 2480, Workers' Unity League, B.C. Section, Executive Committee, Minutes, 8 June 1931

135. Vancouver Sun, 11 August 1932, quoted in "LWIU Shows Militant Record", Lumber Worker (Sudbury), September 1932, 9

136. Taped interview with Harold Pritchett (personal holding)

137. W. Woodhead to the editor, The Worker, 23 August 1930; also Unemployed Worker, 4 April 1931

138. "New Westminster Unions Support Fraser Mills Strike", Labor Statesman, 23 October 1931; "Millworkers Win Strike", Workers' Unity, 6 August 1931

139. Labor Statesman, 7 August 1931, 1; 23 October 1931, 4; Unemployed Worker, 21, 28 November 1931, 2; Workers' Unity, 2 December 1931

140. Interviews with Harold Pritchett and Elio Canuel.

141. Bergren, Tough Timber, 29-30; interview with Harold Pritchett; UBC, Vancouver & New Westminster Trades and Labour Council, Minutes, 2 June 1925; American Federationist, 39 (June 1932), 683-4 (for the SWU's unashamed lilywhite policy)

142. Interview with Elio Canuel.

143. Interview with Harold Pritchett. Pritchett relates that he changed his political affiliations after ILP (socialist) leader Ernest Winch privately told him that strikes were less important than parliamentary action.

144. Labor Statesman, 23 October 1931, 4; "Reformist Unions Support Lumber Workers' Strike", Workers' Unity, 2 December 1931; UBC, VTLC, Minutes, 3 March, 20 October 1931, 5 January 1932

145. Interview with Harold Pritchett. Earlier in the year, when the Archbishop registered his approval of the growing state repression of the left, the party's anti-church sentiments were unrestrained by tactical considerations. See Unemployed Worker, 14 March 1931

146. Interview with Elio Canuel; Unemployed Worker, 26 September 1931; Workers' Unity, 30 October, 2 December 1931

147. Interview with Elio Canuel.

148. Unemployed Worker, 3 October 1931; 10 October 1931; 17 October 1931, 1; 21 November 1931

149. Interview with Harold Pritchett.

150. The National Convention of the LWIU which met in Sudbury in August 1932 criticised the B.C. district for failing to find "a strategic revolutionary form of retreat" at Barnett Mill. "Resolution on the Situation and Tasks of the LWIU of Canada", Lumber Worker, September 1932 (henceforth LWIU, "Resolution")

151. Unemployed Worker, 13 February 1932; interview with Pritchett; LWIU "Resolution"

152. LWIU "Resolution"

153. Interview with Arne Johnson.

154. A. Johnson, "Shingle Workers of B.C. Show Fight", Lumber Worker, September 1932; Unemployed Worker, 17 September 1932 (report from Sterling Shingle Mill).

155. Arne Johnson, "Timberland Strike", Lumber Worker, October 1932; "Workers' Training School Closes Session", Unemployed Worker, 8 October 1932. The 34 participants on this WUL training course were given practical experience of class struggle on the Timberland picket line.

156. B. Purdy, "Lessons from the Timberland Strike", Lumber Worker, October 1932

157. A. Johnson, "The Strike in the Mohawk Mill", Lumber Worker, December 1932

158. UBC, interview with Canuel; PAC, Bennett Papers, 492261, H. Pritchett to the Federal Government, 1 August 1932; interview with Pritchett; The Burnaby-New Westminster-Maillardville area unemployed movement was very militant. See, for example, "Workers' Imprison Council Until Relief is Granted", The Worker, 13 May 1933, 3. The B.C. unemployed movement is discussed in detail in chapter 9.

159. A. Johnson, "Shingle Workers of B.C. Show Fight"; Interview with Pritchett; Unemployed Worker, 9 May 1931. Compare the left's stand against racism with the more traditional viewpoint of the "reformist" unions and the Vancouver TLC. See, for example, Percy Gladstone and Stuart Jamieson, "Unionism in the Fishing Industry of British Columbia", Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, XVI (May 1950), 146-71 (especially 160-61, 164); and PAC, SLF, Vol. 350, file 41; UBC, VTLC, Minutes, 15 March 1932 (on a strike by Japanese Bowling-Alley workers). It is surely more than coincidental that the Anglo-Saxon percentage of the B.C. industrial workforce rose from 70.34 per cent

to 76.3 per cent between 1929-33, while at the same time the Asian percentage declined from 10 per cent to 7.8 per cent. "Report of the Deputy Minister ... 1934", L20

160. Interview with Pritchett.

161. UBC, Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, Minutes, 21 February, 16 May 1933; "An Impossible Unity", Labor Statesman, May 1933

162. Interview with Pritchett. This tactic was not applied uniformly. The WUL seems to have made no attempt to merge its Fishermen's and Cannery Workers' Industrial Union with either of the existing VTLC affiliates, and in March 1933 it chartered a Vancouver local of the Communication Workers' Industrial League comprised of dissidents from the International Commercial Telegraphers' Union, The Worker, 1 April 1933

163. Interview with Pritchett; "Fighting Against Reaction", B.C. Lumber Worker, 24 November 1934. A brief and often undependable account of these events, also based on Harold Pritchett's memory is Fred Wilson's "A Woodworkers' Story", Pacific Tribune, 29 April 1977. I wish to thank Mr Pritchett for this reference.

164. "Representation at WUL Congress", Workers' Unity, August-September 1932; A.R.L.O.C. 1932 (Ottawa, 1933), 37-8, 85

165. "Some Features of WUL Congress", Workers' Unity, August-September 1932

166. "RILU Greets First National Congress of the Workers' Unity League", Workers' Unity, August-September 1932; "Industrial Committees and How They Should Work", Workers' Unity, May 1933

167. Alex Gauld, "How we MUST work in the REFORMIST Trade Unions", Workers' Unity, March 1933 (original emphasis)

168. J. Gershman, "Workers' Unity League to Hold Important Session", The Worker, 17 December 1932

169. Charles Sims, "The Daily Struggles and Socialism", Workers' Unity, May 1933

170. A. Lozovsky, The Workers' Economic Struggles and the Fight for Workers' Rule (Montreal, 1933), 17

171. Workers' Unity League: Policy-Tactics-Structure-Demands (Toronto, 1932) 43; "Some Features of WUL Congress"

172. A.R.L.O.C. 1932 (Ottawa, 1933), 37; Tom McEwen, The Forge Glows Red (Toronto, 1974) Appendix II, 247

173. Gershman, "Workers' Unity League to Hold Important Session"

CHAPTER FIVE

AGENTS OF REVOLUTION, 1933-1935

"Organization, Consolidation, Struggle are the slogans for March!", The Worker, 4 February 1933

"The vain imaginings of revolutionary doctrinaires, once loosed upon the world like a cloud of poison gas, are difficult to bottle up again."
Toronto Globe, 19 February 1934

During the period from 1930 to the winter of 1932-33 the Workers' Unity League served its apprenticeship, surviving internal torment and external repression to come through the worst of the depression years with an invaluable store of experience and the foundations of a new cadre. In the next two years it demonstrated an ability to put its strengthened organizational and analytical powers to work. Helped by the economic upturn which began in the late spring of 1933, and which had an impact on workers' confidence out of all proportion to its objective dimensions,

the WUL managed to establish the groundworks of industrial unionism across a wide spectrum of Canadian industry. Its performance was not uniform, and in many industries it had identified as crucial it made little or no headway. Nevertheless, given its own limitations, the partial nature of the economic recovery and the contemporaneous efforts of "official" unionism, its achievement was not unimpressive. So much so, that to do it justice in every particular area of intervention would require much more space than is available here. For that reason, I will continue the approach adopted in the previous chapter of providing an overview of the range of WUL organizing experiences while concentrating on two particularly instructive case studies. The first - furniture - indicates the WUL's relative success in organizing light industries characterized by relatively small units of production. The second - steel - reveals its relative failure to penetrate "basic" industry. The chapter concludes with an examination of the WUL's relations with the state and the introduction of the theme of trade union unity, which was to assume dominance for the rest of the WUL's brief existence.

The economic recovery which started in mid-1933 was so sustained and general that two University of Toronto economists, perhaps mindful of the blithe predictions of 1930-31, suggested in February 1934 that it had been "too

good to be true."[1] In fact, recovery continued throughout most of that year, by which time those industries which had been slowest to revive had come out of the slump. There were three specific reasons for Canada's recovery: the benefits deriving from the Ottawa Imperial Conference of 1932; the degree of competitive advantage provided, albeit temporarily, in certain industries by F. D. Roosevelt's New Deal policy of wage and price inflation; and sharply rising prices for gold, silver and nickel.[2] The creation of an imperial trading bloc was directly responsible for substantial increases in Canadian exports to Britain and the "white" Dominions: in 1933 exports to New Zealand rose by 6 per cent, to Britain by 20 per cent, to Australia by 54 per cent and to South Africa by 72 per cent.[3] The upward trend was particularly marked in the lumber industry. By March 1933 lumber exports to Britain, considerably helped by the latter's agreeing to Canada's demand for an embargo on Soviet lumber, had risen by 54 per cent; lumber exports to Australia rose by 79 per cent in the same period. By August 1933, after one year of the Ottawa agreements, total Canadian lumber exports had risen from 53.6 million board feet to 128.5 million board feet, and in value from $970,000 to $2,245,000.[4] German rearmament helped Canada double its nickel exports to Germany and Holland (a less controversial conduit for sales to Germany) in 1933; in 1934 total Canadian exports of the metal more

than tripled, its value reaching a record high of $28.2 million.[5] Steel and cotton were well on the way to recovery by the end of 1933; coal and construction revived in 1934.[6] In general, by the autumn of 1933 there were unmistakeable signs that the worst of the slump was over.

Equally clearly the Canadian people were looking to change political course. Between August 1933 and June 1934 Liberals replaced Conservatives in four out of four provincial elections - Nova Scotia, British Columbia, Ontario, Saskatchewan - winning by a total seat count of 173 to 25. In British Columbia, moreover, the Tories were wiped out entirely and replaced as the official opposition by the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), less than eighteen months old and with the ink on its Regina Manifesto barely dry. Also looking for change were Canada's industrial workers, who after three years of unrelieved misery, with unemployment or the threat of unemployment forcing mute acceptance of wage-cuts, deteriorating conditions and harsh factory discipline, could see the labour market stabilizing. This was not happening dramatically, but nevertheless sufficiently in certain workplaces to give workers the confidence to resist further demands and seek to retrieve lost ground. In non-coal mining industry 1933 and 1934 saw substantial increases in strike activity (Table 5-I). During 1934 there were more strikers than in any year since 1920 and more striker-days

Table 5-I

STRIKES IN NON-COAL MINING INDUSTRIES 1932-24

Year	No. of Disputes	No. of Strikers	No. of Striker Days
1932	83	14,850	122,234
1933	104	23,530	284,528
1934	165	34,339	483,060

Source: Labour Gazette

than since 1921.

The strike pattern suggests that workers were growing in confidence the longer the revival continued. The percentage of strikes fought over a range of issues rather than wages or conditions rose from 26.5 per cent to 49.4 per cent. While the percentage involving union recognition fell slightly in 1934, there was a sharp rise in strikes to maintain union conditions and/or prevent victimization of union activists (Table 5-II). Strikes fought specifically over issues of factory discipline and changes in work practices virtually disappeared in 1934, which does not mean that the issues themselves disappeared, but that changes in production methods were probably increasingly accompanied by managerial concessions or were subsumed in workers' struggles for general improvements, of which there were many. Roughly 73 per cent of strikes in 1933-34 brought

Table 5-II

THE STRIKE PATTERN IN NON-COAL MINING INDUSTRIES, 1933-34

Year	Mainly Wages	Mainly Conditions	Both	To maintain Union Conditions/Prevent Victimization
1933	45 (43.5%)	31 (30%)	27 (21.9%)	15 (14.5%)
1934	47 (28.7%)	36 (21.9%)	81 (49.4%)	41 (25%)

Source: Labour Gazette

victories or more frequently partial gains. Apart from improved conditions and morale, 1934 saw money-wages rise for the first time since 1930 and real-wages rise from the plateau reached in 1932 (Table 5-III).

With considerable justification communists have looked back on these years as the heroic moment of the WUL. While the quality of the evidence available makes definitive calculation impossible, it is clear that the CPC's claim to have led the vast majority of strikes in 1933-34 is substantially valid.[7] Looking only at non-coal mining industry in 1934, we can see that the WUL led 51 per cent of strikes with 50 per cent of all strikers and 71 per cent of striker days; if the coal industry were to be included, the WUL's predominance would be much greater (Table 5-IV). In a whole range of unorganized industries the WUL was the sole or leading force. Only the international garment

Table 5-III

INDICES OF MONEY- AND REAL-WAGES IN CANADA, 1929-1935

Year	Money Wages	Real Wages
1929	100	100
1930	100	101
1931	98	110
1932	92	113
1933	89	113
1934	90	114
1935	92	116

Source: International Labour Review, XXXIV (July 1936) 117

workers' unions bear any comparison, as can be seen by drawing up a "league table" of the ten largest strikes, by striker days, in 1933-34 (Table 5-V). Communists claimed complete credit for the militant upsurge, even to the extent of alleging that rising indices of production and employment were being deliberately falsified.[8] In reality, the combination of an accumulation of grievances and the economic upturn would inevitably have produced a rise in the level of class struggle. But without the WUL, it is doubtful if unorganized workers would have fought so often or won as much as they did.

Table 5-IV. STRIKES LED BY THE WUL IN NON-COAL MINING INDUSTRIES 1934

Industry	No. of Strikes	No. of Strikers	No. of Striker Days	Won/ Compromise	Lost
Agriculture	1 (0)*	93	93	1	
Logging	16 (1)	5,819	193,208	4	12
Metal Mining	2 (0)	1,373	26,700		2
Fishing	1 (0)	50	250		1
Food Processing	7 (3)	195	528	6	1
Shoe & Leather	18 (2)	2,347	12,372	11	5**
Garment	9 (27)	4,525	76,012	8	1
Textiles ***	5 (2)	91	730	3	2
Furniture	15 (0)	1,774	27,198	11	4
Automobile	4 (0)	333	1,228	4	
Construction	1 (4)	175	600	1	
Service & Other+	10 (4)	484	4,025	9	1
	89	17,259	342,944	58	29

* Figures in brackets refer to the number of strikes in these industries not led by the WUL

** Two shoe workers' strikes are not designated won/lost since they were one-day sympathy strikes

*** I have counted all Ontario textiles' strikes as WUL strikes, even though most were short, spontaneous affairs. This is reasonable given the WUL's solitary activity among Ontario textile workers in the previous three years.

\+ This category includes rag sorters, cleaners and dyers, car washers, window cleaners and, especially, restaurant workers.

Source: Labour Gazette

Table 5-V

THE TEN LARGEST STRIKES IN NON-COAL MINING INDUSTRY, 1933-34

	Industry	Location	Union Involved	No. of Strikers	No. of Striker Days
1933					
1.	Logging	Thunder Bay	LWIU*	1,500	48,000
2.	Garment	Toronto	ILGWU	2,000	27,000
3.	Furniture	Stratford	FWIU*	600	26,000
4.	Garment	Montreal	ILGWU	1,800	20,000
5.	Garment	Montreal	ACWA	4,000	20,000
6.	Logging	Thunder Bay	LWIU*	1,300	18,000
7.	Logging	Rouyn	LWIU*	800	14,000
8.	Metal Mining	Anyox	MWUC*	400	14,000
9.	Textiles	Hespeler	TWIU*	700	10,000
10.	Textiles	Hamilton	TWIU*	600	6,900
1934					
1.	Logging	Vancouver I.	LWIU*	2,300	125,000
2.	Garment	Montreal	IUNTW*	3,000	45,000
3.	Garment	Montreal	ACWA	4,000	40,000
4.	Logging	S.S. Marie	LWIU*	900	26,000
5.	Metal Mining	Flin Flon	MWUC*	1,073	25,500
6.	Logging	Iroquois Falls	LWIU*	680	23,000
7.	Garment	Toronto	ILGWU	2,000	22,000
8.	Garment	Winnipeg	IUNTW*	400	11,000
9.	Garment	Montreal	MDCU**	400	11,000
10.	Garment	Guelph	ILGWU	250	10,000

* WUL unions

** The Montreal Dress Cutters' Union was an independent, communist-led organization. This was a strike in support of the IUNTW.

Source: Labour Gazette

Throughout this period the WUL gave considerable attention to its consolidation as a stable organization. For the first time it was attracting relatively large groups of workers, and its organizers had to relate to the varieties of working class ideas and attitudes. Most workers had a general impression of how a union should operate: it should be "businesslike" and it should be a union - not an adjunct or a duplicate of a revolutionary organization. Workers were dismayed by the "rotten old slip-shod ... methods of work" that were frequently characteristic of WUL unions. They were also put off by the pseudo-revolutionary jargon that all too readily crept into WUL literature, and consequently by the absence of language used "by the average literate worker". Moreover, there was an unfortunate tendency for the day-to-day life of WUL unions to fall by the wayside whenever a large strike was in the offing or in progress. At such times union life amounted to little more than "a series of big mass meetings". WUL leaders also had a constant fear of a new wave of state repression, a prospect that came very close in the spring of 1934 when WUL activity was at its height. The "Red Bogey" was a problem that arose in virtually every strike the WUL led, and persisted generally in the view that the WUL was not respectable. On one occasion the B.C. Lumber Worker pointed out in exasperation that a WUL charter was no less legitimate and "just as handsome as any granted by the

reformist unions". The fact that "the word Red [was] becoming synonymous with a sincere and honest organizer and fighter for a living wage and union conditions" was slender consolation.[9]

The WUL responded by "professionalizing" its approach, urging greater systematization of finances, meticulous payment and collection of dues and per capita, and no siphoning-off of funds from literature sales that should have been submitted to the National Office. Similarly, after "many complaints and criticisms" it changed the format of Workers' Unity, replacing "long-winded programs, theses and resolutions" with more concrete and comprehensible articles. It told organizers to produce shop leaflets and papers that spoke directly to workers' experiences and sensitivities, and also to observe a certain modesty of approach, remembering that for most of them "it wasn't so long ago" that they "didn't know what it was all about." Shop papers, it was stressed, failed if they excluded broad sections of the workforce. Hence they should contain mainly items on the social and cultural life of the union, carry educational items of a "trade union character" and maintain a "non-partisan" position, except where indicating how the communist viewpoint related to a particular economic issue. Unions were encouraged to develop active shop committees capable of performing basic union tasks, protecting members' employment and improving wages and conditions, and bringing

forward new leaders who were more adept at showing workers "how to stop the bullying of a boss or a foreman" than at making revolutionary speeches. They were also encouraged to develop social and educational dimensions, the latter in particular being considered vital for the consolidation of a predominantly inexperienced membership.[10] That these aims were only achieved to a limited degree by the end of 1934 is less important than what they said about the WUL's trajectory.

WUL leaders were acutely conscious of the League's apparent convergence with the practices of reformist unionism. Moreover, after they tentatively broached the question of limited united action with the reformist unions in May 1933 (and as we saw in the previous chapter, even earlier in British Columbia), they opened themselves to questions on their entire strategic approach: if the WUL really was interested in unity, and if it considered unity with reformist unionism possible, why did it not grasp the opportunity to carry the fight for militant policies from the inside?

In fact, TLC and ACCL leaders did not wish to inherit a rumbustious bunch of militants, and were from time to time clamping down on left wingers, such as Harold Pritchett and Alex Gauld, who <u>were</u> fighting from the inside.[11] But a nagging voice calling for a return to united front tactics

belonged to the small Trotskyist Left Opposition (LO). Built around an alliance of former adversaries Maurice Spector and Jack MacDonald, and staffed mainly by expelled YCL members, the LO urged the WUL to seek every available opportunity to strengthen the left inside the trade union mainstream, not by a policy of wholesale liquidation - the WUL still had a job to do in organizing the unorganized - but by inserting its new recruits, where appropriate, as militant blocs in the reformist organizations. A classic example was the WUL's organization of a Fur Dressers' and Dyers' Union after a strike at Toronto's Hallman and Sable factory in late August 1933. The LO paid due tribute to the WUL's "effective leadership", acknowledged that it had won the confidence of the entire workforce, and criticised Max Federman, local leader of the International Fur Workers' Union for his mischievous role and general untrustworthiness. Nevertheless, "especially at this time when the masses are turning towards organization and .... militant action", it was vital that the WUL look beyond its own organizational interests to the question of how best to promote unity and class struggle. And in this case, the answer was to organize the Hallman and Sable workers as a dressers' and dyers' local of the IFWU. For the time being the WUL ignored the LO's advice.[12]

For most of 1933 the WUL was unwilling to think through the arguments on unity, though by the end of 1934 it was

giving increasing attention to them. Instead, it reacted against its public promotion of trade union professionalism by stressing that there was something quite different politically about its kind of trade unionism and emphasizing the reciprocal relationship of WUL and CPC: building the one meant building the other. "We are not", a WUL Toronto organizer emphasized, "'economists' or reformists who simply look upon the daily struggle or the immediate demands as the sole object of struggle." On the contrary, communists used the struggle to prove their fitness to lead and to demonstrate that the "workers' way out of the crisis - the revolutionary way" was the only one likely to succeed. Communism was essential to trade unionism, another party member added, because it represented in the political arena the true interests of the working class, its "highest and fullest expression", just as the openly anti-capitalist WUL unions represented them in the economic arena. The WUL, Charles Sims added, at the same time as he was stressing its non-partisan character, neither denied class struggle nor the fundamental antagonism of capital and labour.[13]

Party leaders saw industrial intervention and party-building as reciprocal tasks. One pulled militants towards the party; the other developed class consciousness among them and strengthened the class struggle element in the unions. To give this new cadre of militants a rapid working knowledge of marxism and the skills to use it in

countering the day to day ideological resistance of the masses, the party launched in 1933 its first systematic educational programme; with a series of "Workers' Schools" and a National Training School. Catering to all levels of political education, these schools taught speaking and writing skills, the principles of trade unionism, the history of class struggles and "the theory and programme of the working class - Marxism-Leninism". Beginners used "study outlines" of the various themes, supplemented by readings from the party press.[14] A good example of the kind of arguments with which beginners were equipped was provided by Bill Findlay's Worker article "Regarding British Traditions", which countered the view that communism was an "alien" force in Canada by showing how the popular image of "British" social development as peaceful and harmonious was a distortion. For one thing it excluded from history the militant tradition of class struggle, as exemplified by the "physical force" Chartists and the 1926 General Strike. It was in that tradition that Canadian communists stood.[15] More advanced students read many of the basic marxist works, including The Communist Manifesto, Lenin's Imperialism and State and Revolution, Stalin's Foundations of Leninism and, for special advanced classes only, Volume One of Capital. The numbers taking advanced classes are not known, but the party claimed in the autumn of 1933 that "several thousand" workers were enrolled in beginners' courses.[16]

This attention to working class political education was long overdue. But while in the long term it must have given new party members greater confidence in their abilities to lead from within the working class, it by no means produced an instant ability to link theory and practice. Organizers on the ground were often completely at a loss when it came to linking the trade union struggle with broader political issues. Even militant YCL cadres as often as not took the line of least resistance, hesitated to broach non-union issues and only admitted their political affiliations when "forced to the wall" by the workers they were trying to organize.[17] One Toronto restaurant organizer complained of the poor response from the YCL when he asked for members to come down to the picket lines. Since the YCL made almost no contribution to "picketing, mingling with the strikers and generally building the union", the result was that neither the YCL nor the union made significant gains. Similarly, when a strike over the Bedaux System broke out in June 1933 at the Mercury Mills in Hamilton, the YCL, whose concentration plant it had been since the March campaign, considered itself insufficiently rooted in the factory (it had organized shop committees in only two departments) to risk showing its face. The two or three members who came down to the picket line melted into the background when the inevitable "red bogey" was introduced. In several instances this failure to build the

party side by side with the union opened the door to raids by the international unions. Fort William freight handlers, Toronto hospital workers and Niagara Falls chemical factory workers were all organized by the WUL, which then failed to build a "solid core of WUL or Party supporters" and let the TLC enter the scene "with a great blast of promises, a great treasury and bosses' cooperation." All three groups quickly switched their allegiances.[18]

Nevertheless, both the WUL and the Party - which effectively moved out of the underground when the first group of its jailed leaders was released in the autumn of 1934 - were growing. The precise membership of the WUL is impossible to determine. Even the unitemized estimates provided by League spokesmen from time to time varied greatly. Thus the Second National Congress claimed a membership of 30,000 in September 1933; the National Office reported 35,000 in April 1934; while in October 1934 membership was given as 26,000 in The Communist International and 39,000 by Sims at a meeting in Vancouver. The Annual Report on Labour Organizations in Canada for 1934 gave a figure of 24,086, but this appears not to have included the membership of the Ontario and British Columbia locals of the lumber workers' union, which at its peak contained perhaps 12,500 members.[19] An educated guess, therefore, would place WUL membership at its peak between mid-1934 and mid-1935 somewhere between 30,000 and 40,000 members. Party membership is

easier to establish. From its 1931 low of 1,300 it climbed to 5,500 in late 1934 and 7,390 in July 1935 (Table 5-VI). A large proportion of new recruits came from the unemployed movement, but some were certainly drawn towards the party by its role in industry.

Table 5-VI

COMMUNIST PARTY OF CANADA MEMBERSHIP, JULY 1935

District 1 (Nova Scotia)	110
District 2 (Quebec)	730
District 3 (Southern Ontario)	2,000
District 4 (Timmins)	400
District 5 (Sudbury)	200
District 6 (Lakehead)	400
District 7 (Manitoba)	800
District 8 (Alberta)	1,100
District 9 (British Columbia)	1,200
District 10 (Saskatchewan)	450
	7,390

Source: "Control Tasks Set by 8th Plenum", Review, 3 (July 1935), 30-34 (copy in UT, Kenny Collection)

WUL organizers were prepared to try almost any method to develop struggle and build pockets of trade unionism. In fact, the Fishermen's and Cannery Workers' Industrial Union (FCWIU) tried "nearly everything short of kidnapping". This

B.C. union agreed with the general contention that "individual contact" was indispensable, but observed that it was not a method suitable for every union organizer, at least on the coast, since it demanded that the organizer "adapt himself to the work very much like a preacher or Salvation Army organizer," and be "even-tempered, patient and docile, not easily slighted and hard to antagonize." These qualities came less than automatically to comrades who had developed in the mass agitation tradition of the unemployed movement.[20] On the other hand, when organizers carried out the prescriptions for patient contact work to the letter, the effect could be to dampen any element of rank and file spontaneity. This was the case at one Toronto textile factory, where after forming a shop group the YCL cadres restricted its activities to obtaining the names of addresses of individuals who might be recruited to the group. This "organizational perspective" simply produced stagnation, and the shop group fell apart through inactivity.[21]

Another example of how the WUL could stand to the right of the rank and file was provided by a loggers' and pulpwood cutters' strike in Chapleau, Ontario (mid-way between Timmins and S.S. Marie) in January 1934. The WUL District Council in Sudbury immediately assumed leadership of the strike. It issued handbills around the area calling on workers not to scab and sent in several organizers,

notably Jim Davis, an individual who had several times "run foul of the law in connection with his alleged communistic activities in Sudbury." Thunder Bay Communists added their contribution by picketing the highways leading out of the city and issuing "travel permits" to travellers who could show they weren't prospective strikebreakers. These efforts were highly effective. To obtain scabs the lumber contractors had to avoid Sudbury, where communist influence was so strong that any scabs might prove to be strike sympathizers, and only managed to obtain them from Gracefield, Quebec. The successful introduction of strikebreakers under heavy guard changed the complexion of the struggle for the WUL, which through Davis called for a "strategic retreat". The strikers, however, told Davis that "the strike was ours and we intended to carry on, as we did not come here to do any retreating and we therefore intended to remain on strike until we had obtained a settlement suitable to ourselves." Eventually, the strike petered out early in February.[22]

There were other occasions when the WUL kept strikes going, apparently long after any chance of victory had disappeared. The Shoe and Leather Workers' Industrial Union (SLWIU) maintained picket lines at the Tilley-Williams Factory in New Toronto from late July to early November 1934, despite the fact that strikebreakers had been successfully introduced and full production restarted by the

end of August.[23] At Corbin, B.C., the MWUC struck for 3½ months over a catalogue of grievances including victimization of the local union secretary, conditions in the mine and the quality of company housing. Even after a battle between the strikers and the provincial police on 17 April, described as a "riot" by the authorities and "another Ludlow Massacre" by the WUL, had placed Corbin under complete police control, the union refused to accept binding arbitration of the dispute under the Industrial Disputes' Investigation Act. It continued its resistance into May, when the Spokane-based company closed the mine.[24] In both instances there was no question of the union foisting its authority on the rank and file. Decisions to continue strike action in the face of impending defeat were taken democratically, in the New Toronto case because there was no compromise on offer and in Corbin because the compromise would have involved permanent elimination of half the jobs.

These different struggles revealed that successful union action remained difficult even in more hospitable economic conditions and in the presence of unions prepared to fight. Much depended on the quality of leadership provided. And in this regard, the WUL was becoming increasingly effective. How, for example, did it reach a position such as existed in Corbin, a company town impossible to enter by train from Alberta if you were a radical sympathizer, where it was "in the habit of exercising a very

strong influence in the running of the mine"? One reason was its ability to inspire by personal example. During the strike with the town bottled up tight and a crucial mass meeting approaching, the WUL sent Pat Lenihan and George Arbuckle, a Fernie communist, on the 30 mile journey from Coleman on the Alberta side of the Crow's Nest Pass to Corbin - on foot. Revived only by an hour's stop in a Michel tavern and five hours' sleep in the shack of a sympathetic railway worker in McGillivray, they survived the Rockies in the dead of winter, although along the way Arbuckle had to inspire a whining and moaning Lenihan by conjuring up an image of Lenin battling through Siberian snows during his exile in the 1890s. When they arrived in Corbin the miners were mesmerized and ecstatic.[25]

Lenihan's colleague in the MWUC, Harvey Murphy, displayed the flair that was often necessary to make a breakthrough, in his efforts to overcome similar difficulties in Michel, another B.C. coal company town. Normal organizing methods were defeated by company spies and the firing of any miner suspected of harbouring an organizer; indeed, any stranger was immediately put under surveillance. Murphy's response was to turn to the Slav and Italian communities of the MWUC stronghold of Blairmore, 30 miles away. He had them organize a concert party, consisting of 90 miners, 8 women and 21 young pioneers, which put on a

show in Michel on 10 March 1934, a pay-day. Murphy had already been banned from Michel, but since this was a social occasion he was allowed in, on the proviso that there be no speeches at the concert. On arrival, however, Murphy was appointed M.C. for the evening "which somehow or another turned out to be a succession of speeches, despite the ban." The concert ended at 9.30, giving opportunities for fraternization between the two towns' Slavs and Italians well into the night. The Blairmore party returned home at four in the morning, satisfied it had laid the basis for unionization in Michel.[26]

During strikes WUL organizers had to use a wide variety of tactics to support their standard use of militant picketing The Winnipeg WUL operated a boycott of the Western Packing Company's products, which bit hard enough to force the company to take out full-page advertisements in the Free Press and Tribune denouncing the WUL.[27] In Port Arthur the LWIU, aided by the Finnish Organization and the Scandinavian Workers' and Farmers' Club, picketed the horse barns of the struck Pigeon Timber Company round the clock. When a combined force of Ontario Provincial Police and RCMP tried to break the picket and round up the union leaders, thousands of people from Port Arthur's South End "began streaming out of their homes ...[until] the whole block surrounding the Pidgeon Timber Barn on Machar

Avenue was packed with people." The police were forced to withdraw, and the horse barns picket was made securer than ever.[28] SLWIU organizer Ken Scott gave leadership of intelligence and flexibility at a strike in Brampton. He mixed up mass and token pickets as circumstances dictated, talked strikebreakers out of scabbing, called a successful mass public meeting to defend the WUL against red-baiting, organized two other Brampton workplaces, a knitting mill and a wholesale flower grower, and brought the strike to a satisfactory conclusion.[29]

Scott was just one of many new organizers thrown up by the struggle and the left's "cadreization" programme. Among others who came to the fore were Jim "Scotty" Houston (Toronto unemployed, Hespeler textile workers, Flin Flon metal miners), Jack Scott (Ontario boot and shoe, metal workers), Jim Beattie (Ontario boot and shoe, steel and metal workers), Bruce Magnusson (Northern Ontario lumber workers), Anne Walters (Ontario textiles), Mitchi Sago (Flin Flon metal miners, Winnipeg labour generally), Myer Klig (Montreal and Toronto garment and fur workers), Oscar Salonen (Vancouver longshoremen) and Fred Collins (Ontario furniture, boot and shoe and auto workers). In addition, several estranged activists had made their peace with the party by this time, for example John Stokaluk, J.B. Salsberg and James Blugerman; and one well-known non-communist militant, Sam Scarlett, had finally renounced his

"anarcho-syndicalist" errors, partly because of the glowing success of the Five-Year Plan and partly because the CPC had taken over sole possession of the place in the state's firing line once reserved for the IWW.[30]

In general, the WUL had its greatest success in relatively small workplaces and in light industry, where its personal contact approach could percolate through an entire factory fairly quickly, where the inevitably ensuing strike did not drastically tax available resources, and where union influence could thereafter be consolidated. Thus in the textiles industry the WUL made its first serious intervention in the knit goods' sector, in which 85.8 (in 1935) per cent of businesses employed fewer than 50 workers. The WUL led five textile strikes in 1933, of which four were in plants with between 20 and 30 employees: Standard Knitting, Winnipeg, 29; Royal Knitwear, Toronto, 26; Model Knitting, Toronto, 25; Textile Knitting, Toronto, 24. Out of the Joint Organizing Committee of Knit Goods Workers the Textile Workers' Industrial Union was formed late in 1933.[31] A similar situation prevailed in the shoe and leather industries. The SLWIU carried out twelve strikes (8 in Toronto, 2 in Kitchener, 1 each in Brampton and New Toronto) between August 1933 and August 1934; the smallest of the factories had 10 workers, the largest had 125.[32] It was the same story in the furniture industry; in meat packing the small companies were struck; and in the automobile industry

only the components' sector was affected.

Conversely, the WUL made little or no impression on the huge mass production industries. There was some evidence of activity in the Kitchener rubber factories, some of the larger cotton mills and at the Steel Company of Canada (Stelco), but none at all at General Electric or Westinghouse, or in the agricultural implement or major auto plants. Failure here stemmed not so much from the inappropriateness of the shop group method as from the greater complexity of the workplace settings and the fact that these large, monopolistic industries had both the most effective disciplinary techniques and the capacity to make tactical pecuniary concessions.[33] These basic points can be developed by looking more closely at WUL activities in the furniture and steel industries. Before doing so, however, it is worth examining WUL oppositional work on the Vancouver waterfront. As we have seen, this aspect of communist trade union activity was often listed as one of the movement's severest weaknesses. Such was not the case in Vancouver.[34]

The rapid rise of communist influence on the Vancouver water-front was scarcely predictable. For ten years the Vancouver & District Waterfront Workers' Association (VDWWA) had dutifully served its purpose as a company union. Formed by the B.C. Shipping Federation (BCSF) in 1924, it

was manned largely by strikebreakers from the previous year's International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) strike, supplemented by such ex-ILA man as could escape the blacklist. It was contractually obliged to restrict its membership to 800, assist the BCSF in eliminating "incompetent" workers, and to support existing governmental institutions; it was even housed in the BCSF Hall.[35] Its composition did not make for militancy: strikebreakers and their victims did not make the best comrades.[36] Moreover, internal disharmony was intensified by the structure of the workforce and customary work practices. The union was divided into groups and work gangs, usually dealing with specialized freight. Thus four ex-ILA gangs made up one group. Gang members were the most privileged of the workforce: "If you were a good gang and produced the goods, you got lots of work." To members of the most favoured gangs, individual earnings of $200 a month were common in the 1920s. In the 1930s, however, continued disparities in relative earnings became a crucial issue, producing demands for union control in dispatching and work rotation.[37]

Before 1933 there had been a few desultory attempts to supplant the VDWAA. From time to time in the 1920s the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council tried to revive interest in the ILA, usually by exposing the deterioration of safety conditions in longshoring since the 1923 defeat. Its attempts were thwarted by the reluctance of former ILA men

to consider bringing back the independent union if, in doing so, they would be legitimating the status of ex-strike-breakers: it was one thing to work with a scab under protest; accepting him as a bona fide unionist was something else.[38] Prompted by the Comintern's strong emphasis on the revolutionary potential of organizing port workers, Tom Ewan carried on extensive correspondence with revolutionary waterfront organizers in Britain and the United States, and hinted that the WUL stood on the brink of significant achievement in this area. In fact, communist influence was almost non-existent; in May 1931 the CPC had a single member working on the Vancouver docks.[39]

The WUL gained its first real influence on the waterfront through the unemployed movement. Dissident longshoremen used the various unemployed councils as a surrogate for activity inside the VDWWA. The Waterfront Neighbourhood Council was one of the most active in the city, and was almost certainly bringing together militants from different longshore groups.[40] Obviously, unemployed and underemployed longshoremen had the greatest material interest in demands for equalized work and earnings. They also provided outside organizers with an intimate knowledge of the rank and file's grievances and problems, such as dreadful safety conditions and the authoritarian habits of many stevedores and foremen. Organizers used this knowledge to make their mimeographed paper The Heavy Lift an "extremely lively", well-informed

publication. It first appeared in May 1933, and promptly became the "collective organizer" of a "veritable network" of left wing groups and party cells on the docks. Supporters of its "progressive" programme poured it "in a continuous stream into the lunch pails and buckets" of VDWAA members. By the end of 1933 a progressive slate, standing on the Heavy Lift programme, won control of the union. WUL National Executive Board member Oscar Salonen was elected business agent.[41]

In 1934 the left extended and deepened its authority in the union. Another communist, Ivan Emery, was elected president; the union's withdrawal from the Vancouver National Labour Council, an almost moribund body propped up only by employers' largesse (including that of the BCSF), was effected; and the "progressive" group began to win support even from the "high earnings" gangs.[42]

Communists used their influence in the VDWWA to extend unionism into many unorganized sectors of the B.C. marine transport industry. A special union meeting in September 1933 voted to overturn the contractual prohibition on increasing the official membership beyond 800 workers. But rather than take on the BCSF prematurely on this issue, the VDWWA chose to become Local 1 of the Longshore and Water Transport Workers of Canada (LWTWC) in April 1934. Left wing organizers, Salonen in particular, used this new

federated structure to form Waterfront Workers' Associations in Victoria, New Westminster, Chemainus, Port Alberni, Duncan, Powell River and Nanaimo, created small specialized unions such as the Vancouver Export Log Workers' Association, the Ship Lining and Fitting Workers' Association and the Coastwise Longshoremen and Freighthandlers' Association, and after two fruitless years trying to build the WUL's Marine Workers' Industrial Union (MWIU) formed the Seafarers' Industrial Union (SIU) through an amalgamation of the MWIU, the Federated Seafarers' Union and a portion of the rank and file of the Canadian Amalgamated Association of Seamen. Altogether, the LWTWC added between 1,500 and 2,000 unionists to the left wing camp.[43]

At the same time as they were building unionism in marine transport, communists were trying both to consolidate what they had built as part of the mainstream labour movement and to prepare the waterfront organizations for strike action. Here they ran into difficulties. In the VTLC Harold Pritchett tried to win endorsement for the LWTWC but this first step towards what was almost certainly an attempt at affiliation to the international movement failed, after considerable discussion, with the LWTWC being declared "dual" to the non-existent ILA. In a sense, this was a case of the communists' chickens coming home to roost: any proposal from their quarter, no matter how sound, was automatically suspect.[44] The left's efforts to win support for strike

action against the BCSF encountered "habits of thought engendered by ten years of suppression", and more than a year passed between the first broaching of the subject and the final emergence of open conflict. Communists in the union were anxious to contribute to the waterfront strikes that hit the United States' ports in the summer of 1934. In the event, the VDWAA rank and file rejected encouragement to follow the American example, indicating that the left's grip on the union was not absolutely secure. Nevertheless, even according to the conservative estimate of the BCSF's informants, by May 1935 the left had the habitual support of half the union membership and a solid core group of 175 activists.[45] Whether this would be enough to sustain it through what was now an imminent strike remained to be seen, but it was certainly as much as the WUL could have hoped for when it launched its intervention two years earlier.

The struggle in which the WUL really established itself as a force to be reckoned with occurred in the furniture industry of Southern Ontario. One sector of the industry was made up of a cluster of small, mainly upholstery shops in Toronto. The larger sector was located inside a geographical triangle extending from Kitchener in the east to Owen Sound in the north to Strathroy in the west, with Stratford at its centre. By May 1934 the Furniture Workers' International Union (FWIU) was known, even in Toronto, as

the "Stratford Union", following the crucial strike in that town in the autumn of 1933.[46] Yet the union actually made its breakthrough, albeit a small one, in Toronto; and in the next year gained at least a foothold in most of the furniture centres. Nevertheless, its role in Stratford won it a reputation, and takes up much of the following discussion.

A useful portrait of conditions in the furniture industry before the arrival of the FWIU was provided by O. J. Kerr, Stratford's leading local activist in the 1933 strike, in his appearance before H. H. Stevens' House of Commons Special Committee on Price Spreads and Mass Buying in 1934. Predictably, it was not a very attractive one. Craftsmanship was a thing of the past. Production had been broken down entirely to repetition and assembly work: "one group of men ... work on arms, another on seats, another on backs, and so forth." Most employees were paid by the piece, and in the depression years especially, when cut-throat competition between manufacturers was at its height, the piece-rate bonus was a ready target for cost-cutting. Workers had to accept whatever rate was offered since unemployment was so severe. During regular spells of spasmodic production workers had to be on constant standby, "always at the call of the whistle." For women and girls in the trade conditions were even worse. Most failed to make the provincial minimum wage, but made no complaint for fear

of losing their jobs.[47]

The industry was ripe for union activity. In the 1920s the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners had attempted to organize the skilled workers in the industry, but after the failure of a drive in winter 1925-26 it withdrew doubting if furniture workers would ever prove real trade union material.[48] One of the primary reasons for the furniture workers' cool reception for the international union was its craft orientation, which they knew to be inappropriate to their situation; even some of the most skilled workers who retained individual membership of the UBCJ felt this to be true. In 1927 the OBU organized a furniture unit in Stratford, but at its peak it held no more than 33 members and perished by the end of the year.[49] When the FWIU arrived in August 1933, it brought with it a form of unionism that spoke to the perceived needs of a workforce that was ready for action.[50]

Fred Collins' and Izzy Minster's organization of the Toronto furniture shops demonstrated the growing resourcefulness of WUL organizers. Beginning with only three contacts in a single chesterfield factory, they drew up with them an article on shop conditions which was published simultaneously in the 8 July 1933 editions of the Worker and the Kampf, causing a major stir among the other workers. The organizers then used an imminent Anti-Fascist

United Front demonstration to maintain interest and momentum. With one of the contacts they gained an interview with the Jewish owner of the shop, to ask if they could speak to the workers about the forthcoming demonstration. He was only too happy to contribute to the anti-Hitler movement and allowed them to distribute leaflets. By this time, the workers were anxious to talk about unionizing the plant, and the organizers were able to gain a number of names and addresses. Collins made a point of visiting one of the key "Anglo-Saxon" workers at his home, holding "a thorough discussion on what the WUL represents ... clearing up the so-called 'red bogey', explaining ... that anyone who is ready to fight against wage-cuts, lay-offs and for better conditions can be a member of the WUL." The entire workforce marched in the anti-fascist demonstration.[51]

While these events were taking place, the Canadian Furniture Manufacturers' Association (CFMA) was making its own plans to organize the industry. On 4 August it held a conference in Kitchener to discuss plans for a "code ... to end the wanton competition" that had brought more than a few CFMA members to the verge of bankruptcy.[52] Since this mimicry of Roosevelt's National Industrial Recovery Act raised the spectre of company unionism, Minster and Collins accelerated their efforts, holding a series of progressively larger meetings. On 10 August 200 workers, more than two-

thirds of the entire Toronto workforce, drew up a list of wage demands - $15 a week minimum, 30 per cent increase for labourers, 40 per cent increase for upholsterers, sewers, cutters and cushion fillers, and 50 per cent for springers - and appointed a Committee of Action to pursue their claim, giving it full authorization to call a strike if the demands were not met. The election of a union executive completed the preparatory stage.[53]

On 14 August these demands, to which had been added several others including overtime at time and a half, a ban on overtime if there were workers unemployed, enforcement of the Workmen's Compensation Act and recognition of union shop committees, were submitted to the manufacturers along with notification of the union's intention to strike two days later if it had not gained satisfaction. The manufacturers ignored the claim, and the strike went ahead, proving highly effective. Within a week 11 out of 12 shops had signed contracts providing even better conditions than originally demanded: in addition to granting all the original demands, they granted union recognition and hiring through the union. Interestingly, the single hold-out was the Gold Medal Company which in the late 1920s had operated an ambitious scheme of collective shop management, profit sharing and group insurance. After several days of vigorous picketing, the Gold Medal shop also accepted the union's terms.[54]

Shortly before the Toronto strike, Collins, Minster and two union members travelled to Kitchener and Stratford to forestall possible attempts at raising strikebreakers. They found the Stratford workers particularly receptive. One strong factor in the WUL's favour was the presence of a strong unemployed organization which was in the process of affiliating to the communist-led National Council of Unemployed Councils (NCUC). The organizers left having put together a small FWIU local.[55] On 14 September, three weeks to the day after the conclusion of the Toronto strike, the 800 workers in Stratford's six furniture factories walked out.

According to one historian, WUL organizers acted with "precipitate haste" in organizing for the strike.[56] As they saw it, however, there was nothing to be gained and much to be lost by proceeding at the elephantine pace of the international unions. Delay only gave the employers time to discriminate against activists and red-bait the WUL; it was not the WUL's experience that delay very often made employers amenable to peaceful settlement. Moreover, the recent Toronto events had demonstrated the efficacy of surprise and of utilizing rank and file enthusiasm. When workers were engaged in their first experience of collective struggle, especially in the habitually penurious WUL unions, spontaneous enthusiasm was often crucial. When the FWIU gave the employers less than a day to meet its demands, it was not indicating an essential preference for struggle over

negotiation or being unfair to the employers - who were surely well aware of what was brewing. Instead it was anticipating a sharp struggle, in which its best interests would be served by getting in the first blow.

The Stratford strike was significant for a number of reasons, not least of which was its refutation of the view that only "foreigners" were receptive to the WUL. The willingness of "home-brew type" workers to follow its militant lead greatly exercised the minds of the Bennett administration.[57] Fred Collins played a decisive role in dissolving whatever hostility there might have been to the union's aggressive tactics. About 40 years old and a former Glasgow ship-yard worker and Toronto streetcar driver, Collins was large in physique and had an aura of dependability. In the words of a co-worker he was "a real militant ... a real, good, solid person".[58] He struck up an easy rapport with local trade unionists, whose support, particularly from the railway machine shops, did much to sustain the strikers' morale.[59] On 22 September around 600 railwaymen marched with their lodge banners alongside the strikers in a protest demonstration led by the CNR employees' band. With fine understatement the federal Department of Labour observed that this expression of solidarity "would seem to be rather an unusual circumstance".[60] Altogether, around 2,000 people marched in this demonstration, showing the massive local popularity of the strike.

Members of Stratford's TLC and ACCL unions actually rejected the admonitions of Tom Moore and Aaron Mosher to have nothing to do with the strike. The WUL's position was strengthened when the Stratford Beacon-Herald obtained a copy of a letter from Moore to a local UBCJ official who had asked if the UBCJ could send in an organizer to supplant the FWIU. Moore's reply could hardly have been more damning. He stated that the TLC was in no position, constitutionally or financially, to underwrite an organizing drive; that industrial unionism was contrary to TLC principles, and hence the furniture workers would have to apply for membership of the appropriate craft union; that, in any event, these same workers had not proved of union calibre in the past; but that, to be going on with, the Stratford carpenters' local should let it be known that the WUL was the "Canadian section of the Red International of Moscow whose sole purpose is to stir up strife and foster the aims and objects of the Communist Party." Here was a classic case of TLC treachery, and Collins denounced it with relish as the "finest example of labour traitorism that Canada has ever seen", any exaggeration in the claim being excused by the fact that the letter appeared exactly a week after the arrival in the town of 60 officers and men of the Royal Canadian Regiment, backed up by four Carden-Lloyd machine-gun carriers.[61] Aaron Mosher complemented Moore's breach of working class solidarity by dismissing a request

for assistance from the WUL National Executive Board with the argument that the FWIU was only prolonging the strike for political purposes and that the presence of the militia was not a material factor in the strike.[62]

Many ordinary trade unionists saw things differently, as the resolutions landing on the desk of Tory provincial Premier George Henry indicated.[63] FWIU members confirmed their support for the WUL after this incident, and the Stratford union movement did likewise. The fact that, as an official in the federal Department of Justice sheepishly noted, what the strikers faced were only "Whippet tanks and quite small", was an irrelevance: troops and artillery were seen to be there for the purpose of breaking the strike, and therefore had to be unconditionally opposed.[64] And, of course, military intervention was yet another object lesson in the validity of the WUL's analysis of the class-based character and essentially coercive function of the state.

It has been argued that within a few days of the troops' arrival "it had become apparent that [they] were irrelevant in the prevailing industrial conflict."[65] By then, however, they had already served their immediate purpose. Before their arrival, militant picketing had successfully prevented the movement of finished goods out of the struck plants and had impeded the entry of scabs into the Swift Canadian plant, where 70 young women chicken pluckers had gone on

strike on 21 September. After the troops arrived, the union was sufficiently intimidated to reduce the level and intensity of its picket line activities and the factories managed to ship out their completed orders. Moreover, their presence had a salutary effect - as far as the employers and authorities were concerned - on the industrial situation in other furniture centres. In Hanover, Owen Sound, Listowel and elsewhere "conditions at one stage promised to develop seriously, and, doubtless, the presence of the Militia had some effect on preventing the strike from spreading."[66]

Another effect of the militia's arrival was to end the likelihood of union recognition. On 21 September representatives of 5 of the 6 factories met with Dominion Conciliation Officer M. S. Campbell and Ontario's Minister of Labour J. D. Monteith (coincidentally Stratford's MLA), and Deputy Labour Minister A. W. Crawford. After the meeting Campbell reported to his superiors that "in private conversation" some of the manufacturers had admitted that the strikers had genuine grievances, that one had felt unionization might lead to a general reorganization of the industry and elimination of some of the worst cut-throat competition, and that union recognition was likely. The FWIU even agreed to forego its demand for the closed-shop, as had been won in Toronto.[67] For some reason, however, a stalemate punctuated by sharp exchanges on the picket lines

developed, only to be broken by the military intrusion.

As we shall see later, the continuation of hostilities stemmed in large part from a hardening of the Ontario government's attitude towards the WUL. For the present, it is sufficient to note that the strike continued through October, by which time the Preston-Noelting plant had settled and the union's capacity to sustain morale had been sapped. The WUL therefore employed a strategic retreat; in early November one plant after another made individual settlements, accepting shop committees but refusing union recognition. Obviously, this was some way short of complete victory. Nevertheless, it is nonsense to say that "the furniture workers gained nothing" from the strike.[68] O. J. Kerr made this quite plain in his Stevens' Committee appearance. The settlement, he acknowledged, was "not acceptable by any means, but [it was] the best possible arrangement that could be made at that time." Not only were the hitherto super-exploited girls routinely bringing their grievances forward for the union to take up, but in general the advent of the union had forced the manufacturers to recognize "the authority and the right of the worker to participate in the organization of the plant."[69] In addition, there can be little doubt that the collective experience of class struggle gained during the strike had much to do with the election of a labour slate, with Kerr as its mayoralty candidate, in the December 1933 municipal

election.[70]

While the Stratford strike was in progress, the union was active elsewhere. In October, for example, a strike "accompanied by more than the usual amount of violence associated with labor disputes among the foreign born", as the Toronto Globe put it, won union recognition for 100 workers in Toronto's National Picture Frame Company.[71] The union was also active in Kitchener, Hanover, Neustadt, Hespeler and Montreal. Delegates from all of these furniture centres participated in the FWIU's first National Conference held in Toronto on 16-17 December. The main business of the conference was the election of a 15-person National Executive Board (including one woman) and the selection of Stratford as union headquarters. But the union found time to underline its militant orientation by passing resolutions opposing the "Hitler Terror" and the continued imprisonment of the CPC leaders and sending messages of solidarity to striking loggers in Rouyn and Fort Frances.[72]

The FWIU then turned to the Kitchener factories, displaying its growing maturity by negotiating contracts for 150 workers at the Anthes-Baetz and Baetz companies; among the union's gains were wage increases of between 10-30 per cent, equal division of work and recognition of shop committees.[73] At the same time it was active in the two plants of the Brandt Company, reputedly "the worst sweat-shops in Kitchener", with abysmal sanitation, bullying

foremen, standard 14-hour shifts and wages ranging from 12 cents an hour for boys under 20 to a maximum of 35 cents for the most skilled. On this occasion the company responded to the union's demands by holding a referendum, asking employees to sign a ballot indicating their preference for either the union or a system of personal contact with the owner. When an overwhelming majority of the 140 workers voted for the former, the company signed a contract raising the minimum hourly rate to 20 cents and the maximum to 40 cents, accepted the 44-hour week as standard with time and a quarter for overtime, agreed to equal division of work and granted union recognition. A gleeful Worker reported: "It all happened in one week, January 22nd, the worst sweat shop in Kitchener, January 29th a Union Shop, 100% organized, with higher wages, better conditions. January 22nd - unorganized. January 29th - A UNION SHOP."[74]

From February to early April the union fought two strikes which showed its capacity to defend existing union conditions. One was at the Reliable Upholstery plant, which had been moved to Kitchener in a bid to escape the union's Toronto contract. When the union struck the plant, its owners moved it again - back to Toronto! The union pursued it, picketed its Toronto premises, and won a fresh contract.[75] The other strike occurred at the recently organized Brandt factory, where management had promptly cut the agreed rates. The union demonstrated its influence with

the rank and file by honouring an injunction requiring the strikers to return to complete unfinished work, then pulling them out again en masse. Confronted with this display of unity, the company again capitulated.[76]

Further evidence of the FWIU's ability to function as a stable organization was provided by its 3 month strike at the Moore-Bell Company in Stratford. When the plant closed down in June 1934 it normally employed 40 workers, but when it re-opened in August it had reorganized production so that only 23 were needed. None of the chosen 23, however, agreed to sell out his fellow unionists, and when the company tried to import strikebreakers the union struck the plant. It kept the picket line going for more than three months until the company conceded in December.[77] In Toronto, at the expiry of the 1933 agreement, the union's 300 members struck for an improved contract, and as in 1933, won a total victory in less than a week.[78] In Hanover 100 union members successfully struck to win the reinstatement of the local president, fired for union activity, and to prevent detrimental changes in work practices.[78] Cases such as these demonstrated that the FWIU (and the WUL generally) was not a fly-by-night organization.

There were, however, a number of breaks in the pattern of progress. One small Kitchener company managed to split its employees away from the union by signing an independent

non-union agreement.[80] More significant was the union's failure to gain union contracts for Montreal's 600 furniture workers during a month-long strike in September-October 1934. Several factors contributed to this partial defeat (most of the shops granted certain improvements), but the most decisive was probably the timing of the strike. It coincided with a massive IUNTW strike which effectively exhausted WUL resources.[81] The FWIU's most serious reverse came in Stratford. Since the 1933 strike, the union had been trying to make good its failure to obtain an industry-wide settlement. However, its efforts were hampered by the presence of an anti-WUL group which had its main strength in the McLagan plant. In July this faction was placed on a firmer organizational footing when the TLC chartered a furniture workers' Federal Labour Union (FLU), which immediately affiliated to the Stratford Trades and Labour Council and began a red-baiting campaign in concert with the Canadian Legion. On one occasion a group of Legionnaires kidnapped Izzy Minster, and after forcing him to kneel down before the Union Jack and pledge allegiance to the King, drove him out of Stratford, dumped him and warned him not to return. Anti-communist activity drove a wedge through the working class community; among the anti-WUL group was Robert Douglas, president of the STLC. And although a mass meeting, numbering 10,000 persons according to the <u>Toronto Star</u>, demonstrated that the FWIU still carried extensive

support, including that of Mayor Kerr and Alderman Douglas Marks, the union was understandably ambivalent about taking strike action that might have widened the split. Although 250 FWIU members at a meeting in mid-September confirmed their support for the industrial union and drew up a new set of demands, the union decided against calling a strike.[82]

Notwithstanding these setbacks, there was no question that in scarcely a year the FWIU had established a genuine presence in the furniture industry. In the face of considerable employer hostility and increasing state interference (of which more later) the union maintained its momentum, extended the range of its influence and, by protecting rank and file gains, consolidated itself with the rank and file. These were no mean achievements. And they gained in stature when compared with the WUL's inability to penetrate basic industry. Here we shall look at the case of steel.

No aspect of WUL activity generated more "self-criticism" than the failure to build unions in the "decisive" industries, in particular automobiles, steel and metals, metal mining and smelting and rubber. The urgency with which this failure was discussed stemmed from the belief that the world stood on the "eve of the outbreaks of war and revolution", with the beleaguered Soviet Union the obvious target for fresh imperialist attacks. Without

a presence in the mines producing the raw materials for rearmament and the factories producing new weapons of war, the CPC would be unable to perform its revolutionary duty of defending the "Socialist stronghold". Since a defeat for the Soviet Union would mean "increased oppression and slavery throughout the whole earth for years to come", it was inconceivable that comrades should, as so many had done in their work in heavy industry, follow "to a large degree the line of least resistance." The "war industries" had to be organized.[83]

The steel industry was probably the WUL's biggest disappointment. The 1929 strike at National Steel Car, although defeated, had raised hopes that this crucial industry might prove hospitable to industrial unionism. However the depression only accelerated the disintegration of workers' control that had been proceeding through the 1920s. The Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers had established a degree of influence in the industry's three largest plants, Besco/Dosco in Sydney, Steel Company of Canada (Stelco) in Hamilton and Algoma Steel in Sault Ste. Marie, towards the end of the world war. But in 1923 it was smashed at Sydney, and in the other two plants its influence gradually evaporated. In the depression, managements seized the opportunity to impose whatever conditions they wished. With Dosco operating at 17 per cent of capacity in 1932, there was little chance of

any kind of inside trade union activity. Circumstances were similar at Stelco and Algoma.[84]

The economic upturn slightly altered the situation. Total Canadian production of ingots and castings rose by 19 per cent in 1933, and 1934 opened with the best single month's production since May 1931; at 61,000 tons it was 49 per cent better than the previous January's figure.[85] The first indication that the upturn was having an effect on working class attitudes came from Stelco, where wages had been cut by 33 per cent since 1929. In April 1934 The Worker printed a report from Hamilton under the headline "Hamilton Steelworkers Stirring", which gave the impression that mass support for unionization, and strong support for the WUL, was growing at Stelco.[86] The reality was rather different.

Workers in one department of the plant, the Sheet or "Hot" Mill, had begun to discuss the possibility of forming "a steelworkers' union, with affiliations, if any, to be decided later."[87] Most of these workers were of British origin, and some at least had been members of the AAISTW in the early 1920s. They had no immediate intention of recruiting workers from other departments, but were primarily concerned to get their shop "all cemented together and paying [dues]."[88] At their second meeting they agreed to call themselves the Independent Steel Workers' Union

(ISWU), apparently striking a compromise between those who favoured reviving the AAISTW and those who supported the Steel and Metal Workers' Industrial Union (SMWIU).

There clearly was some support for the WUL union. At the second meeting a motion was put to admit local communist Alex MacLennan and WUL National Secretary Charles Sims, the latter's presence indicating the degree of importance the WUL accorded these developments. The majority, however, overruled the motion, and the two communists were left outside the door. The sheet mill workers were then on the point of meeting with management to discuss the possibility of wage increases and may have viewed the WUL's burgeoning reputation for militancy as a liability they could do without. Even after management gave them no encouragement, they remained aloof from the WUL's approaches. Hamilton WUL organizer William Rigby invited the ISWU to send representatives to a series of public meetings in the Grand Opera House, luring it with the observation that it would be able to put its case before "the big audience that usually attends our meetings." Rigby urged it to consider "the problem ... of organizing the thousands of steel-workers throughout Hamilton ... to win a living wage for all."[89] The WUL Executive Board [illegible]ighed in with an offer to place its "entire resources" behind the independent union.[90] The problem was that the majority in the ISWU simply did not

share the WUL's perspective on organizing the entire steel industry as a matter of the utmost urgency. To all appearances, the ISWU settled down to a period of quiet consolidation, and the WUL had to look elsewhere.

Vexed by this failure, in September the WUL appointed Toronto unemployed organizer James Beattie National Organizer of the SMWIU and made available an organizing team of eight. Beattie and his comrades began their work the following month, and by the end of the year the SMWIU was claiming locals in seven Ontario centres: Toronto, Hamilton, Brantford, Sault Ste. Marie, Galt, Guelph and Windsor. It also had two active locals in Winnipeg and one at Dosco.[91] Evidence that their efforts were bearing fruit came in the spring of 1935, when the union led successful strikes at the Brantford Washing Machine Company and International Malleable Iron in Guelph. The latter was particularly impressive in view of the fact that the work-force of 125 was divided along craft and ethnic lines. According to one RCMP report, "although all employees went out on strike, only 50 per cent were in favour of the walk-out, these being mostly of foreign extraction." This assertion probably said as much about the authorities' reluctance to believe that "home brew" types could be impressed by "well-known Communist agitator[s]" like James Beattie as about the range of rank and file opinion in the strike. Whatever their differences, the strikers remained

solid, reaping the benefit of several years of communist unemployed activity in Guelph.[92]

The WUL also had a hand in the May strike at the Stelco sheet mill. In February it convened the first meeting of the Steel and Metal Workers' Organizational Committee - an interesting title in the light of later developments - in Hamilton, and a second meeting in the same place a month later. The SMWOC had no affiliation to the WUL, the CPC having concluded that a more indirect transmission of influence was now necessary.[93] A sense of that influence can be derived from developments at Stelco after the sheet mill strike, which resulted in some wage improvements but no recognition of the ISWU. Two of the leading ISWU activists, Milton Montgomery and Tom McClure (the latter a communist), joined the plant council set up by the company after the strike. By now it was communist policy to have members and "militants ... join the plant council and use it to build the union ... this was done pretty generally", according to Sydney communist George MacEachern, who was following this tactic at the Dosco plant.[94] The other important development was that the sheet mill workers finally recognized the need to build "a single Union for all Stelco employees", and beyond that to reach out to all the "unorganized workers employed in the steel industry in Canada."[95] By September 1935 the ISWU was operating "an exchange of information" with the Algoma Steelworkers'

Union (ASU) and the Steelworkers' Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS), both of which had been formed in 1935. The final article in the October issue of the ISWU organ, a brief account of a strike at the Page-Hersey Tubes plant in Welland, ended with the slogan "Unity Wins!"[96] This could have been pulled from any current CPC publication.[97]

The CPC's and WUL's growing emphasis on working class unity, and the latter's willingness to forego direct affiliation of groups it was organizing, derived in some degree from the realization that in industries like steel - and also in automobiles - the task of organizing was far too great for the left's available resources. As later events would reveal, to achieve a psychological breakthrough of the Stratford type in the mass production industries required a massive concentration of resources, as at Flint, Michigan, or the presence of an organizing body with almost charismatic powers, as the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) offered General Motors' workers at Oshawa in 1937.[98] There was, however, another main domestic source of the left's growing interest in unity: fear of renewed state repression. The interaction of this factor with the signals coming from the international communist movement created a situation where, by the end of 1934, the continued existence of the WUL was already being considered.

Until the Stratford furniture strike Canadian capitalists had no real reason to be concerned with the WUL. Its successes had been few and far between, and even then seemed almost entirely confined to strikes involving "foreigners". Capitalist complacency, however, received a sharp blow in the following year when, one hostile observer reported, Communism made "greater strides and obtained more followers in Canada ... than in any previous three years." The "monster" that was the WUL was adding "hourly" to its numbers, and had to be curbed.[99] Lumber operators were among the most concerned. A rash of strikes in Northern Ontario in the autumn of 1933 led to claims that Canadian loggers were being manipulated by "agitators", on orders from Moscow to undermine the 10 per cent imperial preference gained at the Ottawa Imperial Conference and facilitate the "dumping" of Soviet lumber in Britain. The General Manager of the Spruce Falls Power and Paper Company wrote from Kapuskasing to the federal Department of Labour that "our camps are full of agitators who prod and agitate the men ... [over] some minor grievance ... which makes it practically impossible to get any kind of efficient work from them." In the House of Commons, G. B. Nicholson, head of one of the largest lumber operations and leader of the Canadian lumbermen's delegation at the Ottawa Conference, denounced the WUL as an "outlaw organization ... financed from outside this country - from Soviet Russia in fact" and called for its

suppression.[100] Moves to do just that were already under way.

The use of the military in the Stratford strike was the most extreme example of the use of state coercion on behalf of capital since the Estevan miners' strike in 1931. But times had changed between the two events, and physical coercion was much less a matter of course than it had been. Although the troops performed their required function at Stratford, using them was a propaganda coup for the WUL and a potential liability for a provincial Conservative administration facing an election in 193[illegible]. The offending "tanks" were withdrawn on 27 October (the troops remained). By then, the Henry government had employed a new anti-WUL tactic, much less provocative but at least as effective. In collusion with the Stratford furniture manufacturers the Henry government hired L. J. Salter, Industrial Commissioner of Kitchener, as a "Special Investigator" cum independent arbitrator. Privately, he was given a remit to leave the strike "in abeyance for three or four weeks, till the men get really hungry and cold, when they would be more tractable." Moreover, if he made sure that "the Workers' Unity League was ... beaten at all costs", he would receive a bonus to his monthly salary of $175. In interviews with the Beacon-Herald and in private meetings with groups of strikers, Salter pushed the view that "a union under different sponsorship and different leadership" might gain

the strikers a satisfactory settlement. Despite union suspicions of Salter's role, he managed to keep his relationship to the Henry administration and manufacturers secret. After the strike ended to their satisfaction, Salter sat back and waited for his reward, but Labour Minister Monteith prevaricated, then died unexpectedly early in 1934. His successor J. M. Robb tried to welch on the deal. Only when Salter threatened to divulge what had taken place did Robb come up with a $325 bonus.[101]

The Henry government by no means renounced the use of coercion. When the Textile Workers' Industrial Union struck the 700 worker Dominion Woollens and Worsteds Mill (a Bank of Montreal subsidiary) in Hespeler during December, Henry sent in a large force of the OPP which whisked away the entire strike committee and WUL organizer Jim Houston to Kitchener jail, holding them there without bail for several crucial days and refusing to release Houston until the strike had been defeated. He eventually served a two-month sentence for intimidation and unlawful assembly.[102] Repression, however, was more problematic in 1933-34 than in the first years of the depression. For one thing it allowed the Tories' political opponents to score debating points: former federal Liberal Minister of Labour Peter Heenan scoffed in the Commons at the use of "a regiment of soldiers with tanks and machine-guns to subdue a few girls on strike in Stratford" and chided the generally

anti-Labour stance of the Tories.[103] The Liberals' rediscovery of their "friend of the working-man" image was itself a direct result of an unmistakeable upsurge of working class consciousness, as yet inchoate but expressing itself in a variety of politically unpredictable - and hence threatening - ways; not only in the WUL-led strike wave and the dramatic emergence of the CCF, but also in mass resistance to anti-democratic police action in Toronto, growing support for the release of the CPC leaders, and the decision of a Toronto jury in February 1934 to ignore police testimony and a judge's directions that virtually demanded conviction, and find CLDL National Secretary A. E. Smith innocent of sedition.[104]

It was increasingly obvious that consent for militant action, political and industrial, was growing. To reverse the trend, therefore, it was necessary to generate a degree of consent for anti-militant action. Thus, it appears that between the Conservative administrations in Ottawa and Toronto there developed a coordinated attempt to undermine the WUL, which was seen as both the most central and vulnerable force in the burgeoning working class movement.

The first blow in the Conservatives' ideological campaign was struck by federal Labour Minister W. A. Gordon in a speech broadcast over the Ottawa Canadian Radio Corporation station. Ostensibly the speech was an extended

commercial for the Dominion Conciliation Service and its officers, a body of men "detached ... [and] without prejudice or bias" who "instinctively [inspired] a sense that what [they] suggested was the obvious thing to do." Without once mentioning the WUL, he then sharply criticised militant trade unionism in a way that left no doubt about his specific target. Not only was trade union militancy unnecessary - given the good services of the Dominion Conciliation Service - but at this crucial juncture, with Canada just beginning to climb out of the depression, it was manifestly against the national interest. The moment called for "Team play - harmony in industry", and if the odd altercation occurred because of a "hasty" employer's decision, there was always the Dominion Conciliation Service, "easily available ... on an impartial and free basis."[105]

In case Gordon's audience had not drawn the correct conclusions, the Toronto Labor Leader reprinted the speech in full, filling in the gaps. It should be read, the paper informed its "army of readers", in the light of the various "ill-advised labor troubles fomented by the Workers' Unity League in the Province of Ontario." A week later Gordon made his meaning crystal-clear when he informed the Commons that it was impossible to deal with the WUL.[106]

On 14 February federal Attorney-General Hugh Guthrie added his voice to Gordon's with a Commons' speech liberally spiced with allusions to the "more or less Communistic" WUL and CLDL.[107] But it was two days later that the next serious intervention occurred, at the hands of Guthrie's Ontario counterpart, W. H. Price. On 16 February he handed over to the press copies of a pamphlet he had had printed, based on materials seized from the CPC in 1931. Entitled Agents of Revolution, the 16-page publication clearly demonstrated the WUL's provenance in the communist "new line". It concluded with the statement: "The above excerpts show that the WUL was organized on the instructions of Communist officials in Moscow, that its plan of action in the minutest detail was, and no doubt still is, dictated from Moscow, and that in fact it subsists principally to carry out the instructions of its masters, and is much more concerned with Russian praise than with Canadian welfare ... The Workers' Unity League is but an agent of revolution - one of the Communist 'steps to power'." In a statement accompanying its publication, Price observed that it was aimed at informing the Ontario people, "and particularly the labor unions", that "continuous strife, unrest and destruction of property" were the WUL's stock in trade.[108] The Globe, quick to appreciate Price's intentions, commended him for his effort to "strip the mask" from the men who exercised

"central control in the Province" and suggested that quick action be taken to "bottle up" their influence.[109]

Agents of Revolution, then, had two main purposes: to cast doubts on the WUL's motives and thereby undermine its legitimacy with the general public; and to encourage rival labour organizations to present themselves as alternatives. Price was given an early indication that the first of these aims was being achieved when, within days of its appearance, it was used by the manager of the Deluxe Furniture Company in Kitchener to attack the WUL's organizing drive. Workers at Deluxe then signed an agreement excluding the FWIU. Workers at two Waterloo companies, Snyder's and Snyder Desk and Table, responded to Izzy Minster's claim that the union planned a total shut-down of the city's furniture trade by issuing declarations that they refused "to have any dealings whatsoever with the Workers' Unity League ... or any other organization sponsored by or affiliated with the so-called Red or communistic party of Russia."[110] The pamphlet was used again several months later during the strike at the Williams' Shoe Company in Brampton, where the town's Mayor J. S. Beck distributed it in large numbers.[111]

On both these occasions WUL organizers contrived to triumph to some extent over red-baiting tactics by taking them on in public. At the Brampton strike, the union

responded to the appearance of Agents of Revolution by immediately calling successive open-air mass meetings to "explain to the entire population the causes of the strike" and the true "role and character" of the WUL. According to The Worker, around 2,000 people turned out at the second meeting, and whatever was said proved effective, as the strikers, most of whom were British-Canadians, stayed solid to the end.[112]

The pamphlet obviously had no magical qualities; where the balance of forces stood in favour of the WUL, its impact could be absorbed. On at least one important occasion, however, it made a large contribution to the WUL's defeat. The metal miners' and smelters' strike at Flin Flon, Manitoba, in June-July 1934 represented the WUL's most decisive intervention in one of the major "war industries". In organizing and bringing out over 1,000 workers in what was an entirely non-union industry, the WUL hoped to strike a blow that would be felt in Sudbury and Timmins. For the first two weeks of the strike it managed to maintain a high degree of solidarity and morale, but thereafter it gradually succumbed to a massive red-baiting campaign. As the Winnipeg Tribune noted: "[Management] has won a victory by showing the strikers the Communistic motive underlying the agitation which led to the strike."[113] Within three days of the walk-out, the company-dominated Flin Flon Town Council had received a

telegram from W. J. Major, Manitoba Attorney-General, telling them of the background of the WUL and MWUC. Although Major admitted that the WUL's officers "claim only fraternal relationships" with the RILU, he added that elsewhere in Canada it operated as "a political organization", and informed them that he was sending forthwith a copy of Agents of Revolution, "which you will read with interest." When the pamphlet arrived, the town council hurriedly had it reproduced as a circular and distributed it throughout the town.[114] Again, the pamphlet by itself did not defeat the strikers - other external factors were a heavy RCMP presence throughout the strike and successive interventions by the staunchly anti-communist Manitoba Premier John Bracken - but, try as it might, the union's strike publicity committee could not counteract the line of argument that made Communism the key issue.[115] In the second week of the strike, the Flin Flon Anti-Communist League was formed. When it gained the endorsement of the town's three largest fraternal organizations, the Masons, Knights of Columbus and Canadian Legion, defeat became a probability.[116]

What, then, of Price's suggestion that the established unions should move in on the WUL? Here was an obvious opportunity to hit back at all the comments about "social fascist traitors", exploit the WUL's organizing initiatives and rebuild the depleted ranks of the international and

national movement: between 1931 and 1933 the TLC lost 25 per cent of its membership (141,000 to 105,000), so was obviously in need of a boost.[117] Moreover, although the CPC was placing more emphasis on work inside the reformist unions, it still continued to form WUL unions when reformist unions could have been used. The case of the Hallman & Sable Fur Dressers' and Dyers' Union has already been mentioned. In December 1933 J. B. Salsberg enrolled a Journeymen Barbers' group into the WUL, and in March 1934 a lapsed Jewish local of the International Painters' and Paperhangers' Union became the inaugural local of the Building Trades Workers' Industrial Union.[118]

In reality, the reformist unions had little interest in stepping into the WUL's shoes. The TLC was in dire financial straits, as were its affiliated unions. Since one of the main reasons for the drift of members away from the international unions was the latter's refusal to waive dues payments during the depression, there was little real prospect of their going after the WUL's membership, many of whom were attracted to it specifically because of its low dues.[119] Nevertheless, on a number of occasions other unions did try to replace the WUL.

The first challenge to the WUL came from an affiliate of the ACCL, the Canadian Bushmen's Union (CBU), which actually was formed shortly before the publication of

Agents of Revolution and may have given Price some of his ideas. It was little more than a company union, as its enthusiastic endorsement by lumber operator George Nicholson and the national press indicated. Its avowed purpose was to stabilize "the labor end of the timber industry", to which purpose it banned communists from membership, prohibited political discussion, only permitted strikes when 75 per cent of the union voted in favour, and provided the Fort William detachment of the RCMP with information on "Communistic activities", especially those of the Finnish Cooperatives.[120] According to one communist organizer in the Lakehead, the CBU only survived its early months because of a contract with Port Arthur's Pigeon River Lumber Company, which provided it with a monthly check-off of $1 a head. Since that had lapsed, it had been trying to survive on voluntary dues of 25 cents a month, but was defunct by November 1934.[121]

Another challenge came from the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' and Beverage Dispensers' International Alliance (HRE), which between 1930 and 1933 had seen its Canadian membership slump from 1,300 to 400 members.[122] In 1934 the WUL's Foodworkers' Industrial Union (FIU) which had hitherto been active mainly in meat-packing factories began a drive in the Toronto hotel and restaurant trade. In the early months of the year it organized around 50 small restaurants, most of them in the College and Spadina garment

district, and recruited 500 new members. However, its successes forced a reaction from the larger hotel and restaurant owners, who formed an alliance with the HRE, exchanging union recognition for strikebreakers and support of the Ontario Restaurant Owners' Association applications for injunctions against the industrial union. The end result was a stand-off, with the FIU retaining most of its members but unable to make further headway.[123]

Undeterred, the WUL sought to take advantage of new provincial Premier Mitchell Hepburn's repeal of prohibition and institution of the sale of "beer by the glass" in hotels, and invaded another part of the HRE's jurisdiction by forming the United Beverage Dispensers' Union, with an initial membership of 150. This action, however, outraged the Toronto District Labour Council (TDLC) which was itself assisting the HRE to reorganize the bartenders. It became the pretext for what TLC Ontario Provincial Organizer Charles Ball termed "a campaign of public exposure of the origins and tactics of the Workers' Unity League" to follow "a startling announcement ... based on documentary evidence, showing that the Workers' Unity League was organized for the sole purpose of revolution, not to improve the economic conditions of the workers."[124] Ball subsequently repeated his prediction, but was immediately taken to task by J. B. McLachlan, then in Toronto for a WUL National Executive Board meeting, who challenged him to an open air

debate.[125] Neither the debate nor Ball's "startling announcement" transpired. But the TLC did demonstrate a growing readiness to oppose the WUL by chartering a total of thirteen Federal Locals in 1934, including the Stratford Furniture Workers' Federal Labour Union and a Toronto Cleaners' and Dyers' Federal Labour Union. The latter competed with one of the smaller WUL unions, the Cleaners' and Dyers' Industrial Union, and by December had taken it over.[126]

Against these relatively minor challenges there was also the case of the Boot and Shoe Workers' International Union. At the 17 August 1934 meeting of the TDLC, an ITU delegate and New Toronto town councillor launched into an attack on the SLWIU's conduct of a strike at his town's Tilley-Williams factory, only to be rebutted by the Toronto business agent of the BSWIU, James Daly. In his view, the Tilley-Williams plant had always been one of the worst in the trade, and if the SLWIU could organize it (it couldn't), it had his best wishes. He had given short shrift to shoe manufacturers who had offered the BSWIU recognition as a means of blocking the WUL. He warned "headquarters or anyone else" that any attempt at a sell-out of the SLWIU would see "every member of our union ... in the Workers' Unity League."[127]

This remarkable speech may only have reflected a

personal opinion. It is more likely, however, that the WUL was gaining a broad measure of respect from unionists who were sick of their international leaders' lack of fight; the BSWIU was a classic example.[128] Moreover, the WUL was making cooperation easier by shedding its sectarianism. As a result, the Conservatives' attempt to manufacture consent for repression was never likely to succeed. Canadian workers were less and less inclined to accept any prompting from the Bennett or Henry administrations. In June 1934 Mitchell Hepburn's Liberals crushed the Tories in Ontario, while at the same time the federal Conservatives awaiting the 1935 general election already had the look of doomed men. Bennett's supremely unconvincing conversion to welfare state policies, and possibly also the early release of the CPC leadership in the summer and autumn of 1934, were dictated by the need to cater positively to the aspirations of an increasingly confident working class.[129]

Nevertheless, the WUL was disturbed by perturbing signs that its virtually continuous advance between summer 1933 and spring 1934 was slowing down. Strikes were proving harder to win, and too many of them were being decisively defeated. The Flin Flon strike was lost, as was another metal miners' strike at Rouyn-Noranda. A massive strike of over 2,000 Vancouver Island loggers, lasting four months, was lost in May and, despite calling two successful one-day sympathy strikes of the SLWIU's Toronto membership,

the strike at Tilley-Williams in New Toronto ground to defeat in November. Perhaps the most disastrous defeat of all was the Montreal dressmakers' strike in August-September.[130] Charles Sims analysed these and other defeats in his long report to the WUL NEB in September 1934, attributing them to three main causes: a failure to prepare adequately for strike action; the superior class consciousness of the bourgeoisie and the state (he claimed, for example, that between 1933 and that moment 2,700 strikers had been arrested by the various police forces); and the role of reformist labour in pandering to anti-communist, anti-ethnic prejudices.[131]

The tone of Sims' speech gave the best possible indication of where the WUL was heading. He stressed its union-building function above any political aims, urged greater professionalism in union management and administration, denied that it was a section of the CPC and claimed that "left sectarianism" was the main danger to its continued growth. He added that "two main factors" had to be "constantly pushed" by WUL organisers: "the immediate economic demands of the workers ... and secondly, the right of the workers to organize into the unions of their own choice." While acknowledging that communists played a dominant role in the WUL leadership, Sims was at pains to transform their collective image from one of political revolutionaries to the most "sincere and honest" industrial

militants. Yet since communists were not syndicalists, Sims had to say something about political struggle. He did so almost as an afterthought. Yes, he agreed, the WUL should be in the forefront of the campaign for state non-compulsory unemployment insurance, the struggle against fascism, and the campaign for the release of the still imprisoned CPC leaders, but these struggles were to be seen as "a vital and necessary part of the struggle of all labor unions to maintain their right of existence, a part of the fight for the right to organize and struggle for a living wage and union conditions."[132] Sims addressed his audience as "fellow workers" throughout a speech in which socialism was never mentioned.

The party had travelled a long way politically in a short space of time. As recently as July, its Seventh National Convention had confirmed the validity of the class against class line and called for the fullest prominence to be given to its role in industrial struggle. Its main aims were still to fight social fascism and "win the labouring masses for the revolutionary way out of the crisis and prepare [them] for the decisive battles to overthrow the capitalist dictatorship."[133] By December, the CPC Central Committee was forced grudgingly to admit that the "broadening and growth of the united front from below does not preclude the possibility also of a united front from on top." This was not, of course, because of any shift to

the right by the party. Rather it was because the "revolutionary upsurge of the masses" was forcing erstwhile social fascists - the term was now dropped - to take up the struggle or be bypassed. The party would continue to expose them, but not in a "sectarian" manner. "Some comrades", Stewart Smith (under his pseudonym of G. Pierce) observed in his keynote speech, wondered if there was not an element of "right opportunism" in this tactical change, but they were simply incapable of grasping the essentials of a "mass revolutionary policy". The party line remained the same: only the reformists had changed.[134]

Another sign of the WUL's uneasy shift into conformity with standard trade unionism was the change in its attitude towards wage codes. One of the earliest policy announcements of Mitchell Hepburn's administration declared its intention to legislate a series of wage codes, in the manner of the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) in the United States. Even earlier, the Taschereau Liberals in Quebec had passed the Quebec Labour Extensions' (Arcand) Act, which also provided for tri-partite negotiations on labour conditions and wages between workers, employers and the state; and the United Farmers of Alberta administration had passed the Alberta Trades and Industry Act, also with wage code provisions. Initially, the CPC's response was to attack this legislation as proto-fascist: any suggestion that workers could improve their economic wellbeing through

class collaboration and the "impartial" supervision of the state was to be fought root and branch.[135] Gradually, however, it began to see that, as with Roosevelt's celebrated section 7-a of the NIRA, codes were being seen by ordinary workers as an aid to trade union organization. Consequently, while continuing to argue that codes were a deception designed to buy off struggle, the party felt that it would be counterproductive to reject them out of hand, and therefore used them as a means of relating to existing class consciousness.[136]

Moreover, although communists feared that the Ontario wage codes (from 1935 concretized in the Industrial Standards Act) would exclude the WUL from the ranks of what Deputy Minister of Labour James Marsh termed "recognized" trade unions, when the Department of Labour began preliminary discussions with manufacturers and labour bodies towards the end of 1934, they found that Labour Minister Arthur Roebuck had every intention of granting certain WUL unions "representative" status - much to the chagrin of the labour establishment.[137] Thus, the WUL was presented with a teasing and unusual dilemma: if it rejected any cooperation with the state it stood to lose an unpredictable portion of its support to those organizations which had no qualms about class collaboration; if it accepted an invitation to meet with the Department of Labour, it would simultaneously win <u>de facto</u> recognition as a <u>bona fide</u>

trade union centre but lose its political purity. In the event, it compromised. Privately it accused the Department of Labour of partiality towards capital in its initial planning and publicly it criticised the proposed legislation as an invitation to company unionism and a threat to existing union conditions. Nevertheless it accepted Roebuck's invitation to meet with him, and after the enactment of the ISA grudgingly participated in its operations in the furniture industry.[138]

For various reasons, then, the WUL was shifting into a much more fraternal stance towards its rivals. As yet there has been no mention of the slow change in the international situation and in the Comintern's position on cooperating with "social fascist" organizations. Nodal points in this shift were Hitler's coming to power in the spring of 1933, immediately followed by a massive Nazi onslaught on the German communist and socialist parties and trade unions; the French Popular Front upsurge in the spring of 1934; and Russia's entry into the League of Nations (once termed by Lenin, a "robbers' den") in September 1934.[139] All of these events had repercussions in Canada, and there is no doubt that the native communists tailored their policies to their understanding of the international line.[140] Yet it would be erroneous to infer that international directives determined national policy decisions. To demonstrate the room for manoeuvre

available to the various communist parties, we only need point to trade union developments in the United States. By March 1934 the Trade Union Unity League had already "voluntarily disbanded its affiliates and instructed them to enter the AFL, there to spur on the organizational campaign."[141] It was officially dissolved a year later, at a point when the WUL still looked set for a reasonably long life.

Industrial strategy in Canada was the result of an interpretation of the international line in the light of the possibilities in the domestic situation. One school of thought in the party was by the end of 1934 already calling for the "liquidation of the WUL unions under the disguise of 'unity'", and mass entry into the TLC.[142] Another pulled in the opposite direction, arguing that if unity were to come, it would come only through the left wing unions and "on the basis of a genuine programme of struggle". In Nova Scotia, for example, the AMW launched unity talks with the UMWA in November 1934, but when these failed to get off the ground the independent union called a special convention in January 1935 at which it conclusively rejected any possibility of peaceful co-existence with the international union and committed itself to a renewed attempt "to build up the AMW... into a union that will hold within itself 100 per cent of the miners of this province." When the UMWA's Springhill local then successfully struck the Cumberland

Railway and Coal Company for the dismissal of 12 AMW activists, J. B. McLachlan wrote the UMWA off as "just a dirty coal company's union doing its stuff betraying the interests of the working class."[143] Unity with such degenerate elements was inconceivable.

Thus, the position of communist industrial politics in the winter of 1934-35 was delicately poised, with a host of complications impinging on party strategists: on the one hand, a push towards unity provided by the appearance of "liquidationist" tendencies, awareness of what was happening in the United States, and not least by international developments; on the other hand, a backward pull to the left, based on a long heritage of sectarian abuse and mistrust of reformist labour and the undeniable fact that the WUL had proved itself a more effective organizer than its American counterpart, and by rank and file commitment to the WUL unions.[144] While the general trend in the world movement was demonstrably towards "liquidationism", there was enough evidence from the Canadian experience to support an assertion of independence.

Footnotes

1. Gilbert Jackson and Lawrence Jacobs, "A New Index of Business Conditions in Canada", Monetary Times (MT), 92 (17 February 1934), 4, 14-15

2. Generally useful here is Ian M. Drummond, British Economic Policy and the Empire, 1919-1939 (London, 1972)

3. "Increases Shown in Empire Trade", MT, 92 (21 April 1934), 6

4. Industrial Canada, 34 (June 1933), 26; The Times 7 November 1933

5. Christopher C. Robinson, "Nickel to Germany", Saturday Night (SN), 49 (3 March 1934), 5; "Canada's Nickel Exports", Toronto Daily Star (TDS), 22 May 1935

6. MT, 92 (3 March 1934), 4; Public Archives of Nova Scotia, United Steelworkers of America Local 1064 Papers, reel 7, Minutes of Special Meeting of General Works' Committee with Mr. H. J. Kelly, 29 December 1936; A. O. Dawson, "1934 Opens With Some Promise for Canadian Cotton Industry", MT, 92 (19 January 1934), 5, 7; Province of Nova Scotia, Department of Public Works, Annual Report on Mines, 1933-1936; International Labour Office, Public Investment and Full Employment (Montreal, 1946), 185

7. Tim Buck, Thirty Years: The Story of the Communist Movement in Canada 1922-1952 (Toronto, 1975), 93-6; Tom McEwen, The Forge Glows Red (Toronto, 1974), 156-61; Irving Abella, "Portrait of a Jewish Professional Revolutionary: The Recollections of Joshua Gershman", Labour/Le Travailleur, 2 (1977), 200-203

8. The Way to Socialism: The Program of the Working People in the Struggle Against Hunger, Fascism and War, manifesto and principle resolutions adopted by the Seventh Convention of the Communist Party of Canada, Toronto, 23-28 July 1934 (Montreal, 1935); "Towards A Thorough-going Clarification of the Situation and Our Tasks", Communist Review, March 1934. Compare these with "Strike Wave in Canada", October Youth, October-November 1933 (the paper of the Trotskyist Spartacus Youth League), which identifies the economic upturn as the root cause of the strike.

9. T. C. Sims, Strike Strategy and Tactics, Report to the National Executive Board, Workers' Unity League, 4-5 September 1934, 8, 14, 17, 30-33; CPC, Central Executive Committee, Agit-Prop Commission, Workers' Leaflet Manual (n.p., 1934), 3-4, 10-11; "Make the

'Union Papers' - Union Papers", Communist Review, November 1934; "This Question of a Charter", B.C. Lumber Worker (BCLW), 24 November 1934

10. The Worker, 28 January 1933; article by Julia Collins, The Worker, 26 August 1933; "Kitchener Meeting Lays Strong Basis for Future Rights", The Worker, 14 July 1934; Workers' Leaflet Manual, 10; "Make the 'Union Papers' - Union Papers"; Jerry Regan, "Improve the Leadership in the Union Locals", Young Worker (YW), 23 February 1935; J. B. Salsberg, "Revolutionary Unionism Advances in Toronto", Workers' Unity, March 1934; "How Does a Communist Hold Down a job", B.C. Workers' News (BCWN), 1 February 1935

11. "Build the United Front", Workers' Unity, May 1933; UBC, Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, Minutes, 2 October 1934, 15 January 1935; "Bengough - Bulwark of the Bosses", BCWN, 25 January 1935

12. "Strike at Hallman & Sable", October Youth, August-September 1933. See also PAC, J. L. Cohen Papers, Vol. 2, file 1688 (J. L. Cohen, often the left's representative in the courts, was in this instance attorney for the company; as the correspondence in this file shows, he took his brief very seriously); Paul Phillips, "How the Strike at Hallman & Sable was Won", YW, 18 September 1933. The LO's argument was extremely pertinent, given that at this precise moment four communists had won election to the executive of IFWU Local 100, the biggest in Toronto. The Worker, 26 August 1933

13. D. Miner, "Our Tasks in the WUL March Campaign", The Builder, March 1933; J. Warren, "Communists and the Trade Union Movement: A Burning Issue Today", The Worker, 17 November 1934; T. C. Sims, "An Appeal to the AFL Workers", The Worker, 25 August 1934

14. YW, 19 February 1934; YW, 16 October to 30 December 1933. Copies of the "study outlines" were published in the YW and Worker. Multiple copies could be obtained at minimal cost. See also "Stalin Stresses to YCL the Need for Study", YW, 30 December 1933

15. W. Findlay, "Regarding British Traditions", The Worker, 1 July 1933.

16. YW, 16 October 1933

17. Anne Walters, "Some Experiences in Concentration Work", YW, 25 June 1934.

18. Walters, "Lessons of the Mercury Mills Strike"; YW, 21 August 1933; Moe Klein, "Consolidation of Restaurant Union", YW, 11 June 1934; Jim Warner, "Towards a Mass

Party!", report to the CPC Central Committee, 8 December 1934, in The Communists Fight for Working Class Unity (Montreal, 1935), 45.

19. Charles Sims, "Some Lessons from the 2nd National Congress of the Workers' Unity League", The Worker, 23 September 1933; The Worker, 14 April 1934; J. Barnes, "Strike Struggles in Canada and the Tasks of the Communist Party", The Communist International, XI (20 October 1934), 692-96; "A Fighter for Our Class", BCLW, 30 October 1934

20. Voice of the Fishermen, 18 September 1934

21. Walters, "Some Experiences"

22. PAC, Department of Labour, Strikes and Lockouts Files (SLF), Vol. 359, file 34(7); Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 1934, I, 23 February 12, 26, 28 March 1934, pages 872, 1414-16, 1840-45, 1917-24

23. Labour Gazette (LG), XXXIV (September 1934), 812; also the TDS throughout August.

24. "Report of Deputy Minister, 1935", Annual Report of the B.C. Department of Labour (Victoria, 1936), 62-7; "Corbin: Another Ludlow Massacre", BCLW, 27 April 1935; "Vicious Police Terror in Corbin", Canadian Labour Defender, 5 (June-July 1935), 14; Allen Seager, "The Mine Workers' Union of Canada, 1925-1936", M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1977, 202-13.

25. PAC, Sound Archive, interview with Pat Lenihan. Lenihan went on to say that he took the train back to Coleman, not caring less whether he went to jail!

26. Harvey Murphy, "We Go to Michel to Organize", Workers' Unity, April 1934

27. Winnipeg Free Press, 10, 18 April 1934; The Worker, 5 May 1934; PAC, R. B. Bennett Papers, 93791-92, R. H. Webb to W. A. Gordon, 21 March 1934

28. Ivar Nordstrom, as told to Satu Repo, "Lakehead in the Thirties: A Labour Militant Remembers", This Magazine 13 (July-August 1979), 40-5.

29. TDS, 28 August 1934; "Brampton Strike Gains Strong Local Support", YW, 30 July 1934

30. UT, Kenny Collection Sam Scarlett to CPC Central Executive Committee, 31 July 1931. This was a similar development to events taking place in Russia, where the 5-year plan pulled many former Trotskyists into line with the regime. See Victor Serge, Memoirs of a Revolutionary (Oxford, 1972), 252-53.

31. Royal Commission on Price Spreads, Proceedings and Evidence, 19 December 1934, 2824; Report of the Royal Commission on the Textile Industry (Ottawa, 1938), 51; YW, 16 October, 1 November 1933.

32. "Detailed List of Strikes and Lockouts, 1933, 1934", LG, XXXIV (February 1934), 122-30; XXXV (February 1935), 116-28.

33. On the rubber industry, see The Worker, 3 December 1932, 25 November 1933, 5 May 1934; YW, 19 February 1934. On textiles, see YW, 9 July 1934 (Empire Cottons, Welland), 6 October 1934 (Courtaulds's, Cornwall).

34. The Vancouver success was specially mentioned in Barnes, "Strike Struggles".

35. City of Vancouver Archives (CVA), BCSF Papers, Vol. 4, file 3, "Agreement between the VDWWA and BCSF", 2 December 1924; International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union Local 500 Pensioners, Man Along the Shore! The Story of the Vancouver Waterfront (Vancouver, 1975), 79-82 (henceforth ILWU Pensioners)

36. "Slaughter Increases on the Waterfront", Labor Statesman, 8 October 1926.

37. ILWU Pensioners, Man Along the Shore!, 61-2, 64, 66, 69-70, 93, 99.

38. Labor Statesman, 8 October 1926, 22 March, 28 June 1929

39. PAO-CPP, 4A 2747-48, 2836, 2422, Tom Ewan to George Hardy, 17 November 1930; Fred Thompson to Ewan, 6 December 1930; Ewan to George Mink, 19 February 1931; George Drayton to Ewan, 22 May 1931.

40. ILWU Pensioners, Man Along the Shore!, 82; Unemployed Worker, 28 February 1934.

41. Heavy Lift, 5 January 1934; "I Was a Communist Agitator", Labor Leader, 18 December 1936; "Strengthen the Work in the Strongholds of Social Fascism", Communist Review, May-June 1934. References to abusive foremen abound in Man Along the Shore!

42. Heavy Lift, 26 April 1934; PAC, Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) Papers, Vol. 152, W. T. Burford to P. E. Thompson, 7 May 1934; Canadian Unionist, 8 (December 1934), 182; "Longshoremen Take Steps to Produce Gains", BCWN, 15 February 1935. The VNLC's fiercely anti-communist Labour Truth was distributed free in the BCSF Hall.

43. Heavy Lift, 26 April, 7 June, 11 September 1934; "Seamen's Choice", Canadian Unionist, 8 (October 1934) 165-6; CVA, BCSF Papers, Vol. 14, file 3,

P. E. Thompson to Major Crombie, 27 November 1934; PAC, CLC Papers, Vol. 103, W. T. Burford to M. M. McLean, 31 May 1935. In 1935 at least 1,450 members of the various LWTWC unions struck in sympathy with the longshoremen; since not all LWTWC locals struck, total membership must have been rather more than 1,500.

44. UBC, Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, Minutes, 1 May, 5 June 1934; "Trades and Labour Council and the Committee", Heavy Lift, 11 May 1934.

45. "Prepare for a Strike", Heavy Lift, 23 February 1934; CVA, BCSF Papers, Vol. 42, file 2, unsigned memo re "Labor Situation at Vancouver", 23 May 1935; Canadian Unionist, 8 (December 1934), 182.

46. PAC, SLF, Vol. 361, file 34 (96), R. S. Williams Co. Ltd., to Deputy Minister of Labour, 12 May 1934.

47. House of Commons Special Committee on Price Spreads and Mass Buying, Evidence and Proceedings, 1 March 1934, 173-98 (SCPS Evidence)

48. Carpenters' Monthly Bulletin, November, December 1925.

49. UBC, Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers' Union Papers, Box 159, file 25, OBU General Executive Board, Organizers' Reports, 14 March, 1 June 1927.

50. SCPS, Evidence, 183.

51. J. Minster, "How the Toronto Workers Organized and Won", The Worker, 26 August 1933; "Anti-Fascist Demonstration", October Youth, August-September 1933.

52. TDS, 5 August 1933.

53. The Worker, 12 August 1933; Minster, "How the Toronto Workers Organized".

54. The Worker, 19 August 1933; LG, XXXIII (September 1933) 903; TDS, 19 August 1933; U. Bruce McMurtry, "Why we have Adopted our New System of Industrial Management", Industrial Canada, 26 (January 1926), 189.

55. The Worker, 12, 19 August 1933; Minster, "How the Toronto Workers Organized".

56. Desmond Morton, "Aid to the Civil Power: The Stratford Strike of 1933", in Irving Abella, ed., On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949 (Toronto, 1974), 82; James Leach, "The Workers' Unity League and the Stratford Furniture Workers: The Anatomy of a Strike", Ontario History, 59 (June 1967), 39-48. Much better than these is Nancy Stunden, "The Stratford Strikes of 1933", M.A. research paper, Institute of Canadian Studies, Carleton University, 1975, on which my account draws heavily.

57. PAC, Bennett Papers, 267758, Department of Labour memo re "Strike at Stratford, Ontario, of Employees of furniture factories operated by McLagen Furniture Co., Kroehler Manufacturing Co. and Farquaharson and Gifford", 22 September 1933 (henceforth DOL memo, 22 September 1933).

58. MCHSO, interview with Jack Scott; "Soldier of Labor, Veteran Fighter. Such is F. Collins", Daily Clarion, 21 November 1936.

59. Stunden, "The Stratford Strikes", 34-6.

60. DOL memo, 22 September 1933.

61. Stunden, "The Stratford Strikes", 58-62.

62. Stunden, "The Stratford Strikes", 59-68; Morton "Aid to the Civil Power", 86.

63. PAO, Premiers' Papers, Box 158.

64. PAC, Bennett Papers, 267621, C. Pearson to Miss A. E. Millar, 14 November 1933.

65. Morton, "Aid to the Civil Power", 86-7.

66. Pearson to Millar, 14 November 1933.

67. DOL memo, 22 September 1933; Stunden, "The Stratford Strikes", 32; Leach, "The Workers' Unity League", 3; Morton, "Aid to the Civil Power", 83 claims the union insisted on the closed-shop.

68. Desmond Morton with Terry Copp, Working People: An Illustrated History of Canadian Labour (Ottawa, 1980), 144.

69. SCPS, Evidence, 176, 186, 193.

70. Stunden, "The Stratford Strikes", 105. Kerr was already a member of the Stratford town council.

71. Toronto Globe, 11 October 1933. See also A. W. Laver in SCPS, Evidence, 54ff.

72. "Furniture Workers in National Conference Ratify Affiliation to WUL", The Worker, 23 December 1933.

73. PAC, SLF, Vol. 359, file 34 (8).

74. The Worker, 3 February 1934, clipping in PAC, SLF, Vol. 359, file 34 (16).

75. PAC, SLF, Vol. 360, files 34 (31) and 34 (36).

76. PAC, SLF, Vol. 360, file 34 (36).

77. The Worker, 19 September 1934; "Detailed List of Strikes and Lockouts, 1934", LG, XXXV (February 1935) 124.

78. LG, XXXIV (October 1934), 907.

79. LG, XXXIV (September 1934), 813.

80. Ottawa Morning Journal, 20 February 1934; Toronto Telegram, 21 February 1934, clippings in PAC, SLE, Vol. 360, file 34 (36)

81. See The Worker, 15, 19, 22, 26 September 1934, and especially the report by Beatrice Fearneyhough in The Worker, 29 September 1934.

82. TDS, 14, 15, 17 August 1934; "Stratford Furniture Workers Maintain Unity", YW, 13 August 1934; The Worker 19 September 1934; PAO, Premiers' Papers, Box 168; A. E. Smith Branch, Canadian Labour Defence League, Timmins, resolution re "Kidnapping of Isadore Minster at Stratford by Certain Members of the Canadian Legion", 17 September 1934.

83. "Lessons of the Recent Executive Board Meeting", Workers' Unity, March 1934; "Towards a Thoroughgoing Clarification of the Situation and Our Tasks", 5, 14, 27; CPC, The Triumph of Socialism in the Soviet Union, Canadian Workers' Pamphlets Series, No. 1 (Toronto, 1930), 7-8.

84. PANS, USWA Local 1064 Papers, reel 7, Minutes of special meeting of General Works Committee, 29 December 1936; George MacEachern, "The Coming of the Trade Union Act (1937)", Cape Breton's Magazine, 23 (August 1979); PAC, CLC Papers, Vol. 66, Harry P. Waite to Norman J. Dowd, 25 February 1939; Craig Heron, Shea Hoffmitz, Wayne Roberts and Robert Storey, All That Our Hands Have Done: A Pictorial History of the Hamilton Workers (Oakville, Ont., 1981), 141.

85. MT, 92 (3 March 1934), 4.

86. The Worker, 14 April 1934.

87. McMaster University, Tom McClure Papers, Stelco Hot Mill Workers' Meeting, Minutes, 7 April 1934. I wish to thank Danny Moore for making these papers available to me.

89. McClure Papers, William Rigby to Tom McClure, 20 April 1934.

90. McClure Papers, ISWU, Minutes, 21 April 1934.

91. The Worker, 13 October, 15 December 1934; "Promising Progress", Unity, May 1935.

92. The Worker, 21 March 1935; James Beattie, "Strike of Iron Workers Enters its Second Week", The Worker, 18 April 1935; A. Bernhardt, "Great May Day Lesson", The Worker, 27 April 1935 (on unemployed activity in

Guelph, see Guelph Daily Mercury, 8 August 1932, 17 March 1933); Department of National Defence, Directorate of History, Ottawa, File 161.009 (D63), A. E. Reames, Superintendent, 'O' Division, RCMP, report re "Unemployment Conditions - Western Ontario District", 7 June 1935.

93. "Promising Progress"; "Metal Committee Meets in Hamilton", The Worker, 23 March 1935.

94. MacEachern, "The Coming of the Trade Union Act"; Heron et al., All That Our Hands Have Done, 142, 153-54; Robert Storey, "The Blurring of the Picket Lines", paper presented to the Third Annual Conference on Blue Collar Work, University of Windsor, May 1979, 2-5.

95. Steelworkers' News, September 1935.

96. Steelworkers' News, September, October 1935; MacEachern, "The Coming of the Trade Union Act"; PAC, CLC Papers, Vol. 66, Waite to Dowd, 25 February 1939; PAC, Bengough Papers, Vol. 1, H. E. Crowder to TLC, 15 July 1935; P. M. Draper to Percy Bengough, 17 July 1935.

97. Earlier in the year, Workers' Unity dropped the first word from its title.

98. On the situation in the auto industry, see below chapter 7.

99. "Communism in Canada", Labor Leader, 22 June 1934.

100. "Canada's Attitude on Soviet Lumber Attacked in Britain", Toronto Globe, 23 November 1933; B. C. Lumberman, January, February 1934, clippings in PAC, SLF, Vol. 359, file 23; PAC, SLF, Vol. 360, file 34 (41), E. S. Noble to W. M. Dixon, 1 March 1934; House of Commons, Debates, 26 March 1934, 1832-38.

1[illegible]. Stunden, "The Stratford Strikes", 87-99. Stunden cites correspondence in the Ontario Department of Labour files on Salter's role.

102. The Worker, 16, 23, 30 December 1933; Toronto Globe, 17 February 1934; Labor Leader, 23 November 1934.

103. House of Commons, Debates, 12 March 1934, 1417.

104. "We Are Sorry for the Police", SN, 48 (12 August 1933), 23; Donald W. Buchanan, "The Communist Spoor", SN, 49 (1934), 4; letters to the editor, TDS, 1, 22 August 1933; "Some Newspaper Opinions", TDS, 16 August 1933; "Reference Made to Smith's Trial at Mass Meeting", Toronto Globe, 26 February 1934; A. E. Smith, All My Life (Toronto, 1977), 166-78; J. Petryshyn, "Class Conflict and Civil Liberties: The Origins and

Activities of the Canadian Labour Defence League, 1925-1940", Labour/Le Travailleur, 10 (Autumn 1982), 53-9. Another contributory factor to a climate of opinion favourable to the CPC was renewed interest and faith in the Soviet Union, which seemed once again to have regained its revolutionary vigour and to be moving via state planning while capitalism sank steadily into economic chaos and social decay. See, for example, J. F. White's series of articles "Russian High Lights" in Canadian Forum XIII (February to July 1933); William F. Ivens, speech to Manitoba Legislature, quoted in Winnipeg Weekly News, 11 March 1932.

105. "Harmony in Canadian Industry", Labor Leader, 16 February 1934 (originally broadcast on 2 February).

106. House of Commons, Debates, 23 February 1934, 872.

107. House of Commons, Debates, 14 February 1934, 577-78; "Communist Agitators Caused Prison Riots, Guthrie Tells House", Winnipeg Free Press, (WFP), 15 February 1934.

108. Agents of Revolution: A History of the Workers' Unity League, Setting Forth its Origins and Aims (Toronto, n.d. [1934]); Toronto Globe, 17 February 1934; WFP, 19 February 1934.

109. "Stripping Off Red Masks"; Toronto Globe, 19 February 1934.

110. London Free Press, 22 February 1934, clipping in PAC, SLF, Vol. 360, file 34 (31).

111. TDS, 13 August 1934; The Worker, 21, 28 July, 4 August 1934.

112. The Worker, 28 July, 4 August 1934

113. "The Strike at Flin Flon", Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 10 July 1934

114. Flin Flon Miner, 14, 21 June 1934; "Says Union Communistic", Northern Mail (The Pas, Manitoba), 15 June 1934

115. On Bracken, see WFP, 25 June, 9 July 1934

116. "Anti-Communist League in Flin Flon", Flin Flon Miner, 21 June 1934

117. ARLOC 1933 (Ottawa, 1934), 22-3

118. The Worker, 16 December 1933, 7 April 1934; Salsberg, "Revolutionary Unionism Advances"; PAC, SLF, Vol. 361, file 34 (53), E. N. Compton to W. M. Dickson, 13 March 1934

119. PAC, Bengough Papers, Vol. 1, Tom Moore to Bengough, 23 January 1935; William Madison, interviews with WUL members, The Worker, 25 August 1934

120. "New Bushworkers' Union is Making Rapid Strides", Toronto Globe, 13 February 1934; "New Bushmen's Union Initiates Drive Against Radicals in Lakehead Area", WFP, 7 March 1934; House of Commons, Debates, 26, 27 March 1934, 1832-38; George Salverson, "Canada Comes to the Timber Camps", Canadian Unionist, 7 (March 1934), 172-73; PAC, Bennett Papers, 93720, Salverson to Bennett, 5 March 1934; 96855-56, Canadian Bushmen's Union, Constitution, no date; 96810-54, CBU, Bulletin No. 4, 15 February 1934

121. M. J. Fenwick, report in The Worker, 10 November 1934. CBU Secretary George Salverson later turned up as the first President of the Port Arthur CCF Club. The Worker, 9 February 1935

122. ARLOC 1930, 1933 (Ottawa, 1931, 1934), 193, 142

123. PAC, SLF, Vol. 362, file 34 (104); "Red Labor Leaders Call Fake Strikes", Financial Post, 5 May 1934; Klein, "Consolidation of the Restaurant Union".

124. The Worker, 28 July 1934; "Challenge Union Men to 'Debate in the Open'", TDS, 20 August 1934

125. J. B. McLachlan, "On with 'The Battle' and 'Public Exposure'", The Worker, 5 September 1934

126. PAC, Bengough Papers, Vol. 1, Moore to Bengough, 23 January 1935

127. "Business Agent Gives Homely Truths", The Worker, 22 August 1934

128. See, for example, UT, J. S. Woodsworth Memorial Collection, Box 9, Ontario Labor Conference, Minutes of the Emergency Convention, 29 October 1933

129. Reginald Whittaker, The Government Party: Organizing and Financing the Liberal Party of Canada 1930-1958 (Toronto, 1977), 45; Alvin Finkel, "Origins of the Welfare State in Canada", in Leo Panitch, ed., The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power (Toronto, 1977), 347-52

130. On the Noranda and Vancouver Island strikes, see the detailed reports in the Communist Review, July-August 1934

131. Sims, Strike Strategy and Tactics, 19-21

132. Sims, Strike Strategy and Tactics, passim

133. The Way to Socialism, passim

134. The Communists Fight for Working Class Unity, 12-28

135. Robert King, "Wage Codes are Forged in Struggle", The Worker, 17 March 1934; Beatrice Fearneyhough, "Taschereau's Fascist Bills and What They Mean", Canadian Labour Defender, 5 (April 1934), 8; Tom Ewan and Harvey Murphy, "To Shackle Trade Unions is Main Aim of Anti-Labor Law Makers", Unity, January 1935

136. Sims, Strike Strategy and Tactics, 10-12

137. Dave White, "Is Canada to Have NRA", YW, 3 September 1934; PAO, DOL Records, VIII-I, Vol. 28, Transcript of Meeting between Trades and Labour Congress and DOL, 19 December 1934.

138. PAO, DOL Records, VIII-I, Vol. 28, J. B. Salsberg to Louis Fine, 18 December 1934; Fine to Salsberg, 17 January 1935; Transcript of Meeting between DOL, Ontario, and Workers' Unity League, 23 January 1935; Ewan and Murphy, "To Shackle Trade Unions"; J. B. Salsberg, "'Labor Legislation' of Hepburn Government Means New Chains for Workers of Ontario", The Worker, 9 February 1935; Salsberg, "Hepburn Government 'Labor Bill' Brings Menace of Company Unions", The Worker, 9 March 1935

139. Fernando Claudin, The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform (Harmondsworth, 1975), 171-78; Isaac Deutscher, Stalin: A Political Biography (New York, 1973), 406, 414-17

140. See for example, PAC, J. S. Woodsworth Papers, Vol. 6, file 8, Central Executive Committee, CPC, to Trades and Labour Congress, 13 April 1933; Vol. 6, file 9, Beckie Buhay to Woodsworth, 19, 23 May 1933

141. Philip S. Foner, The Fur and Leather Workers' Union (Newark, N.J., 1950), 452. See also articles by TUUL National Secretary Jack Stachel in The Communist, 13 (March 1934), 272-301; Labor Unity, 9 (June 1934), 26-40

142. "The Struggle for the United Front and the Immediate Tasks", Communist Review December 1934 to January 1935

143. Nova Scotia Miner, 22 December 1934, 5 January, 16 February 1935; Sydney Post-Record, 21, 24 January 1935; Glace Bay Gazette, 23, 24 January 1935; PANS, UMWA District 26 Papers, reel 6, John A. MacDonald, President's Report to the Special Convention, AMW of NS, Glace Bay, 21 January 1935; Dalhousie University Archives, MS. 9 33 C.2//.6, Local 4514 UMWA, Minutes, 19, 23 January 1935; Minutes of Meeting between Cumberland Railway and Coal Company and UMWA Local 4514, 28 January 1935

144. William Madison, interviews with WUL members.

CHAPTER SIX

UNITY AT ALL COSTS, 1935-36

"The sky was never brighter for the realization of the aims and objects that caused us to form the Workers' Unity League almost six years ago. Better conditions, living wages and trade union unity."

Tom Ewan, report to the Third Dominion Convention, WUL, 9 November 1935

"But the 'line' never changes. What never? Well seldom ever! Stalin has spoken and his satellites do their stuff. Even 'honest' Jim McLachlan."

The Vanguard, 15 November 1935

"I firmly believe the party in Canada has gone badly to the right ... I refuse to follow."

J. B. McLachlan, letter of resignation from the CPC, 13 June 1936

In January 1935 the leaders of the Workers' Unity League could look back on two years of growth which had transformed the organization from little more than a propaganda sect into a genuine force in the Canadian trade union movement. Simultaneously, however, they were peering into a future made problematic by the increasingly pervasive slogan of "Trade Union Unity". Already, the slogan of "class against class" and the concept of "social fascism" had been quietly put to rest, and with them the overt commitment to class struggle and revolutionary socialism - the Leninist intertwining of politics and economics - that had given the WUL its uniqueness. One year later, no ambiguity remained. Although still theoretically in existence, the WUL had abandoned its independent attempt to organize the unorganized and was shepherding its members back into the once reviled international unions. The main purpose of this chapter is to show how and why this particular process of trade union unification occurred. It begins by examining the interaction of domestic and international influences in the tortuous development of an understanding of the meaning of trade union unity between January and November 1935; proceeds through case studies of unity drives in various industries, giving particular attention to the Cape Breton coalminers and Ontario shoe workers; and concludes with an assessment of the consequences of unification for the CPC and the labour movement in general.

In discussing trade union unity in the early months of 1935 the WUL and CPC were sure of one thing: it was not going to be a case of going cap-in-hand to Tom Moore and Paddy Draper and begging to be taken back into the TLC. Their strategy was to mobilize mass pressure from below for militant policies, combining it with approaches to the TLC and ACCL executives for united action. Their ultimate aim was to bring the three centres, and possibly even the National Catholic Syndicates of Quebec, together in an "all-inclusive Federation of Canadian Labour". In short, it would be unity by merger, not by liquidation.[1]

This plan was, of course, reminiscent of the left's programme for Canadian trade union autonomy that went back to the Trade Union Educational League and even earlier to the proposals of the Toronto left in 1919-20. They had failed to penetrate the TLC leaders' visceral conservatism, and there seemed little likelihood that the new attempt would prove any more effective. Correspondence between Tom Moore and TLC Vice President Percy Bengough, doyen of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, indicated that the TLC still regarded the WUL with hatred. Moore referred to Bengough's "troubles" and hoped he would "again succeed in suppressing the incipient rebellion in [the] shingle workers and other unions caused by the WUL." Bengough was indeed doing his best to cheer Moore up. In January, after receiving the approval of AFL President William Green, he

suspended the charter of the Shingle Weavers' Union, expelled Harold Pritchett and one other executive member (who, ironically, was not a communist), and drew up a loyalty oath for prospective members of a new SWU, members having to affirm that "I am not a member of any dual organization, neither am I sympathetic to the activities of the Communist organizations, such as the Workers' Unity League or other similar organizations. I agree to act as a loyal member of the American Federation of Labor and will uphold the constitution."[2] As yet, the "incipient rebellion" of the rank and file was not powerful enough to change the TLC's ways.

When the WUL suggested the creation of a new Federation of Canadian Labour it omitted to mention the terms on which the participating parties would be invited to merge, except to stress that "reactionaries" would have to agree to a broad policy of "militant struggle". It had hardly uttered these words, however, when the Red International of Labour Unions seemed to cut the ground out from under them. In March the RILU sent an invitation to the International Federation of Trade Unions to reopen discussions on "restoration of international trade union unity". It was couched in the most moderate terms and made no prior demands on the IFTU leadership. Immediately the Worker published the letter, describing it as "timely and practical", and WUL National President J. B. McLachlan sent copies in letters to Tom Moore and Aaron Mosher. McLachlan asked fraternally for

their comments and promised that any proposals they might make would receive the WUL's serious consideration.[3] There was no mention of "militant struggle" or forcing the "reactionaries" to act.

When the two reformist leaders refused to honour McLachlan's invitation with a reply, they unconsciously extricated the WUL from a potentially embarrassing situation. This arose when the RILU, also ignored by the IFTU, sent a second letter to its social democratic counterpart which exposed how close to the surface its submerged "social fascism" theses were. The letter acknowledged that the split in international unity had been a disaster, but accepted no responsibility for widening the split by its post-1929 tactics. Instead, it claimed that sole responsibility lay with the IFTU's international policy of class collaboration. Now, if unity were to be achieved, it was mandatory for the IFTU and its affiliates to repudiate class collaboration, accept the revolutionary unions as de facto equals, forget about any question of liquidating them and work towards unity by the merging of parallel unions "on the basis of BROAD TRADE UNION DEMOCRACY ... AND A UNIFIED TRADE UNION INTERNATIONAL ON THE BASIS OF CLASS STRUGGLE." What the position of the WUL would have been had either the TLC or ACCL given a positive response to its invitation in the period between the two RILU letters is a question for wry speculation. But the second RILU missive

clarified the debate in a way that the WUL clearly found congenial. Instructively, J. B. McLachlan published the second letter in full in the Nova Scotia Miner, and until November 1935 the WUL continually emphasized unity and class struggle, unity and equality of status.[4]

It was expected that the Seventh (and final) World Congress of the Comintern in July/August 1935 would finally clarify the international "line" on trade unionism. But that was not the case. The events at the Seventh Congress are well enough known not to require extended discussion; suffice to say that, while sharply attacking the "third period" conception of fascism and social democracy as "twins" and rallying communist parties behind anti-fascist struggle to preserve bourgeois democracy, the keynote speeches by Palmiro Togliatti and especially Georgi Dimitrov were carefully couched in what Comintern insiders termed "Aesopian language". That is, they offered a little something to everyone, referring on the one hand to the necessity and possibility of winning the support of the leaders of "whole nations" for the Soviet Union's "peace policy", and on the other hand mollifying those who suspected that the new line would involve "right opportunist" capitulation to reformism by emphasizing its temporary and provisional character. Defensive struggle against Fascism, Dimitrov observed, could be quickly transformed into offensive struggle against capitalism.[5] Party members were

free to interpret from the various checks and balances of the line whatever they needed to support their own predispositions. Typically, J. B. McLachlan chose at a crucial moment to emphasize the militant angle, reprinting in the Nova Scotia Miner one of the least ambiguous parts of Dimitrov's speech. This insisted on the preservation of revolutionary communist independence within any united front; beyond basic programmatic agreements about the aims of struggle, communists had to retain the capacity to educate, organize and mobilize against inevitable social democratic treachery. He was not the only party member to draw this lesson.[6]

The Comintern, moreover, proposed procedures for trade union unity that could easily be interpreted as an argument for the Canadian policy of multi-lateral merger:

> In countries where there are small Red trade unions, efforts must be made to secure their admission into the big reformist trade unions, with demands put forward for the right to defend their views and the reinstatement of expelled members. In countries where big Red and reformist unions exist side by side, efforts must be made to secure their amalgamation on an equal footing, on the basis of a platform of struggle against the offensive of capital and a guarantee of trade union democracy.

The problem here was that terms like "big" and "small" were relative and indistinct. If Canada were considered on its own, then a case could surely be made for "amalgamation on an equal footing": the combined membership of the ACCL, WUL and independent unions in which the left had influence

(AMW, LWTWC for example) - not to mention the Catholic Syndicates - was probably in the region of 80,000 to 100,000 as against the TLC's 1935 membership of 106,000. Even if the WUL and ACCL claims were inflated, the TLC was not manifestly "big" in comparison to its rivals.[7] On the other hand, if Canada were to be considered alongside the United States, the situation changed dramatically, for not only had the Trade Union Unity League already dissolved into the American Federation of Labour, but the autumn of 1935 saw the emergence inside that organization of the Committee for Industrial Organization under the leadership of UMWA President John L. Lewis. The miners' leader was not one to promote "class struggle unionism" by any means (in February 1935 Vancouver communist William "Ol'Bill" Bennett described him as a "racketeer" who maintained himself "through murder and brutal suppression of all opposition"), but his initiative represented the most promising development yet in the long campaign to organize the mass production industries.[8] Was there not, therefore, a serious case for voluntary suspension of demands for Canadian autonomy, to allow an immediate link-up with the progressive wing inside the undeniably mass-based AFL?

Yet as late as 17 October, in a discussion document for the November WUL Convention, the National Executive Board remained undecided. While reiterating its willingness to have "a WUL union merge with an AFL or Independent union, if

by doing so, the position of the workers would be strengthened", it continued to support its earlier ideal of a Federation of Canadian Labour.[9] Three weeks later, however, Tom Ewan's keynote speech at the Convention left no doubt that the WUL unions were headed into the TLC.

At no point in his speech did Ewan actually state that the WUL was to be liquidated, but to those accustomed to reading between the lines of party pronouncements the inference was an obvious one. The Trotskyist Vanguard concluded that the "new Stalinist policy" was one of "Unity at Any Price."[10] Ewan began by outlining the forces which were making trade union unity necessary and possible: first, an economic upturn that in the absence of a united working class was producing massive capitalist profits with no commensurate improvement in working class living standards; and a thaw in the glacial relations between communists and their opponents. When he tried to give specific examples of the latter, however, all he could offer was the case of the Tetrault, Quebec, shoe workers' strike during which "a WUL organizer [Harvey Murphy] and a Catholic priest spoke from the same platform" and the fact that "the question [of unity] was discussed" at the recent Annual Conventions of the TLC and ACCL. Although, Ewan admitted, it was "regrettable" that no "firm stand for trade union unity" was made, discussion itself was a sign of progress.[11] Speaking in terms that recalled Charles Sims' speech of a year earlier,

Ewan went on to disassociate the WUL even more from the CPC. The "old poppycock" that the WUL was a section of the CPC, he argued, was failing to "fool the workers ... everybody knows that our unions comprise a representative cross-section of the Canadian workers - all sorts of nationalities, all kinds of political and religious opinions". He did try to sustain a militant posture by claiming that the WUL would endorse a programme of unification only if it guaranteed two unbreakable principles: Canadian autonomy and industrial unionism. And he argued, finally, that it was the general leftward movement of the masses in the reformist unions, the "forward surge of the rank and file who want better economic conditions and trade union unity", that was driving trade union leaders once "bitterly opposed" to the WUL to see that "we are correct". John L. Lewis was a classic example.

It might have been argued by some die-hards who remembered the precise conditions in which the WUL had been formed, that Ewan's analysis of the "forward march of labour" pointed to diametrically opposite political conclusions from those he drew. If there really was such an upsurge, did that not justify the prolongation of communist trade union independence? Ewan could only cope with this argument, which must surely have been at the back of his mind, by distorting the WUL's origins and stressing the <u>defensive</u> requirements of the moment: if the working

class was on the move, so indeed was the capitalist class, which in the Flin Flon and Noranda metal mining strikes and most conclusively of all in the recent Vancouver waterfront strike, demonstrated its cohesion, class consciousness, integration with the state and increasingly fascist tendencies. To defeat this force would require immediate suspension of all petty considerations of jurisdictions or past resentments. The Workers' Unity League had enough magnanimity to give the necessary lead.

Ewan then placed his hand on his heart and admitted that the WUL leadership had been guilty of unfortunate errors in its characterization of both "leaders and members" of the reformist unions as "labour fakirs" and their organizations as "company" unions. This had been a "terrible mistake", which had to be replaced by a more "brotherly and fraternal" attitude towards working class comrades outside the WUL. Once again, in refusing to deal honestly with the past, Ewan reduced an entire political strategy to a matter of individual psychology. Nevertheless, even if the attribution of mistakes to individual subjectivism was an insult to the party membership, it did pave the way for a more placid reintegration of the WUL into the trade union mainstream than might have been the case.[12]

According to Irving Abella, once the issue had been decided the party leadership was totally inflexible: "It

ordered even the most unyielding opponents of international unionism to return to the fold of the TLC; there could be no exceptions."[13] Although exaggerating the CPC's ability to command compliance with its directives, Abella's assessment is broadly correct. But it was an indication of the WUL's success in establishing rank and file loyalty to militant unionism that it expected to encounter opposition to the "back-to-the-unions" drive. "It goes without saying", Ewan stressed, that in organizations based on the principle of rank and file democracy the membership would have the opportunity to discuss all sides of the unity issue, while the peculiarities of different industrial settings would determine the pace and character of the unification process. Yet rank and file democracy could only go so far. Ewan never considered the possibility that the rank and file might choose continued independence. Unity was a question of timing, not of choice.

How, then, did the rank and file respond to the new line? According to one anonymous ex-party member, WUL members were left "dazed and gasping for breath". Having been taught that "the reformists were the worst enemies of the working class ... out of a clear blue sky came the ... announcement that these men ... were okay. They were fine, upstanding defenders of labor's right. They were progressive, trustworthy fighters for democracy. We were ordered to throw all our convictions overboard, to turn our backs on the cause to

which we had willingly given our life."[14] And Ewan himself later acknowledged that "it was a very difficult struggle in many areas" to win rank and file compliance.[15]

Such responses are not difficult to understand, given not only the last minute capitulation to the TLC, but also WUL practice throughout 1935. In August, for example, the FWIU renewed its contract with the Toronto upholstery manufacturers for another year, and the following month struck the Knechtel Furniture Company in Owen Sound for a union contract and the reinstatement of a union activist.[16] The SLWIU followed the furniture union by winning a contract to run from October 1935 to August 1936.[17] In numerous industries where trade unionism was absent - steel and metals, textiles, fruit picking and canning, domestic service and office/retail work - the WUL continued to set the pace.[18] In September a joint meeting of the Ontario Lumber Workers' Industrial Union executive and the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council produced a suggestion from the latter that the LWIU, having organized only a third of Northern Ontario's loggers, should help in building an AFL union. The LWIU refused on the grounds that it was the only lumber union in Canada, and as such the PATLC should help it to recruit the two-thirds who remained unorganized. This, the union argued, would "lead to real unity, and whether the Trades Council realizes it or not, this is the route that will be taken in the near future, splitting tactics to the contrary."[19]

There was also, however, a contradictory trend pushing the WUL into practical alliances with reformists. When the provisions of Mitchell Hepburn's Industrial Standards' Act became known, J. B. Salsberg immediately tried to arouse the trade union movement to the danger of company unionism. Only a "united front drive of all trade unions", he argued, would defeat this threat and "organize tens of thousands of unorganized workers ... into fighting unions."[20] Salsberg's fears were partially stilled by the limited application of the ISA agreements, which despite Arthur Roebuck's grandiose claim that "We are going to extend these collective agreements where they were never dreamed of. They are going to be in every trade" were overwhelmingly confined to already semi-unionized trades, notably construction.[21] But in the furniture industry, one of only two industries covered by the ISA where the WUL was present, Salsberg's fears were proved genuine, his jaundiced view of the role of the state was strengthened and the WUL was pushed further in the direction of unity.

When the Ontario Department of Labour drew up its furniture code in June 1935 it more or less rode roughshod over the FWIU. It gave the union only 24 hours' notice of its first combined meeting with employees and the Furniture Manufacturers' Association (FMA), dismissed out of hand the union's criticisms of the Act, and rejected its nominee as workers' representative in the five-man Furniture Advisory

Board (FAB), James Earnshaw of Stratford. The FAB, which had an automatic 3-2 employers' majority and was chaired by an employee of the FMA, then proceeded to exclude Toronto from the agreement and divided the rest of the trade into Northern and Southern "zones", based respectively on Hanover and Stratford, granting rates that were 2 cents higher across the board in the Northern zone but which were in both zones much lower than the rates suggested by the FWIU. The FWIU opposed zoning which it considered likely to lead to a general chiselling down of rates to the smaller figure, and of course it was unhappy about the rates imposed: in Hanover 30 cents unskilled, 37 cents semi-skilled, and 47 cents skilled. But most of all, it was concerned about the imposition of a "boy's" rate of 17 cents an hour and the FAB's decision to leave the definition of "skill" to individual manufacturers, making a disingenuous appeal to them to "apply these rates in a fair, broadminded manner and in such a way that the beneficial objects of the act may be obtained."[22]

Not surprisingly, the furniture manufacturers took no notice. Within a few months of the code's gaining force of law, letters were flooding in to Deputy Minister James Marsh protesting abuses of the Act. One Strathroy manufacturer was said (by a local clergyman) to be "scouring the country in the neighbourhood of this town" for teenage boys to replace adult males; Hanover FWIU secretary Victor Valin

complained that another of the code's provisions, the 8½ hour day, was being ignored; and from all quarters came complaints of "reclassification" of skilled workers as unskilled.[23] Marsh, formerly a full-time official in the UBCJ, did not let his working class origins stand in the way of his new responsibilities. While privately admitting to his departmental colleagues that some manufacturers were abusing the spirit of the Act, he informed his complaining correspondents that he was surprised at their attitude, since "as a whole ... a very substantial improvement has been made."[24]

In the Owen Sound strike referred to earlier, the Knechtel Company took the view that the ISA gave it the right to manage production as it wished and refused to deal with unions. The "contracting parties", Karl Knechtel wrote to the FWIU, were individual companies and their employees: "This company and all other furniture manufacturers in Ontario signed that agreement and so did the representatives of the Employees throughout the Province." In this instance, the company did grant recognition of a shop committee but flatly refused to reinstate the unionist whose firing had provoked the strike. On this "there would be no negotiating ... the Company reserves the right to hire and discharge its employees."[25] Since protecting the membership was a fundamental obligation, the FWIU's failure to perform that task in Owen Sound - despite the strenuous efforts of Fred

Collins - had grievous implications.

Common experience of the ISA's shortcomings undoubtedly drew together the various working class forces in the industry. As we saw in the previous chapter, in 1934 the TLC chartered a Federal Labour Union in opposition to the WUL in Stratford. In November 1934 the UBCJ chartered a furniture workers' local in Chesley, Ontario, which in May 1935 successfully struck for the reinstatement of several victimized members.[26] At this time the carpenters' union was attempting to transform itself into an industrial union, recruiting members in sawmills and a variety of woodworking establishments.[27] Thus there was a variety of competing organizations in the industry by early 1935, all of them in some way antagonized by the ISA and, more importantly, sharing their experiences with each other.[28] By November, it seems that the FWIU local in Owen Sound had already stepped aside for the UBCJ. Furniture delegates attending the WUL Convention must have been aware that in their industry a militant trend really was developing, and could look forward to unity optimistic that the militant traditions of their union would be sustained.[29]

There were other forces pushing towards unity, sometimes within the WUL, on other occasions from the outside. Through 1935 an organizational rule-of-thumb developed, with the WUL organizing the unorganized sometimes into its own unions, on occasion as a faction within independent unions,

and on other occasions helping build TLC unions. This tactical mélange was at its most complicated in the steel and metalworking industries. Thus, the WUL operated as the SMWIU at International Malleable Iron in Guelph, as a faction within the Independent Steel Workers' Union at Hamilton, and as the main organizers of "shop unions" at the London and Toronto plants of the General Steel Wares Company (at the time, Canada's largest manufacturer of metal household goods and furnishings). When the London "shop union" obtained a TLC Federal Labour Union charter in March 1935, WUL organizer Jack Scott persuaded a recalcitrant group of WUL supporters to enter it, pointing out that: "The spirit of working class unity and struggle is what makes unions. AFL unions can be good if the members make them so."[30] Then, just to add to the complexity, in September-October 1935 Welland organizer Frank Haslam unsuccessfully pushed the SMWIU at the Page-Hersey Tubes strike.[31]

Early in 1935 the WUL took the lead in forming a "Joint Painters' Conference" comprising the members of its own Building Workers' Industrial Union, the painters' unit of the ACCL's Amalgamated Building Workers' Union and Local 557 of the International Painters' Union. Its formation exposed the contradictory tendencies at work in the international labour movement on the unity issue, for on the one hand the Building Trades' Council expelled Local 557 for participating

in the joint body, only to be overruled by the full Toronto District Labour Council. Some of the latter's more perceptive members saw that the international movement was always the likeliest beneficiary of unity discussions in the building trades; they only had to count heads to prove their case.[32]

Inside the WUL there were obviously members capable of coming to independent conclusions about the requirements of the period: the WUL's political education can only have helped their numbers grow. And given that the organization and the party press relentlessly reiterated the need for unity, it is inconceivable that before the leadership made its mind up no WUL member had begun to feel that to achieve this goal more than rhetoric was needed. In the opinion of one B.C. member of the LWIU, expressed when the union had all but completed its entry into the UBCJ, the move should have taken place "a long time ago".[33] This pro-unity trend was stimulated at the rank and file level in at least two WUL unions, the IUNTW and the SLWIU, by Trotskyist factions which had consistently argued that the place for militant unionism was inside the mainstream. Taking pride in their predictive powers and always ready to say the unsayable, they read the reports coming from the Seventh World Congress and concluded as early as September that the WUL's liquidation was imminent.[34]

There were also individuals with axes to grind against

the party's trade union line and the intellectual capacity to make their points tellingly. Bill Moriarty, for example, was one of the first Canadian "Lovestoneites" expelled from the CPC in 1930. He joined the CCF in 1933 but maintained his marxist interests in a number of small propaganda groups and study circles. Through the latter he exerted a significant degree of influence among a section of the more class conscious workers in Toronto who had been radicalized by the depression. As one East York worker remembered Moriarty: "[he] was teaching us the difference between barging in and breaking up an organization and coaxing the workers to the left." This was his message when he analysed the trade union movement. In one letter to the Toronto Star Moriarty took to task a WUL supporter who had defended the revolutionary unions on the basis of their unequalled militancy, as evidenced by the number of WUL pickets arrested. Moriarty pointed out that he had in front of him newspaper reports of 66,000 AFL-led strikers in Terra Haute, Indiana, who were holding off 2,000 National Guardsmen and still managing to shut the city down. "Mere militancy", he noted, "does not necessarily prove the correctness of ... union policy. Such can only be proven by results secured in the broad general fields of the class struggle." In his opinion the WUL's standing was low according to this measure of achievement, and its mistakes were being compounded by tardy recognition of what communist parties in most other countries

had already seen: "pure revolutionary unionism" led only to isolation from the masses. Nothing so agitated a communist than an opponent's casual appropriation of Lenin's writ![35]

Lack of evidence makes it impossible to establish with any degree of precision the relative strengths of the pro- and anti-unity camps among the rank and file. The party leadership was willing to admit to the latter at the time and has also done so in retrospect.[36] And there is no doubt that some, perhaps many rank and file WULers had little relish for the TLC. Yet this admission was also self-serving, in that it drew attention to the WUL leadership's inspirational qualities. Conversely, to acknowledge the presence of a substantial pro-unity wing actively supporting entry into the TLC before that became official policy would have called into question not only the vitality of the WUL unions, but also the leadership's claim to a monopoly of political wisdom. But if the strengths of the two camps cannot be gauged, by looking concretely at the various unification processes more light can be shed on the strengths of their respective arguments.

In Ewan's speech to the WUL Convention he avoided saying that the WUL would be wound up, and in the immediate aftermath of the Convention he and his fellow tacticians continued to act as if there was a future for revolutionary unionism in some form. The reasons for this fiction become clear from an

examination of the proceedings of the Ninth Party Plenum which was held shortly before the WUL meeting. The keynote of the Plenum was nowhere better expressed than in the title of its published proceedings Towards A Canadian People's Front. Stewart Smith, Canada's representative at the Seventh Congress, opened the proceedings with his long report and reformulation of the Congress' decisions in light of the Canadian situation. On Trade Union Unity he drove home the message that it was "intimately bound up and is decisive for the achievement of the broad people's front." He rejected conclusively the possibility of proceeding towards "a general all-in amalgamation of the trade union centres", essentially on the grounds that it was too mechanical and, even more important, likely to be too protracted a development. While it remained the party's ultimate goal in the trade union field, to achieve it "we must with all energy fight to bring about the unification of the two most decisive and important centres of the Canadian trade union movement, the revolutionary unions and the AFL unions ... we must systematically commence to build up the AFL unions into powerful mass organizations ... and put an end once and for all to the sectarian role of some Communists in the AFL who consider it their task to be 'general oppositionists', rather than responsible leading trade unionists."[37]

The trade union sections of Smith's speech were responded

to by two anonymous speakers, the WUL "Fraction Secretary" (probably Tom Ewan) and a "Representative of [the] Trade Union Commission". Both agreed that the main immediate task was to effect as complete a merger with the AFL as possible; but both also stressed that it was essential that the party fight "the poison of the liquidationists" (Fraction Secretary) and the "right-opportunist liquidation which is fostered by the counter-revolutionary fragments of Trotskyism in Canada" (Trade Union Commission representative). The way to achieve that task was - build the WUL![38] In short, the party was reluctant to hand the tiny Trotskyist organization a propaganda victory on a plate.

One other reason for the continuation of the WUL's life was hinted at in Smith's speech: the exhortation to communists to become "responsible leading trade unionists". Once it became clear that, despite all the equivocations, the revolutionary unions were headed for the TLC, a primary tactical aim was to derive the best possible terms of entry, or in other words secure executive positions for leading WUL organizers. That would not be done by total capitulation to whatever demands the international unions might care to make. Keeping WUL unions together and resisting attempts to reabsorb them piece-meal might provide a degree of leverage for communists, who had after all built the unions, to entrench themselves in the revamped international union structures. Thus in December Salsberg

urged the WUL rank and file to prevent "any slackening in the inner life and in the organizational activities of our own unions."[39]

An early casualty of the orientation on the TLC was Canadian trade union autonomy; it too became a long-term goal. Some of the other non-negotiable WUL principles were also found, rather rapidly, to be dispensable. In late November 1935 Salsberg convinced the members of the Toronto Coal Handlers' and Truckers' Union to seek a TLC charter. In urging them to disaffiliate from the WUL, he cited unity as the first criterion, while the second was to free the union from the taint of its association with the WUL! A TLC charter, Salsberg suggested, might help it gain a contract without recourse to strike action. The union agreed, disaffiliated forthwith and became Local 83 International Brotherhood of Teamsters in March 1936.[40] There was just a suspicion here that the WUL was diluting its traditional militancy.

Another obvious deviation from principle was the readiness with which the WUL let its industrial unions be broken down into craft components. In December Salsberg admitted that "problems of a very serious nature" had arisen over the food and furniture unions. At that moment, however, these were too difficult to solve and were deferred. When Salsberg next broached the matter, it was to assert that

certain "organizational compromises" would be necessary in the short-term: the immediate interests of the movement at large would best be served by proceeding towards unity as fast as possible.[41] In fact, "organizational compromises" were in most cases surrenders to craft unionism.

In January 1936 the WUL and Toronto District Labour Council formed a joint committee to supervise the unity drive. Tom Ewan was so overwhelmed by this manifestation of inter-organizational equality that he promptly abandoned any thought of pushing the TDLC to the left. At one public meeting he gave an unambiguous statement of support for international unionism. Unity, Ewan urged, "must be built around the greatest economic centre, the American Federation of Labor", while at another he placed the onus for achieving unity firmly on the backs of the WUL rank and file, who were to prove their "sincerity by their activities and deeds".[42]

The best kind of proof was to dismember the industrial unions. Thus the Foodworkers' Industrial Union was divided up among three internationals, the Bakers, Teamsters and Hotel and Restaurant Employees, with its meat-cutting and meat-packing sections retaining potentially industrial form as federal labour unions. At the same time, however, the WUL managed to fulfil certain of its broader aims. FIU organizer Henry Segal was appointed full-time organizer for the International Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Alliance,

and under his leadership it launched a major organizing drive in mid-1936 that saw it win contracts in 80 Toronto hotels.[43]

There were similar developments in the furniture trade. As we have seen, the UBCJ was moving into this field and taking on, however reluctantly, some of the features of industrial unionism. There was also the tiny Upholsterers' International Union (UIU) with just 45 members in two Canadian locals in 1935. Yet the UIU was a craft union with a difference. In June 1935 its international convention declared in favour of the industrial union principle, and two months later it absorbed the TUUL's National Furniture Workers' Union.[44] These developments were not lost on the WUL, which in March 1936 initiated the formation of the Toronto Furniture Joint Council, incorporating delegates from the FWIU, UIU and Local 1415 UBCJ and with Fred Collins as chairman. Within weeks the FWIU had become Local 149 UIU with Victor Valin, Leo Sax and Fred Collins of the industrial union as respectively President, Secretary and Organizer. When the FJC was placed on a province-wide basis, the UBCJ reaped the benefit, absorbing WUL locals in Elmira, Hanover, Preston and Kitchener between March and M[illegible] The UBCJ also entered territory where the WUL had never been established, chartering furniture locals in Listowel, Strathroy and Wingham. All three struck to win union conditions during 1936.[45]

There were many other successful mergers. The Toronto Shirt and Overall Workers' local of the Industrial Union of Needle Trades' Workers entered the United Garment Workers with its entire executive apparatus intact. Organizer Sam Lapides then took a seat on the TDLC and helped smooth the way for further mergers.[46] The Fur Dressers' and Dyers' Union, almost three years after Trotskyists had urged the WUL to affiliate it to the International Fur Workers' Union, doggedly held out for a separate charter, successfully resisting Max Federman's efforts to have them re-enter the union as individuals.[47] The Lumber Workers' Industrial Union in British Columbia and Northern Ontario entered the Lumber and Sawmill Workers' Union, a semi-autonomous section of the UBCJ, with several of its leading militants gaining executive and organizing posts, notably Harold Pritchett and Nigel Morgan in B.C. and Bruce Magnusson in Ontario.[48] Another significant merger was that which saw the clandestine WUL metal miners' groups become almost overnight the International Union of Mine-Mill and Smelter Workers, which by the end of 1936 could claim 12 locals throughout the country.[49]

In these and other cases the process of unification was not a matter of directives or snap decisions. Unity usually took a considerable time and, by Ewan's account, was thoroughly democratic: "In all WUL unions the decision to return to the AFL-TLC unions was carried out by a referendum vote of the membership, and in no instance was any 'break-

away' from this major step towards trade union unity ... in evidence anywhere."[50] Once again lack of evidence does not permit a definitive test of Ewan's first claim. But referenda were definitely held in the MWUC and the LWIU B.C. Provincial Section. In the latter instance, the industrial and international unions first discussed unification in December 1935, and agreed terms of affiliation in early January. The LWIU then presented these terms to its widely scattered membership on 1 February, set the starting date of the referendum as 1 March, and balloted the membership throughout that month. All the while it was agitating on behalf of acceptance, both in the union paper and on the radio! The vote was fairly conclusive: 1048-23 in favour of affiliation to the UBCJ.[51]

Ewan's second claim, however, was incorrect. There was one unity drive which did not go according to plan. Ironically, this took place in the shoe industry which had always seemed one of the WUL's securest bastions. As in the furniture industry, an early impetus was given to unity discussions by the Industrial Standards Act - although, as events transpired, the ISA never was invoked in the shoe industry.[52] In May SLWIU Secretary Ken Scott invited the International Boot and Shoe Workers' Union (IBSU) and the National Catholic Syndicate to send delegates to its June convention in Kitchener, out of which he hoped "a closer understanding" would evolve.[53] The June issue of Unity went

even further than this, announcing that the SLWIU convention would debate "the ultimate aim of organizational unity".[54] Activists in the industry clearly knew that a unification of factions was a fairly proximate prospect.

The pervasiveness of the unity theme was demonstrated when the Toronto SLWIU local, the union's largest, met in late May to discuss the forthcoming convention. When a resolution was proposed calling for the industrial union to be "prepared to forego our affiliation if others do likewise and to establish an independent union for the time being, so that all forces can be centred in the building of one shoe workers' union ... particularly in the Province of Ontario", it passed almost unanimously, one of its supporters being Ken Scott. A copy of the resolution was then forwarded to the SLWIU national office and another was sent to the Toronto IBSWU local, which promptly added its endorsement.[55]

Compared with the vague proposals emanating from the SLWIU and WUL, this resolution clearly defined what the next stage in the unity programme should be: an independent union. The very specificity of this proposal indicates that independent thought had been given to the question. One of the influences behind it was the Trotskyist Left Opposition (LO). In most instances, the LO followed the guidelines set by 'Left Wing' Communism: An Infantile Disorder and reworked by Trotsky's early 1920s writings on revolutionary tactics in the trade unions. Its position can be summed up in

Trotsky's 1931 maxim: "A sure majority in a narrow and isolated trade union confederation, rather than oppositional work in a broad and real mass organization, can be preferred only by sectarians or officials but not by proletarian revolutionists."[56] This usually led it to advocate the policy finally adopted by the WUL of re-entry into the TLC. However, LO members also believed in listening to rank and file opinion and assessing tactics on that basis. They knew, for example, that the IBSWU was a moribund and discredited organization, little more than a dues-collecting agency and totally inactive.[57] They also knew that among Toronto's few remaining IBSWU members there was growing disenchantment with the quality of assistance from the union's Boston headquarters.[58] In light of these factors, one move might have been to encourage a complete industrial union takeover, but since the LO opposed the WUL in principle, knew almost certainly that the revolutionary union moment was all but over, and was aware that a right-wing faction in the IBSWU would never accept entry into the industrial union, it proposed the only other alternative.

When the SLWIU convention finally met, its leadership showed that it could be just as bureaucratically anti-democratic as the TLC. Without excuse or explanation it had the convention resolutions' committee replace the Toronto local's resolution with an anodyne substitute, which would have empowered the SLWIU executive simply to enter

negotiations with the other shoe unions without any declaration of intent. This might well have passed on the spot, but for the intervention of a rank and file delegate from the international union who demanded to know what had happened to the resolution his local had endorsed. His comments caused consternation among the ranks of the WUL leadership, represented by Ewan and Salsberg, who called on Ken Scott to provide an explanation. A rather sheepish Scott admitted that the offending resolution had looked good on paper, but that on reconsidering it later he concluded that the issue needed more thought - and in any case, at the meeting when the resolution had been passed there had been a small attendance! Salsberg and Ewan also intervened. The latter agreed that unity was "the burning, immediate necessity for the working class", but added that there was no "short cut" to obtaining it. Salsberg ventured that the Toronto resolution, which effectively said "ABC -- Z", was just too schematic. The official resolution duly passed, despite some rank and file dissent.[59]

Shortly after the convention, what the Trotskyists had been predicting happened. A dissident, mainly conservative and "Anglo-Saxon" faction in the IBSWU broke away to form the independent Canadian Union of Shoe Workers and Allied Crafts (CUSW). The LO responded by urging the SLWIU to look on the new union as a transitional structure which left wingers should immediately enter to prevent the right's entrenchment

and to work for its eventual admission to the TLC as a militant union.[60] As late as December, however, the WUL insisted that unity should come immediately through the IBSWU - which unfortunately did not exist - and rejected the LO's appeal.[61] After the turn of the year the unreality of the WUL's position began to dawn, at least to individual SLWIU members, some of whom began spontaneously to enter the CUSW. In fact, they were doing so in sufficient numbers to agitate shoe manufacturers who had signed contracts with the independent union in the expectation that it would be less demanding than the SLWIU.[62] Moreover, the CUSW began to display an unexpectedly militant streak, perhaps not unconnected with the entry of former industrial union militants. In particular, a successful strike for union recognition and wage increases at the large Murray Shoe Company in London lasted more than five weeks, during which the union gained the support of the London Trades and Labour Council.[63] The WUL finally entered negotiations with the CUSW in early March; by the end of the month the SLWIU had been liquidated.[64]

Unlike most of the mergers involving WUL unions this one was concluded on terms manifestly detrimental to the left. Two weeks before the merger was finalized, the CUSW executive hurriedly held new elections and entrenched itself in control. It then refused to admit the SLWIU as discrete locals, forcing former members to enter the CUSW as individuals. Although some ex-industrial unionists managed

subsequently to gain election to executive office at the local level, relations between the two basic factions were always antagonistic. The CUSW leadership, according to Ken Scott, adopted a chauvinistic attitude towards non-British members, ran executive meetings undemocratically and refused to fight for equal division of work among the membership. Whether all these allegations were true, it certainly did collaborate in clamping down on shop floor activity and helped employers to discipline militants.[65] Not surprisingly, the left's sojourn in the CUSW lasted only so long as there was no alternative. When the CIO formed the United Shoe Workers of America in 1937, Toronto left wingers defected to it at the first opportunity; its first Canadian local was chartered in 1938 with Ken Scott as organizer.[66]

The WUL's handling of the unity campaign in the shoe industry was almost ludicrously maladroit. It misread or chose to ignore what was happening at the rank and file level; when confronted by decisive action it resorted to bureaucratic methods to preserve its own indecisive policy - and probably compounded its error with a transparently insincere declaration of support for the principle of unity; it hoist itself on its own argument when, after stating that the proposal to unite the workforce in an independent union was overly mechanical, it insisted that unification come through a union that had effectively ceased to exist; and even at the last it threw away possible tactical advantages

by refusing to look reality in the face.

In short, this experience made nonsense of the promise that unity would be fought for according to the particular conditions operating in different industries. Having decided to reorientate exclusively on the AFL-TLC, its anxiety to establish its bona fides made any such promise dispensable. Similarly, its capacity for independent criticism of the shortcomings of reformist unionism faded almost to invisibility. Instead of general condemnation of the bureaucracy, into the lower levels of which a goodly number of communists were moving, there came discriminative criticism of "the outright reactionaries like Draper, Morrison, Burford and Bengough", coupled with the creation of a blanket term - "progressives" - which covered many of the union leaders who had been the WUL's bitterest enemies.[67] It was this development that led to the most serious defection from the party: that of WUL National President J. B. McLachlan.

In 1935 McLachlan was the WUL's figurehead. Sixty-six years of age, veteran of countless labour struggles, victim of bosses and union bureaucrats alike, one of the very few Canadian communists able to contest parliamentary elections without fear of humiliation, an internationalist and an intransigent to his core, McLachlan resigned from the party in June 1936 unable to accept its "sad march to the right".[68]

Why did he take what for the vast majority of leading communists, and certainly for him, was a momentous and tortured step? According to one account, it was because he was beginning to think in terms of allying with the CCF, which he saw as a more suitable force for the achievement of socialism in Canada.[69] All the available evidence points in the opposite direction: when the CPC was desperately trying to win over J. S. Woodsworth's support for a "Canadian People's Front", McLachlan was embarrassing its efforts by ridiculing Woodsworth's pacifism and reiterating his belief that violent class struggle would be necessary to overthrow capitalism.[70] The CPC has offered an alternative explanation, according to which McLachlan broke with the party because, while broadly approving the unity line in the trade unions, he couldn't accept its application in Nova Scotia because of a subjective inability to accept a return to John L. Lewis's UMWA. According to one of McLachlan's Cape Breton comrades: "poor Jim McLachlan couldn't stand it. His position was, John L. Lewis is no good and he'll never be any good, which is something less than Marxian .... he had a hate of John L. Lewis and all that he stood for."[71] This is closer to the truth, but still distorts McLachlan's position. To gain a fuller understanding of this, we have to return to the early months of 1935.

In the previous chapter it was briefly noted that McLachlan's views on the prospect of reuniting with the UMWA

hardened markedly after the international union's Springhill local struck in January 1935 for the dismissal of 12 AMW activists. In July almost 2,000 UMWA members in New Waterford took similar strike action, although on this occasion without success. These strikes convinced McLachlan that unity with the UMWA was impossible. What is more, the WUL and CPC shared this outlook throughout the year. As late as December, the party's new District Organizer Bill Findlay looked forward to an AMW victory over the "Lewis machine".[72]

Nevertheless, McLachlan was deeply embroiled as WUL President in the unfolding unity campaign. He had, after all, invited Tom Moore and Aaron Mosher to discuss the issue with him, and as a close follower of the international situation he was well aware of the trend development in the world movement. But while he supported unity in principle, it would appear that by the late autumn of 1935 he was already disturbed by the party's willingness to compromise some of its principles. His publication in the Nova Scotia Miner of one of the more unambiguously Leninist sections of Dimitrov's Seventh Congress speech may have been a warning shot to the Toronto leadership not to play fast and loose with the Leninist conception of the united front. In the same (2 November) issue of the paper he was quite uncompromising: unity in Nova Scotia would come through the AMW "and by no other way".

By the time that issue of the paper appeared, McLachlan was on his way to the Central Committee Ninth Plenum and the WUL Dominion Convention. At the former, his growing isolation from mainstream opinion in the party was apparent, but his prestige remained so high that Stewart Smith's speech took special account of it. Smith actually implied that unity in the mines might not occur through the UMWA, but that the WUL would be "prepared" to follow that path "if [unity] can be achieved in the UMWA on the basis of the struggle against the coal operators and genuine trade union democracy which would ensure that the militant will of the majority of the miners" would prevail.[73] The crucial word here was "if", McLachlan was prepared (like everyone else) to accept almost all of Smith's report. "We can all endorse the report of Comrade Smith on the Seventh Congress of the Communist International", he agreed, "and I am sure we can all endorse his analysis of the Canadian conditions, conditions in which we should be able to put into effect the decisions of that Congress and the directives we will get from this plenum." However, when asked whether it would be possible to carry out "the trade union policy of striving to unite trade unions and affiliate them to the AFL" in Nova Scotia, he temporized. Citing the recent federal election in which he had run openly as a CPC member, he informed the plenum that his campaign team had brought together rank and filers from both the AMW and UMWA, and that out of their political collaboration had come fresh

discussion of reuniting the two unions. Therefore the possibility of unity was strong, but in his view it would be a mistake to move in with a sudden campaign for affiliation to the international union. To achieve unity definitively would require "patient work".[74]

Although McLachlan did not rule out going back into the UMWA, he made no attempt to conceal his skepticism about the possibility of doing so within the terms outlined by Stewart Smith.[75] It seems therefore that he returned to Glace Bay prepared to take Smith at face value, believing that the trade union unity line really was to be applied flexibly and did not simply mean capitulation to the UMWA. Very quickly, however, he received evidence that the unity line was being applied opportunistically: reports of J. B. Salsberg's conduct of the Toronto Coal Handlers' and Truckers' Union disaffiliation from the WUL left a deep impression.[76] At the same time, he found himself being undercut by Bill Findlay, who by the end of December seems to have been pushing hard for re-entry to the UMWA.

In early December the unity discussions McLachlan had helped initiate at the rank and file level were extended to include the UMWA and AMW executives. Almost immediately they collapsed into bitter recriminations when AMW secretary Bob Stewart accused Dan Willie Morrison and other UMWA officers of having given Dosco a list of 122 miners for blacklisting

in 1932. Morrison, District President and Mayor of Glace Bay, initially offered to resign union office if Stewart's allegation could be proved, but then demanded Stewart's public retraction, threatening to sue him for slander if he refused. When Stewart "resolutely refused" to comply, the writ was served, and rank and file miners were treated to the paradoxical spectacle of a unity campaign being conducted at the top by individuals who were adversaries in litigation.[77]

To many ordinary miners this affair seemed a frivolous diversion, and led some of them to demand a "hands-off" approach on the part of the two union executives. Miners at one meeting in Reserve Mines issued a statement supporting unity and attacking "the campaign of hate and slander that has been indulged in during the past three years." Any individuals or groups, they stated, who stood in the way of unity were "no friends of the miners".[78] The onus of responsibility for obstruction seemed to be placed impartially on both leaderships, but it was the AMW men who were under most pressure.[79]

The longer the unity debate continued, the more likely it seemed that the final result would be a return to the UMWA. On 1 February delegates from 14 UMWA and AMW locals at a meeting in Reserve provided a fairly clear picture of the range of rank and file opinion. There was a small amount of support for an entirely new union, but AMW President John A. MacDonald spoke strongly against this option and indicated

his own preference for the UMWA, especially now that John L. Lewis had assumed leadership of the CIO. At the same time MacDonald urged that Lewis be asked to guarantee "full democracy" in District 26. AMW rank and filer Mickie Young shared this reservation, but while doubting that Lewis would ever permit "progressive officers" to take control in Nova Scotia, he admitted "that the UMWA members were getting somewhere while the AMW had got nowhere." There was a general view that the AMW had failed to sustain its early promise, and although the UMWA still "left much to be desired", it remained the alternative most likely to strengthen the fight against unemployment and short-time working: "any existing faults" in the UMWA's make-up would be rectified by an infusion of AMW militants. The meeting ended with a vote to unite "under one banner - the United Mine Workers of America."[80]

This was by no means the end of the story. Immediately after the Reserve meeting a sub-committee was struck to prosecute its decisions, and its first action was to wire John L. Lewis asking for his views on the AMW's proposed re-admission. At this juncture Bob Stewart claimed that the meeting had "never said at any time" that unity would have to come through the UMWA, and insisted that miners had still to work out a militant platform around which unity and the struggle for improved conditions would develop side by side.[81] Another delegate meeting at Reserve demonstrated that there was still a substantial degree of resistance to the UMWA.

Some AMW delegates pledged they would never go back to Lewis's union, among them Mickie Young, who claimed that "hundreds" of AMW members shared this view. Support for a new Canadian union chartered directly by the TLC also existed, but AMW delegate D. J. McVarish from the Phalen local pointed out that this was out of the question and that a more realistic approach had to be adopted. He hinted that the UMWA was the only real alternative - if only because it would carry on with its contract even though it had only 10 members. The meeting broke up with no consensus, but with a pledge to continue joint discussions.[82]

As the unity drive teetered backward and forward, two ineluctable trends were nevertheless emerging. One was that the AMW had to go: even the AMW members who insisted they could never swallow the UMWA found it impossible to make a solid case for their own union, which was in parlous financial condition, made even worse when Princess Local at Sydney Mines, the only local from which the AMW received check-off payments, voted to suspend them on the grounds that other AMW locals were not pulling their weight.[83] The other was that the UMWA was gaining an increasingly positive image as pro-John L. Lewis, pro-CIO reports gained in volume and frequency. By February these two developments had made the final fictory of the UMWA inevitable. The latter brought J. B. McLachlan's disaffection from party policy to a climax.

The transformation in the CPC's image of John L. Lewis in winter 1935-36 was little short of miraculous. Before Lewis took charge of the battle for industrial unionism at the October 1935 AFL Convention, he always stood in the first rank of labour "fakirs"; not just a red-baiter and political reactionary, but a blood-stained thug.[84] Once he placed the organizational resources of the UMWA, not to mention his undeniable personal charisma, behind industrial unionism and the organization of the unorganized, this image had to be revised. At the November WUL Convention and Central Committee Plenum it was noted that "historic changes" had taken place in the American labour movement and that Lewis was one "important leader" who had displayed "significant signs of change in the direction of progressive trade union policies." Tom Ewan did claim that Lewis had been forced into this position to prevent his being bypassed by rank and file militancy, but the signs were there that his history was not to stand against him.[85] In February 1936 Harvey Murphy sent back a glowing account of the UMWA International Convention in Washington, D.C., reporting that while Lewis had personally intervened against the creation of an independent labour party, in every other respect he stood in the vanguard of "progressive industrial unionism". The CIO, Murphy predicted, would mean "New Life for Canadian Unions". By June, in a "special steel issue" of the CPC's recently launched Daily Clarion, Lewis was prominently promoted as the "fighting leader" of the CIO.

Thus, the "nemesis of the Communists in the twenties, was transformed into their patron saint in the thirties."[86]

J. B. McLachlan observed this transformation with growing disgust, hardly able to believe what he saw. Like the party, he welcomed the prospect of a massive industrial union drive and looked on the UMWA International Convention as likely to prove "the most historic ever held" if the UMWA promised to "foot the bill". But at the same time, he felt that any gratitude the left might feel towards the miners' union should not become unconditional or uncritical, especially where someone like John L. Lewis was concerned. In contradistinction to Harvey Murphy's inconsequential criticism of Lewis's position on labour politics, McLachlan concluded that the Welshman would wreck industrial unionism if it ever threatened to develop as a force for socialism. In April he was strengthened in this belief when he saw Lewis threaten to withhold a promised contribution of $100,000 for organizing from the United Automobile Workers of America, unless the auto union repudiated its recent convention decision to support a labour party and refuse F. D. Roosevelt its endorsement. Moreover, he could not ignore, as Murphy had done, the fact that Lewis had forced a roll-call vote at the UMWA Convention to give himself the independent power to depose district officials. In McLachlan's view, no individual alive was good enough, wise enough or just enough to hold such power "over the democratic rights of men, and

no man on earth except a swollen, impudent, aspiring fascist" would even accept it.

It is important to emphasize here that McLachlan shared the party's enthusiasm for the CIO and trade union unity. But he did not wish to see it become so enthusiastic that it allowed itself to be sucked into an industrial unionism/unity campaign from which revolutionary politics were excluded. Hence when he saw the party not only failing to maintain a critical perspective, but also making "frantic attempts to say as many nice things as possible about a traitor and scoundrel like Lewis", he concluded that the party was reneging on its revolutionary duty and that he, as an individual "honest to his class", had no alternative but to break party discipline. He therefore publicly attacked Lewis in the pages of the Nova Scotia Miner and at various workers' meetings.[87]

The CPC's view of McLachlan's apostasy was aptly summed up by George MacEachern when he wrote that McLachlan "could not be expected to have any love for John L. Lewis and no one asked him to pretend otherwise ... or 'praise' John L. Lewis": in effect, all he had to do was keep quiet![88] As late as 4 June 1936 Tim Buck, in a last effort to convince McLachlan to recant and stay in the party, wrote to him suggesting that his actions had been "based on nothing less than a misunderstanding of the political line of the

Comintern." This was party short-hand for: re-read the appropriate documents and acknowledge your errors. Already, however, McLachlan had announced his resignation to Bill Findlay (who, along with the other members of the CPC District Bureau, was allegedly discussing ways of "destroying" the Nova Scotia Miner), and he confirmed this decision in a final letter to Buck in which he observed that he had "paid the greatest attention" to the Comintern line on the trade union question, had read everything he could get his hands on, and remained convinced that he was following the line. The party "in Canada", on the other hand, was misapplying it, and he could no longer follow its "sad march to the right".[89]

His resignation took place well after the reunification of the Nova Scotia miners within the UMWA had been effected. McLachlan was not in the end opposed to this decision, but to the way the party's original demands for certain guarantees had been quietly shelved. One report in the Worker had blandly observed that "it is not thought possible" that John L. Lewis would grant local "autonomy" to District 26. In the context of the report, this implied that the demand should be dropped, which to McLachlan was rank defeatism.[90] Lewis, according to the union's international representative in District 26, Silby Barrett, approved the re-entry of AMW members with full rights and without fees or penalties, and promised "sympathetic support" for future organizing drives.[91] That was enough to convince the vast majority of AMW members,

and on 19 April merger was finally agreed.[92]

It may appear, then, that McLachlan was simply overtaken by events, and that his defiance was essentially personal rather than political. That was the position adopted by some of the younger communists in the area. George MacEachern, toiling away inside the plant council at Dosco, saw McLachlan's attacks on Lewis as understandable in light of the older man's victimization at Lewis's hands but politically indefensible as far as the interests of the steelworkers were concerned. He himself felt that Lewis had changed, but that in any case, "we had to trust him. We had no bloody choice there."[93] Was this position any more "Marxian" that McLachlan's? Only history would tell whether the party's sacrifice of principles to tactics were justified. But there were already enough indications - some of which McLachlan pinpointed - to show that Lewis had not been transformed, and even more significantly that in the long run the party's support for bureaucratic, top-down unionism was at most an ambiguous contribution to the struggle for socialism.[94]

By the summer of 1936 the WUL had disbanded, "gone over", as the Winnipeg Free Press put it, "into the trenches of the once-hated enemy."[95] In May the prodigal's return was symbolized by the lifting of the TDLC's 1929 ban on communist delegates.[96] Back in the mainstream, communists immediately

took up the ideological struggle for industrial unionism, aware that this was already the subject of much wider debate than in the 1920s when they were virtually alone in raising it.[97] In this period J. B. Salsberg established his reputation as an analyst of trade unionism and protagonist of its industrial form. His numerous articles on the subject always arrived at two basic conclusions: the case for industrial unionism was proven by the failure of craft unionism to organize unskilled and semi-skilled mass production workers; and that debating the issue in "abstract, almost academic fashion" had to give way to immediate, practical activity.[98] His case gained in urgency as the AFL-CIO split developed.

In February 1936 the AFL attempted to assert its "supreme" authority over the international unions in the USA and Canada over the CIO issue. To all Trades and Labour Councils President William Green sent a directive ordering them to refuse "allegiance, assistance or support" to the CIO. The response of the TDLC was probably typical. While resenting Green's abuse of local autonomy, it was reluctant to take any action that might force a split in the Canadian movement. Consequently, it delayed formal discussion of the industrial union question until late May.[99]

In the intervening period the Toronto labour movement was given an object lesson in the rights and wrongs of craft

versus industrial unionism. The issue arose over the question of how the Coulter Brass foundry was to be organized. Already, a precedent seemed to have been established by the TLC's chartering federal locals at the General Steel Wares plants in London and Toronto. From the union base in the Toronto plant activists were beginning to link up with workers in other city machine shops and foundries, of which Coulter Brass was the first to make a definitely positive response. In April W. T. Parker, a delegate from the GSW plant, officially asked the TDLC to grant a federal charter to Coulter Brass, only for twelve different craft unions to lodge jurisdictional claims. Even when the Coulter workers made it clear that they wanted only an industrial union, the craft unions refused to yield. At this time TDLC President was John Noble of the International Brotherhood of Electical Workers, a craft die-hard who would later act as the AFL's leading anti-CIO hatchet-man. He refused to resolve the impasse, claiming it was outside the council's powers. With Parker's warning that "if we don't do something, they [Coulter Brass workers] will be lost to this movement" ringing in their ears, Toronto's international unions finally debated their position on the CIO.[100]

In the period immediately before the TDLC debate, the Daily Clarion took a sounding of labour opinion. It found a predictable mixture, ranging from Noble, who considered the craft unions still the most effective defenders of working

class interests, to TDLC secretary John W. Buckley of the Railway Carmen, who flayed this "self-sufficient ... 'holier than thou' attitude", with all shades of opinion in between.[101] But unusually, the communist paper vastly underestimated the degree of support for industrial unionism. At the May meeting the TDLC voted by 95 to 8 in favour of "the industrial form of organization as a necessary step in the unionization of the mass production industries", endorsed the CIO and criticised the AFL's attempt to stifle it, and rejected "the contention that [the CIO] must inevitably lead to dualism."[102] The party saw this outcome as further proof that its tactics were working.

The CPC devoted the next three months to broadening the base of support for industrial unionism, working towards a 1936 TLC Convention which it hoped would prove as historic as the AFL's of 1935. It recommended three specific reforms: first, the TLC should work in close cooperation with the Trades and Labour Councils to coordinate local and national organizing drives; second, it should create an "Organization Department" to oversee this drive where it affected the craft unions, the autonomy of which would not be questioned; and third, that it create another special department to coordinate the activities of the proliferating federal labour unions, with the ultimate intention of uniting them into "national organizations with a centralized leadership". The party also urged the TLC to build bridges to genuine

"progressives" in the ACCL.[103]

The party had a significant degree of success in winning grass roots support for its proposals: four Trades and Labour Councils (Hamilton, Stratford, Port Arthur and Winnipeg) submitted resolutions endorsing the reforms to the TLC. But once again, despite the presence of a sizeable contingent of communist delegates, the party found that converting resolutions into action at a TLC Convention was a difficult proposition. As usual, the international officers of the craft unions formed a solid conservative bloc, while only one identifiable left winger, Henry Segal, gained appointment to a convention committee. None of the three reforms was accepted.

Left and right groupings at the Convention in Montreal conducted affairs in an atmosphere noticeably free of rancour; the knowledge that less than two weeks earlier the AFL had finally expelled the CIO probably acted as a calming influence.[104] Because of their recent outlaw status, Communists were particularly keen to appear conciliatory. The best example of this concern came when J. B. Salsberg intervened in a debate on a resolution calling for compulsory retirement of TLC officials at 60 or 65. Salsberg declared that this attack on the "official family" of the movement was not "progressive", and supported the resolutions' committee's statement that the experience of such men as Paddy Draper was

indispensable to the labour movement, (the transformation in the party's view of Draper, scarcely less miraculous than that concerning John L. Lewis, presumably had something to do with the fact that he was a member of the International Typographical Union, which was a founder member of the CIO; ITU President Charles Howard was CIO Secretary).

When the convention got down to more substantive issues, many delegates were less impressed by the prospect of a vastly expanded Canadian labour movement than worried by the fear that their unions would have to bear the financial brunt of an organizing drive. In one debate on the possibility of the TLC's organizing a special strike fund to assist federal labour unions, the executive simply did not conceive that this might apply to the TLC membership at large; if it were to come at all, it would have to come from the federal membership alone. On the other hand, some unions supported a special general levy, not because they were tremendously enthusiastic about a massive organizing campaign, but because they were sick of being panhandled from all directions; a central strike fund would at least impose order and eliminate bogus requests. R. J. Tallon, TLC Secretary-Treasurer (Draper had succeeded Tom Moore as President), neatly summed up the establishment's tunnel-vision by pointing out that the Congress already provided federal labour unions with free copies of the Journal. Was this not enough?

Few delegates could see the point of a special central organizing department, and some argued that the issue of industrial unionism was an irrelevant American importation. When the Stratford Trades and Labour Council spoke to its resolution calling for the TLC to charter a national, industrially organized Furniture Workers' Union with jurisdiction over all cabinet makers, woodworking machinists and upholsterers, the response was one of stunned silence. One speaker then suggested this question should be referred for the UBCJ's attention, followed by another who expressed amazement that such a resolution could be made at a TLC Convention. The left wing group made no intervention at all.[105]

In short, the Convention was a dire disappointment to the industrial unionists, and especially to the left. Salsberg had to admit that the party's intervention had been a failure, especially since throughout convention week industrial unionism had been virtually the sole topic of private "discussions, lobbying and caucusing". He felt that the issue might have been pushed harder than it was, but concluded that its failure to make a deep impression stemmed from the left's failure to "Canadianize" it. On this reasoning he made translation of industrial unionism "and the CIO methods of organization[into] Canadian terms" the party's immediate ideological task.[106]

The CPC's rôle at this juncture was rather different

from the way Irving Abella has presented it in Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour. When it abandoned the WUL, the CPC did not sell out its support for Canadian trade union independence. Instead it chose to pursue this goal inside the TLC as a subordinate goal to its main preoccupation with industrial unionism. Arguably, given its experience of the TLC, the party's desire to promote Canadian independence was likely to prove forlorn. The fact nevertheless remains that it openly discussed and organized support for the issue. Simultaneously it also tried to build bridges between the TLC and ACCL "progressives", such as CBRE Secretary M. M. McLean, being well aware that the national trade union centre was on the point of splitting. This raises another question mark against Abella's suggestion that in 1935 the forces of national unionism - the WUL, ACCL and National Catholic Syndicates - were so strong that to "most observers at the time, it appeared that at long last Canadians were about to recapture control of their own labour movement."[107] Setting aside the certain impossibility of welding together catholic and communist organizations, the ACCL had given no encouragement to WUL unity overtures in 1935 and its break-up in September 1936 suggested that it would not have been the most dependable organizing base for a national industrial union drive.[108]

The split in the ACCL was and remains obscure.[109] Although the defecting group, led by W. T. Burford, charged

Aaron Mosher and M. M. MacLean with pandering to "Anarcho-Communism" (a favourite term in Burford's Canadian Unionist editorials), the political basis of the dispute really lay in the defectors' opposition to Mosher's attempts to align the ACCL with the CCF: the allegation of pro-communism was little more than a smokescreen. Another more prosaic issue divided the two groups: railroad amalgamation. Burford used his position as editor of the Canadian Unionist to run an article by Allan Meikle of the OBU, one of the defecting unions, which pronounced in favour of uniting the Canadian National with the Canadian Pacific, a suggestion that horrified the CBRE. When the ACCL split, most of the smaller unions left to form (or more accurately, re-form) the Canadian Federation of Labour (CFL), which, as far as can be detected from its monthly Labour Review, was characterized by class collaboration, anglo-saxon chauvinism, anti-semitism and extreme anti-communism.[110]

The point of this detour into the internal squabbles of the ACCL is to suggest that over all the unity tactics finally adopted by the WUL best suited the interests of the party and Canadian workers generally. Although in the autumn of 1936 the "progressive" forces in the labour movement were in a state of limbo, having failed as yet either to draw the CIO north or to convince the TLC to assume a more assertive organizing function, the prospect for either of these goals was immeasurably better than that of uniting the disparate

forces of Canadian national unionism. Moreover, in this situation the CPC's experience of independent leadership stood it in good stead. It continued to lay the foundations of industrial unionism inside and outside the CIO. Two examples underline not only its capacity to use the new conditions to organize where it had previously enjoyed little success, but also its growing tactical flexibility.

In steel communists were quick to link up with the CIO, first through the temporarily revived Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, and after June 1936 through the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee (SWOC). In Toronto they established a trade union centre to coordinate organization of the city's mainly medium-sized plants, using the shop paper of the General Steel Wares plant as a collective organizer.[111] In Hamilton the latter half of 1936 saw three SWOC locals formed, all with CPC members in the leadership; and in Sydney George MacEachern's efforts to interest John L. Lewis in the Dosco steelworkers were finally rewarded with a SWOC charter in December.[112]

In the textiles industry the party operated through the AFL's United Textile Workers of America (UTW). Working out of the TDLC Labour Temple they launched the Textile Workers' Association to clear the way for the UTW's entry. The AFL union had been moribund in the United States through the 1920s and early 1930s, but was reborn in a massive organizing

drive in the Southern United States in 1934. Although it declined again after the failure of that year's general strike, it could still be held up to Canadian textile workers as a mass organization. In July the first new UTW Canadian local was formed in Toronto.[113]

As with many a WUL union, the UTW made its first breakthrough in a militant strike, at the massive Courtauld's rayon mill in Cornwall. Organization here had been started by Frank Love, a local electrician who had been working in Toronto. There he became active in the Canadian Labour Defence League and Progressive Arts Committee, co-authoring the agit-prop play Eight Men Speak. In July he formed the rather anachronistically named Rayon Workers' Industrial Union, which grew rapidly after a successful departmental strike to reinstate four young woman unionists. By 11 August the union had been reconstituted as UTW Local 2499. With 1,300 of the mill's 1,500 workers recruited, it lodged demands for improved wages and conditions and a union contract. When Courtauld's refused to negotiate with the UTW, Love and fellow communists Alex Welch and Frank Haslam led the workers out in a three-week struggle which ended with most of their demands won. One observer made the point: "The company does not recognize the union. But the workers do."[114]

Following the Cornwall strike, the TLC demonstrated its

ability to learn from the left. In response to evidence of strong employer resistance to "American" control it chartered ten federal labour unions in the textiles industry, all under the umbrella of the Canadian Textile Workers' Council: behind the change of name the union remained the UTW.[115] The CPC remained the dominant force in the union until the purges of the early 1950s.[116]

Since I do not wish to anticipate my overall conclusion, I shall restrict myself here to a critical comment on the account of the end of the WUL experience provided in Canada's Party of Socialism. According to this account, the period after 1935 saw conditions "becoming more favourable for deepening working class unity, the key to advance, particularly in the labor movement." Hence the party, ever sensitive to shifts in the conditions of class struggle and unwavering in "its goal - to promote and achieve working class unity on the basis of militant policies", as early as February 1935 grasped the opportunity to issue a call for the creation of an all-in Canadian labour federation; an obviously timely appeal, since within a year it had been able to merge the WUL unions with their "approximate counterparts" in the TLC. Meanwhile, it was unfortunate that the ACCL (the Catholic Syndicates are not mentioned) remained outside the invigorated movement because of its "anti-TLC policies."[117]

As we have seen, the reality was a good deal messier, and

the CPC rather less prescient, than this account implies. The February appeal had the virtue of being a genuinely independent interpretation of the emerging international unity line, one that had roots in a native radical tradition and recognized the WUL's positive achievements. On the other hand, it had the disadvantage of being impossibly optimistic, not least because of the sharp cleavages between the various union federations: the antagonism between the TLC and ACCL, for example, was thoroughly reciprocal. The official account also ignores such inconveniences as the CPC's abrupt change of tack in November 1935 and the decisive impact of the Seventh Comintern Congress on Canadian communist policy. This is not to say that domestic influences were entirely absent or that reorientation on the TLC was mistaken. Quite the contrary. Rather, it is to emphasize that the deciding factor was external, and not only denied the party tactical flexibility, but imposed a series of "opportunist" accommodations to a TLC bureaucracy that had demonstrably <u>not</u> moved to the left. Pandering to Paddy Draper and John L. Lewis could have been defended as a tactical necessity - but these avowed anti-socialists were positively <u>rehabilitated</u>. This was unity "from above" with a vengeance. Working class unity had, indeed, always been an indispensable "key to advance", but for communists the key to <u>socialist</u> advance had always been an independent, active working class guided and, on occasions, led by an independent

revolutionary party. The manner of the WUL's liquidation represented an abandonment of that principle.

Chapter 6, Notes

1. The Worker, 26 March 1935.

2. PAC, P. B. Bengough Papers, Vol.1, Tom Moore to Bengough, 23 June 1935; "Bengough - Bulwark of the Bosses", B.C. Workers' News, 25 January 1935 (BCWN); "AFL 'Democracy'", B.C. Lumber Worker, 19 February (BCLW); UBC, Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, Minutes, 15 January 1935; interview with Harold Pritchett, personal holding.

3. J. B. McLachlan to the Executive Council, Trades and Labour Congress, 30 March 1935, reprinted in Unity, May 1935

4. Nova Scotia Miner, 18, 25 May 1935, original emphasis (NSM)

5. Fernando Claudin, The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform (Harmondsworth, 1975), 182-242. On "Aesopian Language" see Stephen F. Cohen, Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938 (Oxford, 1980), 277, 358-59

6. Nova Scotia Miner, 2 November 1935; Fergus McKean, Communism Versus Opportunism (Montreal, 1977 [originally Vancouver 1946]), passim. McKean, in the mid-1930s a lumber workers' organizer in British Columbia and in the early 1940s Provincial Secretary of the CPC/Labour Progressive Party, broke with the party over the issue of "Browderism" in 1945. This was the domestic political strategy CPUSA leader Earl Browder developed from his interpretation of the possibilities for "peaceful co-existence" between the Soviet Union and its Western Allies, following the dissolution of the Comintern and subsequent meeting of Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill in Teheran in November 1943. The Comintern was dissolved in June 1943, and two months later the CPC transformed itself into the Labour Progressive Party; presumably more than coincidence connected the two events. In the USA Browder went even further, although slightly slower, changing the CPUSA into the Communist Political Association in May 1944. This "revisionist" trend, which seems to have had - did have - Stalin's approval, was abruptly uprooted in the spring of 1945 with the publication of Jacques Duclos' now-famous article on Browderism in the theoretical journal of the French Communist Party. The LPP very promptly placed itself on the winners' side, in fact so promptly that it revealed the precipitate nature of McKean's imputations regarding the complicity of the national party leadership in Browder's policies. In July 1945 he was suspended and in August expelled from the party. His

book is a mixture of analysis of the impact of Browderism on the LPP, viewed through a "militant" reading of Dimitrov's speech at the Seventh Comintern Congress, and some interesting correspondence between McKean and the CPP. The book was resurrected by Maoists in the late 1970s as a weapon against what they considered the CPC's post-Stalin revisionism. On Browderism itself, see Joseph Starobin, American Communism in Crisis, 1943-1957 (Cambridge, Mass., 1972); Peggy Dennis, The Autobiography of An American Communist (Berkeley, Cal., 1977). Unfortunately, insiders' accounts of Browderism in Canada are brief and evasive. See William Beeching and Phyllis Clarke, eds., Yours in the Struggle: Reminiscences of Tim Buck (Toronto, 1977), 343-45; and Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada 1921-1976 (Toronto, 1982), 145-50. Less evasive but even briefer is Norman Penner, The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis (Toronto, 1977), 141.

7. The Worker, 21 September 1935; Communist Party of Canada, Canada and the VIIth World Congress of the Communist International (Toronto, n.d. [1936]), 17-18; ARLOC 1935 (Ottawa, 1936), 23, 26. It is worth mentioning that in the proceedings of the Seventh World Congress there is not a single specific reference to Canada. See Communist International, Report of the Seventh World Congress, Moscow, July-August 1935 (London, 1936).

8. 'Ol' Bill', "Short Jabs", BCWN, 1 February 1935

9. The Worker, 17 October 1935

10. The Vanguard, 15 November 1935

11. Even a cursory examination of the ACCL and TLC conventions establishes Ewan's capacity for wishful thinking. See All-Canadian Congress of Labour, Fifth Convention, Report of Proceedings, Montreal, 7-9 May 1935; Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, Report of the Proceedings of the Fifth-First Annual Convention, Halifax, 16-20 September 1935

12. Thomas A. Ewan, Unity Is The Workers' Lifeline, report delivered to the Third Dominion Convention of the Workers' Unity League, 9 November 1935, 10-13, 15-19, 29-31

13. Irving Martin Abella, Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour (Toronto, 1973), 3-4

14. 'Ex Communist', "I Was A Communist Agitator", Labor Leader, 18 December 1936

15. UBC, Burke Papers, interview with Tom McEwen; McEwen, The Forge Glows Red (Toronto, 1974), 147. See also Tim Buck, Thirty Years: The Story of the Communist Party of Canada 1922-1952 (Toronto, 1975), 119-20

16. Labour Gazette, XXXV (September 1935), 820 (LG); PAC, SLF, Vol. 371, file 141; The Worker, 19 September 1935

17. LG, XXXV (November 1935), 1000, 1061

18. On the organization of the Household Workers' Union, see Toronto Daily Star, 15, 22 March, 4 April 1935 (TDS). The other industries mentioned are discussed later in the chapter.

19. "Trade Union Unity - Not Dual Unionism", BCLW, 13 September 1935. See also Fraction Secretary, "The WUL Fights for Unity", in Toward A Canadian People's Front, proceedings of the Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, CPC, Toronto, November 1935, 124-25

20. The Worker, 9 February, 9 March 1935

21. "Industrial Standards Act in Ontario and Alberta", LG, XXXV (June 1935), 534-36; "Report on the Industrial Standards Act (for the fiscal year ending 31 March 1936)", Ontario Sessional Papers, 10, 1937, 47-8; Multi-Cultural History Society of Ontario (MCHSO), interview with Bruce Magnusson; PAO, Department of Labour Records (DOL), VII-I, Vol.28, Transcript of Meeting between DOL, Ontario, and All-Canadian Congress of Labour Delegation, 9 January 1935

22. The Worker, 15 June, 4 July 1935; LG, XXXV (August 1935), 736; PAO, DOL Records, Deputy Ministers' Files, memo re "First Meeting [FAB], Parliament Buildings, Toronto", 21 August 1935

23. PAO, DOL Records, Deputy Ministers' Files, II-4, Vol.1, Reverend S. H. Brownlee to David Croll, 13 September 1935; Bert Jacques to J. H. Marsh, 9 November 1935; A. E. Lamb to Marsh, 18 November 1935; A. Hawksford to Marsh, 9 November 1935; Victor Valin to Marsh, 30 September 1935

24. PAO, DOL Records, Deputy Ministers' Files, II-4, Vol.1, Marsh to Jacques, 12 September 1935; Marsh to Valin, 27 September 1935; Marsh to Cecil Hyde, 5 November 1935; Marsh, memo to David Croll, 12 September 1935

25. PAC, SLF, Vol. 371, file 141; The Worker, 19 September 1935

26. LG, XXXV (May 1935), 402

27. American Federationist, 42 (June 1935), 552

28. PAO, DOL, Deputy Ministers' Files, II-4, Vol.1, Hawksford to Marsh, 9 November 1935; Lamb to Marsh, 18 November 1935

29. The Worker, 19 November 1935

30. "Toilers of GSW Should Join Union", The Worker, 5 March 1935

31. PAC, SLF, Vol.371, file 152

32. TDS, 22 February 1935; "Trade Union Unity - An Example", Young Worker, 6 April 1935 (YW); The Worker, 6 June 1935; PAC, SLF, Vol.369, file 85

33. "Our Past Policies Were Correct", BCLW, 7 March 1936. The critical statement was quoted in an editorial that gave the standard account of how, at every juncture, party policy was consistent and correct.

34. "WUL Liquidation Admitted On Way", The Vanguard, 16 September 1935

35. "Errors of Dual Unionism", TDS, 27 July 1935; Patricia V. Schulz, The East York Workers' Association: A Response to the Great Depression (Toronto, 1975), 43, 49; Ian Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada (Montreal, 1981), 306-8

36. See above, note 15; also J. B. Salsberg, cited in Abella, Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour, 3

37. Toward a Canadian People's Front, 31, 34, 36-8

38. Toward A Canadian People's Front, 122, 126

39. J. B. Salsberg, "We Unite the Trade Unions", The Worker, 21 December 1935

40. "Coal Workers to Cut Tie to Workers Unity League", TDS, 30 November 1935; The Worker, 24 March 1936

41. Salsberg, "We Unite the Trade Unions"; Salsberg, "Toronto Trade Union Unity Problems", Unity, January-February 1936

42. M. J. Fenwick, "Committee Appointed for Unity", The Worker, 14 January 1936; TDS, 17 January 1936; New Commonwealth, 25 January 1936 (NC); The Worker, 9 January 1936

43. The Worker, 10 March, 11, 18 April 1936; TDS, 5 June 1936; LG, XXXVII (March 1937), 286

44. The Worker, 31 August 1935

45. The Worker, 14, 19 March 1936; Daily Clarion, 26 May, 5 August 1936 (DC); LG, XXXVI (August 1936), 693; (September 1936), 777; (November 1936), 985-86; (December 1936), 1116; ARLOC 1936 (Ottawa, 1937), 112

46. Unity, January-February 1936; TDS, 20 March 1936

47. The Worker, 12 March 1936; DC, 13, 16 May 1936

48. Timber! Reports and Minutes of the Second Annual Convention, Local 2786, Lumber & Sawmill Workers' Union,

Port Arthur, 17-19 December 1937, 5-7; MCHSO, interview with Bruce Magnusson; The Worker, 30 November 10 December 1935, 26 March, 11, 18 April 1936; DC, 14 May 1936; BCLW, 1 February, 11 April 1936; Abella, Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour, 112-13

49. M. J. McKellar, "Launch Drive to Organize War Industry Town", The Worker, 2 April 1936; Abella, Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour, 86-7; interview with Ray Stevenson, in Gloria Montero, We Stood Together (Toronto, 1979), 73

50. Ewany The Forge Glows Red, 149-50

51. "Unity Is Keynote of Conference", BCLW, 4 January 1936; referendum vote in BCLW, 11 April 1936. It is worth noting that a year earlier the LWIU B.C. Section claimed a membership of 4,000, of whom 1,200 were in good standing, 1,300 were in arrears, and 1,500 were paying no dues, presumably because of unemployment. BCLW, 2 March 1935

52. The WUL had already been squeezed in Quebec, where the National Catholic Syndicate had signed an agreement under the Arcand Act.

53. YW, 18 May 1935

54. Unity, June 1935, quoted in The Vanguard, 15 June 1935

55. "Officials Block Unity at Shoe Workers' Meet", The Vanguard, 15 June 1935

56. Leon Trotsky, "The Question of Trade Union Unity", in Leon Trotsky on the Trade Unions (New York, 1975), 50. See also, Bill Matheson, "Revolutionary Strategy in the Trade Unions: The Balance of 'Third Period' Sectarianism", The Vanguard, November-December 1932

57. "Shoe and Boot Workers Organizing", The Vanguard, February 1934

58. The comments of the Toronto IBSWU local secretary quoted in the previous chapter come quickly to mind.

59. The Worker, 15 June 1935; The Vanguard, 15 June, 17 August 1935

60. "AFL Workers Break Affiliation", The Vanguard, 15 September 1935; G.F., "Unity for Shoe Industry", The Vanguard, 17 December 1935; YW, 21 September 1935

61. The Worker, 17 December 1935

62. PAO, DOL Records, Deputy Ministers' Files, II-4, Vol.3, David Rosenstein to Executive Committee, Canadian Shoe Workers' Union, Local 1, 12 February 1936

63. PAO, DOL Records, Deputy Ministers' Files, II-4, Vol.3, Walter Brown to James Marsh, 6 April 1936; "Facts Con-

cerning the Murray Shoe Strike", undated leaflet.

64. The Worker, 28 March 1936

65. Kenneth Scott, "Problems of the Shoe Unions", DC, 28 May 1936; "Ken Scott Replies", DC, 30 July 1936; PAO, DOL Deputy Ministers' Files, II-4, Vol.3, David Rosenstein to A. J. Wright, 20 May 1936; Henry S. Rosenberg to James F. Marsh, 13 June 1936; Marsh, memo re "Maxime Shoe Company", 15 June 1936

66. ARLOC 1938 (Ottawa, 1939), 187, 204. Scott is referred to as "Karl" Scott in Abella, Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour, 49

67. Toward A Canadian People's Front, 119

68. J. B. McLachlan to Tim Buck, 13 June 1936, private possession (henceforth McLachlan letter). I wish to thank David Frank for providing me with a copy of this letter.

69. Paul MacEwan, Miners and Steelworkers: Labour in Cape Breton (Toronto, 1977), 188-93. When MacEwan wrote this work he was an NDP member of the Nova Scotia Provincial Assembly. His desperation to root the CCF-NDP in the Cape Breton proletarian tradition led him to distort quite seriously McLachlan's position vis à vis the CCF. Very little research is required to demonstrate that McLachlan was a revolutionary internationalist who had very little time for Woodsworth's parliamentary road.

70. "Ottawa Discusses Bloodshed", NSM, 28 February 1936

71. George MacEachern, "The Coming of the Trade Union Act (1937)", Cape Breton's Magazine, 23 (June 1979); MacEachern to the editor, Cape Breton Highlander, 26 June 1968: I wish to thank Mary Turner for bringing this letter to my notice; interview with MacEachern, in Montero, We Stood Together, 47-68

72. NSM, 12 January 1935; E. Sarman, "Militant Miners Check Move of Lewis Machine", YW, 17 August 1935; William Findlay, "Nova Scotia Miners in Fight for Unity", The Worker, 5 December 1935

73. Toward A Canadian People's Front, 36

74. J. B. McLachlan, "Work in Nova Scotia", in Toward A Canadian People's Front, 148-53

75. McLachlan, "Work in Nova Scotia", 152-53

76. McLachlan letter

77. Glace Bay Gazette, 14 December 1935, 6 January 1936 (GBG); Sydney Post-Record, 13, 16 April 1936 (SPR). Stewart was found guilty and fined a dollar plus costs.

78. "Statement of Workers' Committee, Reserve Mines", GBG, 22 January 1936

79. 'A. R. Filer' to the editor, NSM, 8 February 1936

80. "Union Move Is Making Headway", GBG, 3 February 1936

81. Bob Stewart, "Unity Platform, Not Lewis Is What Miners Want Now", NSM, 8 February 1936

82. "Miners Discuss Reunion", GBG, 10 February 1936

83. SPR, 13 April 1936

84. See above, note 8

85. Toward A Canadian People's Front, 120, 125; Unity Is The Workers' Lifeline, 13

86. Harvey Murphy, "Great Drive for Industrial Unionism", The Worker, 6 February 1936; Daily Clarion, special steel issue, 18 June 1936; Earl Browder, quoted in Roger Keeran, The Communist Party and the Auto Workers Unions (Bloomington, Ind., and London, 1980), 140

87. J. B. McLachlan, "Lewis Becomes Dictator of UMW", NSM, 8 February 1936; McLachlan, "Everything Charged Against AFL by Lewis He Does in UMWA - Only More So", NSM, 29 February 1936; McLachlan letter; Keeran, The Communist Party and the Auto Workers Unions, 146-7

88. George MacEachern, letter to the editor, Cape Breton Highlander, 26 June 1968

89. McLachlan letter, quoting Buck's letter of 4 June

90. "Plan Single Union in Nova Scotia Coalfields", The Worker, 2 April 1936; McLachlan letter

91. SPR, GBG, 13 April 1936

92. PANS, UMWA District 26 Papers, reel 13, UMWA-AMW Unity Committee Minutes, 19, 25 April 1936; SPR, GBG, 20 April 1936

93. MacEachern, "The Coming of the Trade Union Act" and letter to the Cape Breton Highlander

94. One small pointer to the limited nature of Lewis's transformation was the UMWA International Executive Board's unanimous refusal to reinstate - as promised in the Nova Scotia unity agreement - five AMW leaders from Springhill. Dalhousie University Archives, Local 4514 Papers, Walter Smethurst to Silby Barrett, 13 August 1937

95. Winnipeg Free Press, 6 March 1936, reprinted in the Canadian Unionist, 9 (May 1936), 314

96. NC, 30 May 1936

97. "Industrial Unionism", The Worker, 2 April 1936

98. J. B. Salsberg, "Industrial Unionism: The Issue of the Day", The Worker, 21 April 1936; UT, Fisher Library, J. B. Salsberg, Trade Unionism in Canada: History and Principles, unpublished manuscript (1937)

99. TDS, 21 February, 20 March 1936

100. "Crafts Plan Charter to Metal Men", The Worker, 21 April 1936; "Craft Claims Delay Unions", NC, 25 April 1936. On Noble, see Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour, 28, 39

101. DC, 1, 5 May 1936

102. NC, 30 May 1936

103. J. B. Salsberg, "What Faces the Trades Congress?", DC, 8 August 1936

104. TDS, 21 August 1936

105. Trades and Labour Congress, Report of Proceedings of the 52nd Annual Convention, Montreal, 8-12 September 1936. The identifiable left-wing caucus at the Convention consisted of the following: Charlie Smith, Mine Mill (Kirkland Lake); Sid Sarkin, Amalgamated Clothing Workers (Hamilton); Alex Gauld, Plumbers (Montreal); Carl Palmgren, Lumber and Sawmill Workers (Port Arthur); Nick Thatchuk, Mine Mill (Sudbury); J. B. Salsberg, Cleaners and Dyers Federal Labour Union (Toronto); Jack Hilf, ILGWU Dressmakers (Toronto); Sam Lapedes, United Garment Workers (Toronto); Henry Segal, Hotel & Restaurant Employees (Toronto); Beatrice Fearneyhough, Office & Store Employees FLU (Montreal); Alex Welsh, Textile Workers (Toronto); Fred Collins, Upholsterers (Toronto).

106. J. B. Salsberg, "Lessons for Labour from the TLC Convention", DC, 26 September 1936; Salsberg, "Where Our Trades Congress fell Short", DC, 3 October 1936

107. Abella, Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour, 1-

108. Ironically, by the end of 1935 the ACCL was discussing the possibility of lining up with the CIO, and actually sought Lewis's views on this prospect. The miners' leader, however, was judiciously non-commital. See PAC, CLC Papers, Vol.99, W. T. Burford to John L. Lewis, 10 December 1935; Lewis to Burford, 10 January 1936; Burford, memo re "U.S. Committee for Industrial Organization", 8 January 1936; Vol.103, M. M. McLean to Burford, 12 December 1939

109. The brief reference to the split in Desmond Morton with Terry Copp, Working People: An Illustrated History of Canadian Labour (Ottawa, 1980), 158, is inaccurate.

110. The broad contours of the dispute can be discerned in the following: editorial, "The Things that Matter", CU, 9 (December 1935), 186-87; Frank Scott to the editor (and editor's reply), CU, 9 (February 1936), 248-49; Allan Meikle, "The Railway Problem", CU, 10 (August 1936), 65, 75-6; The Globe, 30 September 1936; Labour Review, 1 (December 1936), 14-26

111. The Worker, 11 April 1936

112. ARLOC 1936 (Ottawa, 1937), 93; Dalhousie University Archives, UMWA Local 4514 Papers, George MacEachern to Local 4514, 12 September 1936; MacEachern, "The Coming of the Trade Union Act"; MacEachern interview in Montero, We Stood Together, 62-4

113. DC, 3, 6 June 1936; Thomas MacMahon, "An Appeal to Canadian Workers", DC, 25 July 1936

114. DC, 4, 6, 7, 11-12 August 1936; Bernard Rawlinson, "Cornwall: Diary of a Strike", New Frontier, 1 (October 1936), 15-17, 23. On Frank Love, see Robin Endres and Richard Wright, eds., 'Eight Men Speak' and Other Plays from the Canadian Workers' Theatre (Toronto, 1976), xxvi-xxvii

115. Canada, Report of the Department of Labour for the Fiscal Year Ending 31 March 1937 (Ottawa, 1937), 25-6; Report of the Royal Commission on the Textile Industry (Ottawa, 1938), 186-7

116. Rick Salutin, Kent Rowley, The Organizer: A Canadian Union Life (Toronto, 1980), 76-89; Abella, Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour, 196-99

117. Canada's Party of Socialism, 100-101

CHAPTER SEVEN

ORGANIZING THE UNORGANIZED: COMMUNISTS AND THE AUTO INDUSTRY

The author of a 1926 study of the Canadian automobile industry summed up the history of trade union organization in auto in three sentences: "Any attempt at organization of labour in the industry has been practically non-existent. The United Automobile, Aircraft & Vehicle Workers of America, constituting the only union of its type in Canada, had a branch (No.28) at Windsor. In 1921 its membership was only 28 and it has now disappeared entirely."[1] Between 1926 and 1936, when the CIO's United Automobile Workers of America (UAW) chartered its first Canadian local, there were still more "fruitless and sporadic organizing attempts in the Canadian auto shops."[2] In most of them, Communists were the main standard bearers of industrial unionism, which in their eyes was "the only hope" for the organization of mass production industries.[3] This chapter examines their efforts in detail.

Although the first automobiles produced in Canada came on the market as early as 1901 and were the home-grown products of Toronto's Canada Cycle and Motor Company, it was not until the second decade of the century and as a branch of

American capitalism that the Canadian industry experienced its first phase of rapid expansion. For most of the period between 1910 and 1930 the Ford Company, based at Walkerville then Ford City/East Windsor, was the dominant force. Launched in 1904, it slowly expanded production to an annual output of 484 units in 1909. In 1910 it produced over 1000 units for the first time, and thereafter its growth was meteoric: 1911, 2675 units; 1912, 7000; 1913, 16,000.[4] In 1918 General Motors of Canada (GM) was created, based on an existing partnership between the McLaughlin Carriage Company of Oshawa and the Durant Company; by 1926 the full range of basic GM models, the Chevrolet, Pontiac and Buick, were being assembled at Oshawa.[5] The final member of the "Big Three", the Chrysler Corporation, began production in Windsor during 1925, and with its absorption of Dodge in 1928 began a period of rapid expansion which saw it take 23.6 per cent of the domestic market in 1935.[6]

Between 1907 and 1917 vehicle registrations rose from 2,130 to almost 200,000, and expansion continued through the war years and into the 1920s, considerably aided by increased federal and provincial intervention in road building and improvements and by technical improvements in the product itself. The industry emerged unusually quickly from the 1920-21 depression. Even before the 1928-29 boom employment and output rose sharply, almost doubling in both categories between 1921-26.[7] The lion's share of growth was concentrated in

Southern Ontario, where in 1926 55 of the country's 70 auto and auto parts plants were located. The two major auto centres, Oshawa and the "Border Cities" of Windsor, Walkerville and Ford City/East Windsor, experienced tremendous urban growth, the most dramatic occurring in East Windsor which saw its population rise from 3,138 in 1919 to 17,000 in 1929.[8]

The main attraction of the auto centres was the possibility of earning unprecedented wages for semi-skilled or labouring work. By 1913, when the going rate for common labour in the Windsor area was 20 cents an hour, Ford was paying its labourers 26.5 cents, assemblers 27.5 cents and semi-skilled machine operators 29 cents.[9] According to Ontario government reports, in 1919-20 only the absence of sufficient accommodation was stemming the rate of migration from Oshawa's rural hinterland to the GM plant and its feeder components plants and foundries, while in the Border Cities, where some of the companies were constructing dormitories for new migrants, both skilled and unskilled labour was earning "practically the highest rate of wages ... in any part of the Dominion."[10] By 1925 average annual earnings in the auto industry stood at $1,577 compared to $971 for manufacturing industry as a whole.[11] In other words, a job in auto was the key to working class living standards almost unimaginable elsewhere: according to one parliamentarian, the Border Cities' reputation as a high-wage centre was international.[12]

The legendary reputation of auto industry wages was consistent with the industry's overall image as the quintessence of modern capitalist enterprise. The late emergence of the auto corporations meant that they could employ the latest innovations in plant lay-out, semi-automatic machinery and assembly-line techniques. Visitors to the auto plants were invariably struck by "the wonderful organization which made it possible to put cars together with such speed and exactness". One visitor to the Ford, Toronto, assembly plant (opened in 1924) marvelled at the precision with which "scores of men rubbing elbows at their work" operated, and concluded that "orderliness" equalled contentment.[13] In 1928 the Border Cities Star caught perfectly the triumphalism of the industry and its admirers when it asked: "Where in all the history of industry has there been progress to compare with that rolled up in the manufacture of cars and trucks?"[14]

But what about the workers? Were they as contented as their orderliness indicated? To all appearances it seemed they were. The absence of trade union organization and strikes was seen by many in the labour movement as a consequence of manufacturers' benevolence. Ford, in particular, was frequently acclaimed as a "good" employer in the labour press.[15] Two historians of the Ford Company have offered a simple explanation of labour's quiescence: "with better wages the workers did not insist on unionization."[16]

In reality, what Ford called the "wage motive" was only one determinant of working class behaviour. Passivity was built into the labour process. Whether working on the assembly line, which in Canada was the dominant productive process at all auto plants except Ford, or on specialized machine tools, auto workers did repetitive, monotonous jobs, from which conceptual skills had been as far as possible removed. An American analyst of the industry defined the essential qualities of the ideal auto worker as "watchfulness, quick judgments, dexterity, guidance, ability and ... a nervous endurance to carry through dull, monotonous, fatiguing rhythmic operations."[17] Henry Ford boasted that the vast majority of jobs in Ford plants could be learned in less than a day.[18] By 1924 there were 4,000 semi-automatic machines installed at the Ford City plant, as many as the total number of workers employed. One typical machine, lovingly described by a house writer for the Canadian Machinery & Manufacturing News, performed four different reaming and drilling processes on crankshafts held in a rotating jig; the operator's sole task was to load and unload it.[19] Given the ease with which "production" and assembly jobs could be mastered, most workers were well aware of their dispensability.

Seasonality was another structural determinant of working class passivity. The production year was divided into busy and slack periods - spring/summer and autumn/winter respectively - which automatically produced a labour reserve

that could be used to discipline potentially disruptive elements. The common sight in the early weeks of the year of long lines of job-seekers trying for an early start after the seasonal downturn left its mark on workers. It reinforced their sense of insecurity and encouraged many to curry favour with supervisory staff.[20]

The auto corporations reinforced these structural advantages by a variety of industrial relations' strategies and workplace control mechanisms. Collectively, these fell broadly into the category defined by the American economist Richard Edwards as "technical" control, but in the case of GM with a substantial hangover of "simple" control. The latter involved the close, paternalist relations of production characteristic of small firms; the former was classically represented by the dictation of the assembly-line. Bridging the two was a combination of scientific management, hierarchical supervisory control and welfare capitalism.[21]

At Ford the control mechanism was basically coercive. Ford assumed that the "wage motive" was all that was required to win the workforce's consent for any demands asked of it. "We do not believe in paternalism", Henry Ford admitted. "No service to employees will take the place of wages."[22] What Ford did believe in was strict workplace supervision by foremen renowned on both sides of the border for particular "viciousness", and by a rigidly enforced rule-book governing

employee behaviour both inside and in the environs of the plant. Absolutely outlawed were "shop-committees, unions or labor leaders, since the relationship between the Ford Motor Company and its employees is purely individual and every policy is designed with keeping it so." Smoking, defacing walls and running towards time clocks or pay offices were sufficient reasons for instant dismissal; all workers caught stealing were prosecuted; all were advised not to loiter "on public walks in front of the company's premises" but to proceed directly home after each shift.[23] Ford's only concession to community responsibility was to establish a three-year apprenticeship programme for toolmakers, restricted to graduates of the Windsor-Walkerville Technical School.[24]

If Ford took "less interest in the worker than any of the auto companies", exactly the opposite was true of GM. In stark contrast to Ford's heavy-handed policy, the GM system wound a cocoon of welfarism around the Oshawa workforce. This was company policy on both sides of the border, but in Canada it was given a particular integrity by the residual paternalism of the McLaughlin family. Oshawa's main annual gala, the GM Field-Day and Pic-Nic in August, symbolized the personal reciprocity that gave the company its small-business feel. Every year around 20,000 people attended, watching and in many cases participating in a tremendously varied programme of sports, side-shows, music and aquatics. It was not unknown for President R. S. McLaughlin to pitch in the soft-

ball tournament, perfectly representing the event's overarching theme of mutualism and class harmony.[25]

Management urged Oshawa employees not to think of the plant as a place in "which you are forced to make a living ... but as a school that gives you every opportunity to develop." Thus it tried to encourage individual self-improvement in a variety of ways. Its "Corporation Savings and Investment Fund" gave workers a chance to "build up an estate", while its "Modern Dwelling Houses Plan" helped them become home-owners; at Oshawa 55.6 per cent of those eligible participated in the former and no less than 75 per cent of the entire workforce had company mortgages. Occupational mobility was encouraged by a training scheme, based in the Walkerville truck plant and again restricted to Windsor-Walkerville Technical School graduates, for foremen and supervisors, and by membership in the "Oshawa Educational Club". This was restricted to employees who had already proved their motivation by enrolling in night-school. From it the company hoped to produce "progressive, energetic young men that industry can look to for leadership in this era of keen competition and efficiency in production."[26]

GM offered welfare benefits which, in a period of minimal state concern, were quite substantial. Health insurance plans defrayed medical and dental costs; injuries sustained on the job were treated in a plant hospital; and

sickness benefits of $5 a week were paid for a maximum 13 weeks. The company also encouraged health by sponsoring a wide variety of sports teams, using the latter, particularly the increasingly successful Senior Baseball Team, to link its identity to that of the surrounding community.[27] It rounded out its superstructure of formally organized leisure with glee clubs and orchestras.

GM's concern for its caring image extended even into the way the work process at Oshawa was portrayed in advertisements. GM workers were not the witless automatons of the Ford shops, but "veteran Canadian craftsmen ... skilled as only those can be who have grown up with their trade. 'They have mastered each his task as only one can who loves it ... and are perpetuating that traditional artisanship which is the just pride of Canadian labor."[28] At most, this description related to a tiny minority of the Oshawa workforce, particularly toolmakers and trimmers. But even this latter group, survivors from the carriage trade who made and installed cushions, upholstery and internal fittings ("trim"), saw "all the components" of their trade broken down for execution by semi-skilled workers in the course of the 1920s.[29] The vast majority of Oshawa workers worked on the line, than which nothing was further from "traditional artisanship".[30]

The assembly line epitomized the contradiction at the heart of GM's representation of the Oshawa labour process as

organic and mutualist. Management might claim that total conceptual freedom was one of its "inherent responsibilities and duties", the execution of which was in "the long-term interests of the business and, therefore, in turn ... the mass of employees themselves." Its welfare policies were designed with the intention of keeping that long-term perspective lodged in the workers' consciousness. Their daily experience, however, was the assembly-line and its demands; demands over which they had no essential control. As one of a series of reports on the Oshawa plant observed: "The speed of the assembly line varies in accordance with production demand."[31] Moreover, when changes in tariff regulations in 1926 threatened to undermine the Canadian company's competitive relationship to the American industry, Oshawa management did not hesitate to hint broadly that the plant might be shut down unless the workforce substantially raised its production standards.[32] At such moments the long-term perspective could collide with the workers' immediate sense of injustice - an emotion to which the reciprocal system implicitly told them they had a right - and propel them into an assertion of independence. There was, however, no absolute certainty that this would happen, either at GM or anywhere else. Nor, until 1926, was there any indication that the industry would not continue its rather complacent progress.

Between 1926-29 the Canadian auto industry found itself in a political and economic conjuncture out of which came a diminishing ability to maintain the complaisance of its workforce. There were four main events in this conjuncture. First, the Liberal budget of 1926 which sharply reduced the tariff on imported automobiles; secondly, the particular problems of the Ford company; thirdly, the appearance of an industrial unionist tendency in the labour movement; and finally, the economic boom of 1928-29. The impact of the tariff revision which was partly inspired by McKenzie King's wish to curry favour with Western voters and partly, through a provision to rebate 25 per cent of the tariff on imported parts to manufacturers using at least 50 per cent Canadian content, by a desire to stimulate domestic production, was to force price reductions and increase competitive pressures on Canadian manufacturers. Despite the latter's grim predictions of industrial collapse, the tariff proved highly successful. Basic Ford and Chevrolet models dropped in price from $520 and $730 in 1925 to $495 and $625 in 1928; and despite the standard cyclical downturn in 1927 the industry, particularly the parts sector, entered an unprecedented boom.[33]

One year after the tariff debate the industry was hit by a fresh upheaval. For several years Ford had experienced increasingly sharp competition in the USA - though not in Canada - from GM. Against Ford's pristine and solitary Model-T, GM offered a vigorous marketing strategy based on a

comprehensive range of models and, from 1923, annual model changes. In Canada, the Financial Post observed, Ford retained "enormous goodwill"; in 1926 it accounted for 54 per cent of Canadian output and achieved record net profits of $5.34 million. Nevertheless, when the parent company decided to replace the Model-T with the Model-A, the Canadian plants were included in the "Great Ford shut-down" from mid-1927 to early 1928, during which a complete retooling was carried out. Between 8,000 and 9,000 Ford of Canada workers were laid off.[34]

The tariff controversy and Ford shut-down had a dynamic impact on the Canadian industry. The former forced managers to think seriously about improved methods of production. Henry Ford himself observed: "I can tell you ... those fellows over in our Canadian unit are going to manufacture more efficiently now. They'll have to."[35] The latter acted as a direct stimulus to Ford's competitors, all of whom expanded capacity in an attempt to capture Ford's market share. Even when Ford resumed production, companies like Chrysler, Durant, Willys-Overland and Studebaker refused to limit their aspirations and maintained high levels of output to meet "insistent and ever increasing public demand."[36]

The boom affected auto workers in two contradictory ways. On the one hand, especially after Ford resumed operations in the spring of 1928, they found themselves in unusually advantageous labour market conditions; virtual full

employment reduced fear of sacking. On the other hand, again especially after Ford's return, they were beset by a major employers' assault on labour costs. The 1927-29 period saw increasing employment of "American efficiency engineers" in the Canadian plants, their intervention invariably resulting in "alterations" to piece-rates, line-speeds and traditional working methods. Typically, Ford celebrated the achievement of record monthly output in August 1928 by cutting its work-force from 9,000 to 7,000 and speeding up the assembly-line by a similar 22 per cent. Several of Ford's rivals, including Chrysler, Dodge and GM, employed one or other variant of "group" bonus schemes. While this system did contain opportunities for members of a group to develop collective solidarity, it had several compensating advantages for management: unlike individual piece-work it was often difficult to calculate and distribute; it could undermine solidarity by turning faster against slower workers (and vice versa); and it forced experienced employees to pass on the tricks of the trade to newcomers. Some companies, including Willys-Overland, GM Truck and Ford, cut wage costs by laying off experienced adult male workers and replacing them with women and youths. A shop-gate leaflet from June 1928 summed up working conditions in the Border Cities: "In all the plants the workers are driven to the limit, the nine hour day prevails and overtime is at straight time." The situation at Oshawa was no different.[37]

The emergence of shop-floor tensions coincided with an external change in the arena of working class politics which made unionization of the auto plants a possibility. For most of the 1920s, as we have seen, the CPC's efforts to promote industrial unionism foundered on its tactic of working solely within the craft union movement. One craft union, the International Association of Machinists (IAM), had enjoyed a brief flirtation with workers in a few auto plants during World War I. But after the open-shop drive of 1919-21 the IAM was driven out as a collective force from every large metal-working establishment and pushed into its redoubts in jobbing shops and railway round-houses. Railway shopmen became the dominant voice in the union, and they were too absorbed in sectional concerns to worry unduly about organizing the unorganized. Leading Canadian official James Somerville repudiated industrial unionism in principle and specifically rejected an organizing drive in auto because there were too few skilled machinists to make it worth the IAM's trouble. When Detroit machinists coaxed the AFL into reluctant sponsorship of an auto recruitment drive in 1927, there was no complementary move into Canada.[38]

A potential change in the situation was signalled by the creation of the All-Canadian Congress of Labour in 1927. But even before its appearance, which communists hoped would lead to various industrial union drives, the CPC had established a small presence in the auto centres, particularly in the Border

Cities. When The Worker published a list of branch contributions to District 3's 1926 "Agitation and Propaganda Fund", the three largest contributions came, respectively, from Windsor, Oshawa and Ford City.[39] In both auto centres the party was based on the ethnic communities; mainly Ukrainians in Oshawa, Finns, Ukrainians and other Slavs in the Border Cities. It enjoyed its greatest depth of support, and potentially the most significant, in Ford City (East Windsor from 1929) where in 1931 the Eastern European population made up 25 per cent of the total, compared with 9.5 per cent in Oshawa, 6.5 per cent in Windsor and 0.1 per cent in Walkerville (where 93 per cent of the population were either Anglo- or French-Canadian).[40] It appears that the unusually large Eastern European presence in Ford City was a function of a conscious Ford policy to recruit a multi-ethnic workforce, perhaps as a barrier to collective action. As early as 1918 Ford's Anglo-Canadian workers were, on the one hand, seeking the Windsor Trades and Labour Council's support for "a fair increase, equalized for skilled machinists and broom punchers alike", and on the other hand were reported dissatisfied with "the fact that a large number of foreigners are employed in the plant".[41] As far as the CPC was concerned, the presence of an ethnic workforce at the heart of the industry's decisive plant gave it advantages that were lacking, for example, in the Oshawa GM plant, where GM followed a diametrically opposite policy to Ford's

of recruiting almost exclusively from the surplus farm population of overwhelmingly Anglo-Canadian Ontario County.[42]

The Border Cities CPC, however, also had some links with the "native" labour movement. As in other cities it used the International Hod Carriers' Union to place delegates in the Essex County Trades and Labour Council, and it also enjoyed support from IAM Lodge 718. The "most progressive local" in Windsor, in the Worker's opinion, Lodge 718 convened the Windsor Labour Forum, a non-sectarian meeting place for the Windsor-Detroit left at which CPC spokesmen were prominently featured.[43] Proximity to Detroit was another advantage. In 1926 communists won control of the Auto Workers' Union (AWU) and its paper, the Auto Workers' News; AWU Secretary Phil Raymond was keen to link up with Canadian organizing attempts, and gave Windsor communists assistance whenever possible.[44] It also seems likely, with 15,000 Windsor area residents commuting daily to jobs in Detroit, that some Canadians would have come into contact with the CPUSA and brought back copies of its many shop papers.[45]

Communists began regular shop-gate meetings at the Ford plant in 1925. Until 1927, however, these proved uneventful, the party's exasperation being reflected in its designation of the workforce as "Ford's slaves ... living in a fool's paradise of 'Fordism'." But in July 1927, with Ford highly sensitive to criticism of the decision to suspend operations,

the situation changed. The instant Tim Buck mounted his soap-box, he was hauled down and arrested. When an account of this incident appeared in the Worker, the party took the opportunity to scoff at the hypocrisy of bourgeois democracy, but was even more delighted at what it saw as the underlying meaning of Buck's arrest: workers who had hitherto lived in their "fool's paradise ... [were] now beginning to think."[46] Sometime in winter 1927-28 the party sent Harvey Murphy to take charge of an auto campaign in the Border Cities. Murphy, who had been Secretary of the Ford City Young Communist League (YCL) in 1924-25, found a job in Ford City and set about his task.[47] It was against all expectations that the rank and file eruption Murphy had been sent to prepare for finally happened - in Oshawa.

Between March 1928 and March 1929 eight strikes occurred in an industry which had been free of industrial conflict for a decade. An examination of this rash of militancy discloses much about rank and file attitudes, the relationship of workers to outside organizations and, of particular importance for present purposes, the effectiveness of communist industrial politics. By far the most dramatic of the eight was the first, which therefore receives the most detailed examination.

The March 1928 Oshawa GM strike was the only one to involve virtually the entire workforce of a major manufacturer,

and its ostensible conclusion in a victory for the workforce was seen at the time as a decisive breakthrough, not only for the Canadian working class but for auto workers in the American plants too. As Maurice Spector observed: "The workers should be happy and contented by all the reckoning of the efficiency experts and social welfare agents, but they are not. Oshawa is a demonstration that the spell of industrial slavery can be broken even in the automobile industry."[48] The strike was led by the "trim line" on the Chevrolet and Pontiac tracks, a group predominantly comprised of veteran employees; 75 per cent of them had at least 10 years experience in the plant. But within days even the least experienced workers had joined them, including the trimmers' young female sewing-machine assistants. The incident which touched off the strike was the announcement in early March of a cut in piece-rates, but the walk-out was also based on several long standing grievances, including harsher work discipline and abusive foremen, the "Cumulative Earnings' System" (a form of group bonus) and the fact that an earlier piece-rate cut had been imposed in December 1927.[49] Workers knew that these grievances were arising during a period when the company was experiencing unprecedented success. 1927 had been "the largest [year] in production and sales in General Motors history", and in February 1928, not normally a high production month, record output had been achieved. Hence their decision to strike was based not only on a sense of

injustice, but on the knowledge that GM could not afford to have operations suspended - especially with a revamped Ford once again looming on the horizon.[50] The strike began on Monday, 26 March, was settled during the following week-end, and the workers returned exactly a week after they had first walked out.

Much of the interest in the week-long strike resided in the struggle between the ACCL, backed up by the CPC, and the TLC to organize the strikers. One issue that has not been mentioned so far was GM's organization of a company union in 1927, which it then used to win acquiescence in the December and March wage-cuts. When they struck, GM workers effectively repudiated company unionism; the immediate arrival in the town of competing organizing teams allowed the strikers to choose the kind of independent organization they considered most appropriate to their situation. The TLC team, led impressively by Vice President Jimmy Simpson, promised the strikers an industrial union - something they insisted on - backed up by the full strength of the established Canadian labour movement. Against this, the ACCL team headed by Toronto National Labour Council President William MacPherson could offer only the dubious support of a year-old organization with no traditions or public standing. The tactics of the two groups were strikingly dissimilar. Those of the ACCL were set by Jack MacDonald and Harvey Murphy, who called for mass picketing (they described the strikers' failure to post

pickets until three days into the strike as "naive") and no truck with arbitration by the state. Simpson, on the other hand, based his tactics on a perceptive reading of the strikers' demand for "fair play" and actively encouraged them to place reliance in a conciliation board under the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act. This seems to have revived old notions about GM's willingness to deal reasonably with its employees. The strikers repudiated the communists' "class struggle" tactics, accepted a settlement that suspended the second wage-cut and contained a pledge from the company to deal with "certain superintendants and foremen" whose behaviour had been particularly offensive, returned to work pending a conciliation board on the issues of union recognition and the wage-cut, and joined en masse International Automobile Workers' Federal Labour Union No. 18011.[51]

To all appearances the CPC and ACCL had been comprehensively beaten by a TLC, not only tactically smarter, but also miraculously converted to industrial unionism. In fact, it was the questionable nature of this conversion that kept the left's cause alive. It was not AFL policy to override craft jurisdictions when it chartered federal labour unions. The latter were primarily designed to hold workers together only for as long as it took the craft unions - in the case of auto, machinists, moulders, carpenters, sheet metal workers and so forth - to sign up skilled workers and any semi-skilled who could be accommodated; the remainder were left in a sort of

limbo.[52] Asked about the Oshawa workers' position in light of AFL policy, Tom Moore admitted on the same day settlement was reached, 30 March, that the Federal Labour Union was only a temporary structure and that standard AFL policy would be followed.[53] This was not what the Oshawa workers had agreed to, and their objections were reflected in the first issue of their plant union paper, The Steering Wheel, which underlined the union's industrial character.[54] Doubts concerning TLC intentions began to emerge. And after the conciliation board announced its decisions on 4 May, the initial decision to link up with the TLC looked increasingly questionable.

The conciliation board's decisions amounted to snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. Ignoring the fact that GM Canada had just announced record sales and profits for 1927, the board, on which Simpson sat as workers' representative, unanimously accepted the company's argument that Canadian productivity was intolerably lower than in its American plants and that "this differential can and should be reduced." It also announced that union recognition was unacceptable and that a review of wage rates would take place in the Fall, prior to the introduction of GM's 1929 models. The ACCL's summary of the announcement seemed unanswerable: "If the bosses had had three representatives on the board instead of one they could not have received a report more favourable to their interests."[55] In complementing growing unease about the status of the Oshawa union, the conciliation board's

decisions allowed the ACCL alternative to return to centre stage. Against this background of rank and file disillusionment, the CPC pushed ahead with its work in the Border Cities and formed the Automobile Workers' Industrial Union (AWIU) there in June. This period represented a major watershed in communist industrial politics. On the one hand, the TLC was beginning to do what communists had been pleading for throughout the 1920s: in addition to the Oshawa union it chartered further auto workers' federal locals in Windsor and at the Canadian Top and Body plant in Tilbury.[56] On the other hand, communists were increasingly turning to the ACCL as the agency through which they could build genuine industrial unions. Their clash with the TLC was symbolized by the launch meeting of the latter's Windsor federal local, which they disrupted with persistent heckling and pointed comments about Jimmy Simpson's role in the aftermath of the Oshawa strike. Simpson, accompanied by an impressive international union delegation including the AFL's Canadian-born Secretary-Treasurer Frank Morrison, was reduced to a tirade against "agents of Soviet Russia who would have the workers gain their ends by civil war, instead of by peaceful appeal to their employers."[57] In establishing the AWIU in direct opposition to the TLC federal unions, the CPC implicitly declared itself guilty of the craft movement's crime of crimes: dual unionism. The possibility of a swift change of tack towards work within the federal locals does not appear to

have been considered.

The AWIU organized around a programme of demands which demonstrated its knowledge of rank and file preoccupations: 100 per cent industrial union, all-round wage increases and abolition of bonus systems, a standard 8-hour day and 44-hour week, systematization of shift work with regular change of night-shifts and adequate notice of any changes, and overtime pay at time-and-a-half. At the same time, the AWIU raised the slogan "Remember Oshawa" and underlined that struggle by "the workers against their employers" was an essential part of its policy.[58] According to the Auto Workers' News workers began flocking into the AWIU "in greater and greater numbers" from its first appearance.[59] It established locals in the Border Cities, Toronto (based mainly on the Durant factory) and Oshawa, where it quickly superceded the collapsing federal labour union, and in November received an ACCL charter from Aaron Mosher at its first national convention. Communist authority was reflected in the appointment of Harvey Murphy as National Secretary and in a constitution which enshrined class struggle and rank and file democracy as organizing principles.[60] In January the union entered into talks with the Detroit AWU, out of which came plans for international cooperation on issues of mutual concern, "strike assistance, etc." and a new set of aims and demands. The latter, combining such issues as plant safety, state unemployment insurance and equal pay for equal work "regardless of age,

sex or race", demonstrated the AWIU's growing sensitivity to shop floor concerns and simultaneous efforts to make the union a political force.[61] When the AWIU launched the Auto Workers' Life in April 1929, it concluded an apparently impressive period of institutional growth and looked set for an effective future.[62]

Independent evidence of the union's growth in the Border Cities comes from the decision taken towards the end of 1928 by the Corporations' Auxiliary Company, one of the largest North American "union-busting" organizations, to shift its operatives out of the TLC federal labour union and into the AWIU.[63] This action, however, was one of pre-emption rather than desperation. The AWIU was growing, but its influence among the mass of auto workers was still very limited. This can be seen by looking at the remaining seven strikes in the March 1928 to March 1929 period (Table 7-I).

With the exception of the final strike in the sequence, all were "lightning" strikes lasting no more than a day and usually only a few hours. Wages were an issue in every strike, with "uncertain" group bonuses a recurring theme. But wages and the quality of work itself were inextricably linked. At Willys-Overland, for example, the strike arose over the unpredictability of piece-rate earnings caused by alternating periods of high-intensity work and production bottlenecks; at Ford, the issue was constant overtime at the usual hourly

Table 7-I - STRIKES IN THE CANADIAN AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY, MARCH 1928-MARCH 1929

Date	Plant	Group involved	Duration	Cause	Result
March 1928	GM (Oshawa)	Initially Trimmers, later entire plant	one week	speed-up, bonus, etc.	com-promise
May 1928	Willys-Overland (Toronto)	Body assemblers	hours	for daily rates	unclear
July 1928	Chrysler (Walkerville)	100 Trimmers, body workers	hours	"uncertain" bonus	lost
August 1928	Studebaker (Walkerville)	40 assemblers	hours	wage rise	won
August 1928	Canadian Top and Body (Tilbury)	29 body workers	one day	wage rise	lost
March 1929	Ford (East Windsor)	various depart-ments	hours	reduction in working day (no overtime payments)	won
March 1929	Dodge (Toronto)	Chassis assemblers	hours	group bonus	won
March 1929	GM (Oshawa)	Tool and die makers	2½ weeks	wage cuts, victimization	lost

Sources: PAC, SLF, Vol.340, files 15, 40; Vol.341, files 65, 83; Vol.342, files 14, 16, 19. Labour Gazette, The Worker, Auto Workers' News

rate and the demand was not, as might be expected, extra overtime payments but a reduction in hours. Tactically, the strikes were marked by a creativity that belied the participants' inexperience. In two of them (Willys-Overland and Studebaker) workers struck "on-the-job" and negotiated directly with management inside the plant; at Chrysler and Ford various departments downed tools, marched out and held plant-gate meetings in an atmosphere of spontaneous militancy. At Ford this produced a quick promise to reduce overtime demands, but at Chrysler an unfortunately timed rain shower dampened the strikers' ardour and the strike petered out.

In general, the strikes had a certain demonstrational quality. Workers were not posing an all-out challenge to the auto companies. Rather they were presenting them with statements of their various grievances and making limited demands which, given the industry's boom situation, could be granted without excessive difficulty. They were trying to gain moderate concessions, and in most cases these were offered. On the one occasion when the AWIU was directly involved, at Studebaker, the workers used the threat of joining it to extract a wage rise from reputedly the industry's lowest paying company. Harvey Murphy, who had given the Studebaker workers much assistance, argued that they would have to join the union to preserve their advantage. They nevertheless returned to work without formalizing union membership.[64] There were similar occurrences at Dodge, where the company

preempted a rising level of union activity by immediately granting the strikers' basic demand for a return to individual piece-work.[65]

This is not to say that companies were content to buy rank and file subordination. They employed companies like the Corporations' Auxiliary to provide them with information on union activists, and when the labour market favoured them took the opportunity to rid themselves of troublemakers. In January 1929, for example, around 20 AWIU members were fired by Ford and Chrysler. The fact that at least three officials in the union's Windsor local were Corporations' Auxiliary agents not only gave the auto companies a decisive edge, but when the fact of their treachery was made public, the union itself was discredited.[66] In late March 1929 the toolroom at GM struck against the victimization of several AWIU members, including one, Charles Giles, who some years earlier had been secretary of the defunct Oshawa local of the International Moulders' Union. GM, however, had been gradually importing skilled men from continental Europe, and successfully fought off the strike, perhaps aided by the fact that the toolmakers had not joined the 1928 strike.[67] Union membership, then, was not something to be decided on without due deliberation. Even communists were capable of vacillation.

In the evolution of the CPC's industrial strategy the auto organizing drive had major significance. It "marked the initial steps of the application of the New Line",

consumed more funds than any industrial intervention with the exception of coalmining, and was as much a political as an industrial issue.[68] When it was getting off the ground, it was natural that Harvey Murphy and Charles Sims, CPC Windsor organizer, should look to party members to set an example by joining it. However, most of the Finns and East Europeans who made up the bulk of the party membership were "in no particular hurry to join ... and even in some cases refused to do so."[69] To Murphy and Sims this response represented unimpeachable proof that bolshevization was long overdue: the ethnic comrades excuses of "language difficulties; ... multifarious cultural activities, pressing and substantial real estate mortgages, etc." demonstrated their resistance to the "New Line".[70] In a sense this was true. Yet their resistance was also based on a reasonable fear of victimization. Many of them decided to "let the English workers join first", a point of view that precipitated a sharp clash between Sims and Nicholas Zenchuk, leader of the party's Ukrainian wing. Sims came off second best in their encounter and was recalled to Toronto.[71] But the line was pushed even harder by Harvey Murphy who ordered party members to join the union or face expulsion. Depending on the general position adopted in the debate on the new line, Murphy's actions were either "big stick" methods that produced a "complete lack of confidence in the Party leadership" or extreme but necessary measures without which "there would

have been no campaign at all."[72] Whichever position was correct - and that of Sims and Murphy does seem to have lacked flexibility - the reluctance of party members to take a step that they equated with victimization helps explain why relatively few non-party members joined.

The new line also influenced the AWIU's relations with the ACCL. As shown earlier, by the spring of 1929 the ACCL was keen to disassociate itself from the CPC, while at the same time the CPC was adopting an increasingly critical approach to the ACCL's class collaborationism. It was not yet ready to cut itself adrift, however, at least where the AWIU was concerned. The ACCL probably provided the auto union with a veneer of respectability: it was probably more than coincidence that the inaugural issue of the Auto Workers' Life featured articles by Aaron Mosher and ACCL Secretary Treasurer W. T. Burford alongside another by Tim Buck.[73] Two months later the ACCL executive was taking a hard line on an appeal from Harvey Murphy for a temporary waiver of per capita payments. In July, no per capita having arrived, the ACCL Executive Board voted unanimously for the AWIU's expulsion.[74]

The union's excuse for non-payment of per capita was that a downturn in auto production had made dues difficult to collect. In fact, the auto industry boom ended in May 1929, anticipating by five months the October crash. The AWIU

failed to survive the summer and was reported liquidated in November.[75] Five years passed before it reappeared in public.

What legacy, if any, did the AWIU leave behind? From modest beginnings in trade union forums and party meetings, through mass propaganda at plant gate meetings, to definite organizational forms, Communists made the case for industrial unionism with increasing clarity and coherence. Although the AWIU failed to survive the industry's early slump, and in any case never made itself representative of more than a tiny minority of auto workers, it is certain that the vast majority were made aware of the possibility of independent industrial unionism. Moreover, the 1927-29 conjuncture had to a degree eroded the consensual view of class relations in the industry. Workers had seen the auto companies manipulate wages, intensify work and victimize unionists; they had also seen them submit on occasion to rank and file demands - and had seen those demands taken up and programatically formulated by the AWIU. In short, communists had sown the seeds of inevitable future struggles. Whether they would reap the rewards remained to be seen.

The slump in the auto industry was caused, according to the Financial Post, by "over-extended production and a glut of used cars that could not be moved ... aided and abetted by lack of stock market profits." Remove the reference to used cars and the same assessment could be made of all consumer

goods industries at the time. What caused the particularly severe slump in auto was the global nature of the crisis and the fact that 30 per cent of Canada's total output of cars, trucks and buses was exported, mainly to the British Empire. In 1930 Canadian auto exports fell by 56 per cent, as both Australia and New Zealand among others took steps to raise tariffs and prevent capital outflows.[76] Between 1929 and 1932 output and value of production fell by 77 per cent, from 262,000 units valued at $163.5 million to 6,000 units valued at $38.5.[77]

Until the latter part of 1933, the tendency was for busy seasons to become shorter and slack seasons longer. Monopolistic and consolidationist trends in the industry were accentuated. Dominion Motors, the last Canadian independent company, went under in 1934; in 1931 GM moved truck production from Walkerville to Oshawa, laying off 200 blue and white collar employees; and in 1932 Kelsey Wheel and Hayes Wheels & Forgings merged as Kelsey-Hayes Wheel, closed one foundry at Chatham and consolidated production at Merriton and Windsor, the latter becoming Canada's sole manufacturer of auto wheels, hubs and drums.[78]

Some companies were harder hit than others. Ford was a particular victim. Badly affected by slumping export sales (Ford accounted for around 75 per cent of Canadian auto exports), its failure to diversify its product range left it

a poor second to GM in domestic sales by 1931; and by 1933 it had been overtaken by Chrysler, which actually increased domestic sales during the worst of the slump (Table 7-II).[79]

Table 7-II

DOMESTIC SALES BY THE 'BIG THREE' IN EASTERN CANADA, 1931, 1933

	1931	1933	% change
GM	20,700	14,800	-28.5
Ford	13,300	7,200	-48.8
Chrysler	7,000	8,290	+18.4

Source: Financial Post Year Book 1934 (Toronto, n.d.), 69 (annual figures based on a simple extrapolation from first eleven months)

For auto workers the 1930-33 period was "very trying ... many hundreds of men did not get even part time work." Average annual employment fell by 53 per cent, from 16,400 to 8,000, while at Ford the workforce fell by almost 68 per cent, from 7,100 to 2,174, between 1929-32. There were many cases of workers bribing officials for jobs; the going rate for auto jobs at one unofficial employment agency in the Border Cities was $80.[80] Those lucky enough to obtain work had to accept whatever conditions management imposed. The auto companies were able to cut wages with impunity. Although Ford made a typically quixotic attempt to raise wages in 1930-31, in the latter year it followed the competition and by 1933

cut the basic daily wage from $7 to $4.[81] Work became more mentally demanding and physically hazardous as companies resorted to running production at full speed for one or two days a week. The Ford assembly-line presented a picture of bickering workers toiling to keep pace - after any breakdown the line was automatically speeded-up - and suffering the close attentions of dozens of foremen. Production workers suffered equally close supervision at their machines, and had to have "mind and energy ... centered only on the job at hand" to prevent an accumulation of articles, a subsequent rush to keep up, and, invariably, an accident. Often workers feared to report all but the most serious accidents, risking the possibility of later infection rather than gain a reputation as a "careless" worker. Another health hazard of this period stemmed from the growing fashion for chrome finish. This was a "live issue", for workers in metal polishing, grinding and buffing plants, where it frequently caused "chrome ulcers".[82] As foremen became more abusive, negative replaced positive incentives and old workmates disappeared, the auto plants became an increasingly alien environment.

Mass unemployment virtually removed any possibility of overt working class resistance to deteriorating wages and conditions. Workers typically felt that strike action would "have little opportunity of gaining anything" and were rarely tempted to try it. There was a brief stoppage <u>inside</u> the Fittings, Painting and Sanding Department at GM in April

1930, which may have led to the withdrawal of a wage-cut. In January 1932 GM Trimmers took similar action against "experimental" piece-rates, demanding that they be reduced by only ⅓ rather than between 50-60 per cent, and forced an announcement from management that "so far as the shops where dissatisfaction has made itself apparent are concerned", there would be rate revisions. In November 1932 a dozen polishers and buffers at Coulter Manufacturing in Oshawa struck for three days against the firing of three of them who had asked for a wage increase. All twelve were reinstated after publicly retracting a negative statement they had issued on conditions in the plant and issuing a second statement declaring their "confidence that our employers ... will pay a living wage to efficient workers." These were the only auto strikes between 1930-33 considered worthy of recognition by the federal Labour Department.[83]

Union activity in such conditions was out of the question. In March 1930 the ACCL chartered the Canadian Brotherhood of Automotive Employees, initially aiming at the organization of mechanics but planning "at the first opportunity ... to organize in the manufacturing field."[84] The union folded before the opportunity arrived. Later the same year the Workers' Unity League (WUL) delegated George Wanden to attempt to revive the AWIU, linking this job with one of building the unemployed movement throughout Southern Ontario. While he and colleague Harvey Jackson were on this

trip, the party was supposed to be taking financial care of Wanden's family responsibilities; it failed to do so, and Wanden was forced to return to Windsor and unemployment.[85] In mid-1931 the Border Cities CPC had a solitary shop group at Chrysler, which actually managed to issue at least one copy of a shop paper. But in general the party's factory work since the onset of the crisis had "not improved to any extent".[86] Almost all party activity was located outside, in the unemployed movement.

Since the unemployed movement is discussed in detail later, only a few brief comments need be given here. The movement in the Windsor area was very highly developed, indeed was considered a model for other local sections of the National Unemployed Workers' Association (NUWA). Earlier than most NUWA branches it combined mass public agitation with the construction of local and neighbourhood groups capable of fighting individual cases. It activized blacks, women, ethnics and Anglo-Saxons for piece-meal struggles against evictions, rents and rates increases and for higher relief payments; simultaneously fought mass political battles over the right of free speech, the arrests of the CPC leadership and the attempted "legal lynching" of the Scottsboro Boys; and was the basis of an unusually successful electoral intervention, which in 1933 saw three "United Front" candidates elected to the East Windsor city council. Its resilience was a constant source of surprise and dismay to the forces of the

state: the intelligence officer of the locally stationed Essex Scottish militia informed his superiors in September 1931 that after the drive against the CPC national leadership the Windsor NUWA had been smashed; in December he had to report not only that his previous report had been premature, but the "surprising" fact that "many English-speaking people were joining" the unemployed movement. By 1933 the NUWA had managed to transcend its ferocious early sectarianism and marched alongside other socialist and labour groups in a 1,500 strong May Day parade described as "the best effort at unity there has been in these parts."[87] This coalescence of working class forces was maturing at the precise moment positive changes were occurring on the shop-floor.

One message permeated all the party's unemployed work: that the unity and solidarity of class transcended all sectional divisions, whether of race, gender, age, skill or ethnicity. When unemployed activists managed to find work they were expected to carry these ideas into the workplace, using them to build the case for industrial unionism. By early 1933 communist auto workers were cautiously building up shop groups using the "personal" methods which the party now considered the most appropriate for clandestine organizing work. In April there were around 100 unionists spread across 14 shop groups in 8 Border Cities plants. Each of the shop groups met regularly to discuss grievances and vet prospective members and engage in political discussion based on readings

from The Worker and Workers' Unity, with occasional forays into Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. A representative of each shop group participated in a central "Shop Council", an embryonic local union executive.[88] Of necessity, however, the development of even limited workplace activity remained slow. For most of 1933 around ⅓ of the male working population of the Border Cities was unemployed, and most workers in the shops were happy to remain isolated from the union nucleus.

Yet developments elsewhere produced evidence of an approaching economic and political upturn. Throughout 1933 the American auto industry was convulsed by strikes. Observing one of the most bitter, at Briggs Body in Detroit, Windsor's radical Mayor David Croll detected "a change of temper which is very significant."[89] Closer to home, Windsor workers could observe the rise of the WUL in Southern Ontario's shoe and furniture industries. During the Stratford strike a furniture workers' delegation attended a rally in Windsor for the release of the CPC leaders. When the strikers arrived, the event was transformed into a Stratford solidarity rally and they returned to their picket lines with a contribution of $108.[90]

Over the latter part of 1933 and the ensuing winter, WUL organizers, notably Sam Scarlett and Fred Collins, made frequent visits to the Border Cities. By October, one RCMP

source reported, "a great deal of organization" had been completed and the situation in the auto plants had to be "very closely watched." Numerous meetings were being held "in out of the way places" and the communist network was canvassing many plants "in an effort to induce discontent amongst the workers."[91]

The winter 1933-34 period finally saw a marked industrial upturn. From January to April most companies were working a five-day week, with GM reporting "an avalanche of orders, literally pouring in from all parts of Canada", and Chrysler employing almost as many workers as in 1929. There were even labour shortages in some trades, such as metal finishers, trimmers and machine moulders.[92] The rising tempo of industrial activity was accompanied by a similar increase in the level of WUL organization. Local communist James Cochrane was singled out as the man most responsible and was said to have made "some headway ... particularly through the Foreign element." But in late February the authorities were skeptical that any strikes would take place.[93] Exactly a month later, on 26 March, the Auto Specialties Plant was struck.

According to the Border Cities Star, the WUL consciously decided to concentrate on the smaller parts plants and foundries rather than tackle Ford or Chrysler.[94] Its intention seems to have been to build up momentum before moving

into the major factories. The three plants where strikes took place had respectively 250 (Auto Specialties), 100 (Canadian Motor Lamp), and 35 (Windsor Bedding) workers. During March-April four similar workplaces - Walker Metal Products, Sandwich Foundry, Dominion Forge and Canadian Motor Products - were reported on the brink of strike action. Such plants were easier to shut down and simply less intimidating prospects than the big companies.

The Auto Specialties strike got the revived union off to an impressive start. At the time of the strike, the plant had been operating round the clock producing malleable iron castings for all of the "Big Three"; its workers therefore knew that they were striking at an opportune moment. The strikers worked out their demands at a meeting on 25 March attended by 60 workers. The following day a delegation of 15 sought an interview with management to present their demands, only to be met with a blank refusal and the firing of several unionists. In the course of the day, the entire workforce came out. Their demands reflected a wide range of economic and social concerns: union recognition and recognition of a shop committee to arbitrate immediate shop-floor disputes; replacement of piece-rates by daily or hourly rates, ranging from 40 cents an hour for women, to 50 cents for labourers, 55 cents for sandcutters and annealers and 60 cents for moulders, coremakers, oventenders, sandmixers, millwrights and furnacemen; a rising scale of payment for

moulders' apprentices, reaching the full scale after a year; an 8-hour day and time-and-a-half for overtime.[95]

An indication that the strike had been well prepared came within hours of the walk-out when the local communist apparatus swung into effective action. Committees for negotiations, relief, picketing, defence and publicity were elected, thus achieving the aim of activizing the largest possible number of strikers. Pickets immediately took up their posts at the plant and outside the Federal Employment Office, which was rumoured to have called in strikebreakers from Hamilton, armed with leaflets produced by the publicity committee explaining their case. Pickets operated on a round-the-clock basis, sustained by meals and coffee from the strike kitchen set up under the supervision of Georgina Ketcheson, Windsor's leading woman communist, at the nearby Hungarian Hall. At the first shift-change on the morning of 27 March, several hundred of the area's unemployed arrived to form a mass picket at the plant gates. As an impressed Border Cities Star reported: "hundreds of picketers crowded the sidewalk in front of the plant, forming an impenetrable chain of moving humanity that stretched for several city blocks."[96]

Obviously surprised by the effectiveness of the strike, management quickly offered the negotiating committee, first, rates of 45 cents for moulders and 40 cents for all other

grades, then when this was rejected upped their offer to a scale between 40 cents and 55 cents. The second offer was placed before a mass meeting the same night, but when it was explained that the rates offered were average rates for any scale within which workers could earn above or below the average depending on ability - in effect a group bonus system - and that union recognition was refused, the meeting voted unanimously to stay out. WUL organizers James Cochrane and Douglas Stewart had no need to whip up a militant mood; in fact, they took pains to emphasize that the strike had arisen out of economic conditions and discourage the strikers from provoking the police. On the other hand, they did urge the strikers to reject a suggestion that David Croll be called on to arbitrate the strike and saw that the meeting ended on a suitably militant note by having it send messages of solidarity to Kitchener's striking shoe and furniture workers.

It seems likely that their emphasis on moderation was a response to the use of the Agents of Revolution pamphlet against those same Kitchener strikers. When Fred Collins arrived from Kitchener to take charge of the strike on 28 March, his approach was equally conciliatory. He convinced the negotiating committee to re-open talks with management and when it was offered a number of minor concessions - installation of showers, overtime pay after 10 hours, and recognition of a shop committee - he urged acceptance of the improved offer at a mass meeting in the Hungarian Hall that

evening. A sizeable section of the workforce opposed acceptance, arguing that there should be a definite time-period to the new wage schedule and that a much more formal contract with union recognition was needed. Collins answered these points by emphasizing that with recognition of a shop committee and 80 per cent of the workforce signed up the Auto Workers' Union (the "Industrial" had apparently been dropped) would have effective recognition, adding that the big auto companies would never allow the smaller plants to recognize the union. The militants reluctantly agreed, and Collins brought the meeting to a close by calling for three cheers for the AWU, "a proletarian country" and "a proletarian world".[97]

Collins' motives in bringing the strike to a rapid conclusion can be partially inferred from his subsequent analysis of it for The Worker. This had a distinctly reformist tone. Arguing that solidarity and sound organization could push back the bosses' "wage-cutting offensive", he provided a picture of workers gaining in confidence and experience as they won partial gains, each stage in the struggle preparing the way for the next but never provoking a premature confrontation.[98] Also at the back of his mind must have been a desire to disprove the current allegations about the "political" character of the WUL. But probably paramount was the feeling, voiced by one Windsor organizer, that "with sufficient leadership the Windsor situation now could develop

into a second Stratford."[99] As Stratford had provided a significant ideological breakthrough on which a sharp incursion into light industry was based, so developments in the Border Cities had tremendous implications for WUL intervention in basic industry. Its very importance demanded careful handling.

One week after the Auto Specialties strike the situation did look very promising. A second strike at Windsor Bedding, a supplier of upholstery to the auto plants, was settled in just over a day with the main demands of 35 cents an hour minimum wage and recognition of a shop committee granted.[100] A third strike began at the Canadian Motor Lamp plant in East Windsor; there were rumours of impending strikes elsewhere; and the AWU felt confident enough to up the organizational tempo at Ford and Chrysler, raising the slogan at Ford of "back to $7 a day!" All of this collapsed when the Canadian Motor Lamp (CML) strike ground to defeat.

At the beginning there was no indication that the CML strike would end differently from the others. The company's 108 workers displayed high morale, strike organization was effective and, once again, the unemployed displayed exemplary solidarity, 2,000 of them turning up at the plant gates when it was rumoured that strikebreakers were to be introduced.[101] Defeat stemmed not from human failure, but from the fact that CML was an unfortunate choice for strike action.

All auto parts and components companies were plagued by

their subordination to primary producers who took advantage of the high degree of competition in the parts sector to establish low prices and, particularly important in the present context, buy on a "hand-to-mouth" basis, placing orders only to meet immediate production demand. The parts companies typically alternated between dizzying bouts of high intensity production and long periods of inactivity, regardless of which their workers had to be on constant standby.[102] At CML one of the strikers' main grievances was unpaid waiting-time during slow periods. When they chose to strike during such a slow period, the company was under no pressure to settle and happily let the strike drag on.[103] This had several unfortunate consequences for the strikers and the union. The latter's relief gathering capacities were exhausted by the end of the first week, and when East Windsor city council rejected the United Front Aldermen's appeal to place strikers on the relief rolls, morale began to disintegrate.[104] The longer the strike lasted, the more the company and the Border Cities Star played on the "red bogey" in an attempt to split the strikers from the union.[105] By the time Fred Collins arrived, the AWU commanded the support of only 20 strikers who continued to insist on recognition of at least a shop committee. Collins and Stewart, after final discussions with Dominion Conciliation Officer M. S. Campbell, convinced the recalcitrant 20 to return to a c[illegible]us settlement whereby the East Windsor Police Commission would supervise the company's promise to increase wages in line with the federal cost-of-living index.

From the WUL's point of view, the most telling commentary on the settlement was the total silence of the party press.[106]

Defeat at Canadian Motor Lamp was the first of a series of AWU reverses. The union's attempt to carry the struggle into the major plants never really got going. Both Ford and Chrysler voluntarily raised wages, in March and May respectively, and Ford launched a purge of suspected union men. In May Chrysler laid off 500 workers as the upturn subsided.[107] In late May one of the leading unionists at the Windsor Bedding plant, Peter Schwansky, was fired on the grounds of "inefficaency". Around half the workforce struck for his reinstatement, and after two days he was re-hired.[108] Within weeks, however, the company fired another member of the AWU shop committee. On this occasion, the sacking stuck. When the shop committee called a meeting to discuss it, no rank and file members turned up. This was a signal for the company to press on with the removal of unionists. By the autumn AWU influence had disappeared.[109] Similar developments occurred at the Auto Specialties plant. The downturn produced the laying-off of the entire night-shift and numerous militants; the operation of the bonus system caused friction among the moulders, and workers began to argue that they could have done just as well from the strike without the AWU. When one leading unionist was fired and the shop committee failed to obtain even a meeting with management, the "union lost its prestige" and collapsed.[110]

In reviewing these two cases, the party placed strong emphasis on the inexperience of the union activists, which showed itself in the poor "functioning of the union local and shop committee." This was tantamount to an admission that in the given conditions the AWU was not capable of consolidation. Yet in a "special automobile issue" of The Worker in October stress was placed on the fact that "despite an even more rabid terror than exists in the auto plants", metal miners at Flin Flon and Noranda had succeeded in building unionism (the inconvenient fact that these unions had been rapidly smashed was ignored). Ed. Cecil-Smith, hitherto best known as a cultural critic, wrote that the AWU retained "several units in the shops of Windsor and East Windsor and contacts in many plants elsewhere", and both he ahd the paper's editor insisted that the AWU remained the "only trade union body which has consistently tried to build an auto union" and which could still do so "on a basis of class struggle." Passivity and defeatism about its future prospects had to be overcome by "careful organization". One obvious possibility was to develop activity around a militant, rank and file "Auto Workers' Code" against the collaborationist alternative the Hepburn government was allegedly planning to introduce. The Worker published a "tentative" model:[111]

1. unskilled minimum daily wage of $6; 7-hour day; 5-day week.
2. skilled minimum of 90 cents an hour.

3. "Production to be governed by a committee of workers elected by the workers."
4. universal one-hour lunch break.
5. employers to pay 2 per cent of payroll into an unemployment insurance fund. "Such fund to be administered" by a workers' committee.
6. improved sanitary conditions (lunch rooms, lockers, etc.), ventilation and lighting.
7. the right to belong to the union of choice; to bargain collectively between the shop committee and the management; and the "unrestricted right to strike and picket."
8. complete enforcement of Ontario Workmen's Compensation Act.
9. "Equal pay for equal work for all youth and women workers."

Despite the Worker's adminitions against defeatism, the pessimistic view of the AWU's prospects was taking hold. Only days after the "special automobile issue" appeared, Fred Collins represented the AWU at the inaugural Congress of the League Against War and Fascism, where he expressed willingness to place the union's apparatus at the disposal of any organization willing to take it over.[112] Whether Collins was simply responding to the mood of an event where "unity" was the keynote, or was directing his remarks specifically at Aaron Mosher, the most prominent trade union leader to accept

an invitation to the Congress and whose ACCL was rumoured to be reviving its interest in the auto industry, is unclear. But it is certain that a more realistic view of the WUL's capacities was dictating tactical modifications.

Two events in December probably reinforced this tendency. In the United States, the AWU officially dissolved, most of its members having already moved into the burgeoning AFL federal locals; given the degree of contact between Detroit and Windsor, this move must have made an impression on the Canadian AWU leadership.[113] The vulnerability of the union was driven home by municipal election results in East Windsor, where after a contest between, in the words of United Front Alderman Tom Raycraft, "Communism and Fascism", the left wing slate was routed. During the campaign the left wing slate, including Fred Collins, stood openly as communists against the combined ideological opposition of the Border Cities Star, Eastern European anti-communist groups, the Roman Catholic church and Ford, which allegedly threatened to fire every worker discovered to have voted for the left. A single Communist candidate was elected to the School Board; nine others were defeated.[114] The AWU quietly disappeared in the aftermath of this defeat.

During 1935-36 communist activity in the auto industry was sporadic and virtually clandestine. The CPC did not try, as it did in steel, to draw together militants and

unionists from different areas even in a loosely centralized industrial union tendency, but seems to have consciously chosen to concentrate its efforts elsewhere, perhaps aware that the same degree of rank and file interest was not present. It did attempt to keep shop groups going, and had several in the Ford, Toronto, assembly plant which managed to produce the Ford Auto Worker on a fortnightly basis.[115] Communists were also active in one of only two strikes in 1935, at the Fittings foundry in Oshawa, and in the only auto strike in 1936, at Kelsey-Hayes Wheel.[116] They were not involved in the Hudson-Essex strike at Tilbury, despite the presence of a militant rank and file mood and enough time for them to mount an intervention.[117]

The most striking feature of the CPC's role in 1935 was what it did not do. It seems to have had no contact at all with the most important trade union development in the history of the North American auto industry: the emergence of the United Automobile Workers of America (UAW). The Worker carried a single report of the UAW's founding convention in August, which emphasized the stand of Frank Dillon, William Green's appointee to the UAW presidency, against full industrial unionism.[118] This curious backwardness seems to have stemmed from two factors: first, the CPC had not analysed the industrial union forces which were shortly to emerge as the CIO; secondly, the party remained reluctant to abandon its "All-inclusive Federation of Canadian Labour"

model of unity through amalgamation and may have been reluctant to support developments which would have strengthened American influence in the Canadian movement. Only after the November Central Committee Plenum and WUL Convention was the party able to call wholeheartedly for auto workers to convert their anti-boss sentiments into UAW affiliation.[119]

As in the steel industry, the party's zealous acclaim of the CIO was not rewarded with anything in the way of material support. By the end of 1936 the UAW had enrolled something less than a fifth of the half-million American auto workers and was proceeding carefully towards its crucial confrontation with GM. Moreover, it was financially dependent on John L. Lewis, who as Irving Abella has shown was reluctant to see the CIO venture into Canada before it had definitively established itself in the United States.[120] CPC activity in auto was therefore much the same in 1936 as in 1935 - a matter of watching and waiting.

The upturn in the auto industry continued unabated through 1935, when there was a 47 per cent increase in output, fell away very slightly in 1936 and rose sharply again in 1937.[121] In 1935 all of the "Big Three" introduced new technology, notably steel presses capable of producing the new all-steel bodies from a single pressing, and both GM and Chrysler began plant extensions to produce more of the total product in their Canadian plants. (In the former's case, the decision to produce transmissions at its McKinnon Industries

subsidiary in St. Catharines was a direct result of strikes at plants in Toledo and Cincinnati, the source of Oshawa's transmissions.)[122] New technology meant a reduction in manning in some sections, but overall the rising level of demand and the opening of entirely new departments produced a growing workforce and a relative stabilization of employment. Ford's average factory payroll, for example, rose from 4,140 in 1934 to 6,371 in 1935.[123]

If the upturn in class struggle in 1934 was based primarily on a marginal shift of labour market conditions in favour of workers, how is the apparent subsidence of struggle in 1935-36 to be explained? Between 1933-36 more than 100,000 workers joined or re-entered the industrial labour force and unemployment was halved. Yet after 1934 strike activity fell below the 1933 level (Table 7-III). Part of the explanation lies with the growing willingness of employers to pass on some of their increased profits in higher wages. Another partial explanation is that workers were reacting to the defeat of the most decisive confrontations in 1934 by shifting from open conflict to informal workplace activity, probing the limits of managerial flexibility while limiting risks. Workers' ability to wrest piece-meal concessions on a "do-it-yourself" basis may well have fed generally the sentiment arrived at by the Canadian Motor Lamp workers, that the value of accepting the AWU's leadership was no greater than the potential benefits

of independent shopfloor organization.

Table 7-III

EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT AND STRIKE ACTIVITY IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY, 1929-1936

	1929	1933	1934	1935	1936
No. workers	577,690	382,022	-	458,734	489,942
% Unemployed	0	34	-	21	15
Strike Days (non-coal mining)	-	284,000	483,000	223,000	220,000

Sources: International Labour Review, Labour Gazette

Evidence of workers' direct action is inevitably difficult to obtain and assess, and impossible to quantify. Nevertheless, it certainly existed in the auto plants, and was used both to exert some limited degree of shopfloor control and to press for higher wages.[124] Workers in the axle department at McKinnon Industries formed only one among many groups in the plant paid according to a widely unpopular group bonus system. Unlike most, however, they had a group leader who organized production and distribution of the bonus in a "fair and reasonable" way. When management removed this man from their group, the entire department signed a "round robin" and threatened to strike if his removal was not rescinded. They won their point.[125] At GM Oshawa "several department stoppages successfully fought back intolerable

conditions and miserable wages." One, lasting only an hour, brought promise of a wage rise for the trim room girls.[126] Workers in the hub and drum department at Kelsey-Hayes Wheel only had to meet together for the first time and talk about taking action against speed-up and overbearing foremen for management to announce a 5 cents an hour raise.[127]

If minor wage concessions could be won, building a union was much more fraught with difficulties. Reports in the party press openly admitted that despite widespread dissatisfaction and unrest in the auto plants, there was no real support for a fresh organizing drive. One Ford worker agreed that "we need a union at Ford's as well as other shops, but we need the work too, and it is worth your job to even speak unionism at Ford's."[128] Like the WUL, the UAW had not demonstrated a capacity to do more for workers than they could do for themselves. When it finally crossed the border in December 1936, it did so reluctantly and with mixed results.

When James Napier began sounding out his immediate workmates on taking action against ever-worsening speed-up at Kelsey-Hayes Wheel, he knew almost nothing about trade union developments in the auto industry. When he sought information, however, he came under the influence of CPC member Jack Wright, who fed Napier "a steady dose of communism" whenever he visited the tool-crib. Napier learned quickly about the

UAW and CIO, and coming from a coal mining background in Scotland (he was born in Hamilton, Lanarkshire, in 1910) he was drawn to the industrial union movement by the charismatic figure of John L. Lewis. Shortly after the incident when the company hurriedly announced a raise to forestall collective action in Napier's hub and drum department, Napier and two colleagues, Roy Nantais, a French Canadian, and Nick Klinger, an Austrian, visited Detroit UAW leaders Walter Reuther and Richard Frankensteen, who were just about to call a strike at the Kelsey-Hayes parent plant. The Americans encouraged them to press ahead with the organization of the Windsor plant, and they returned to Windsor convinced that "the auto union was best for us." The position regarding trade union affiliation, however, remained fluid enough for Napier and five fellow activists to have discussions with the Windsor business agent of the Bricklayers' Union, Percy Fisher, who urged them to join the IAM. The day after they informed him of their decision to join the UAW, Napier was fired, followed in short order by four of the others. In his autobiography Napier suggests that Fisher sold the five out to the company (he could not identify the sixth man). Whoever did the informing, the firings brought matters to a head.[129]

Immediately after the firings the CPC called a street meeting at which 38 Kelsey workers were signed up in the union, which received its charter as UAW Local 195 in mid-December. By 16 December, when UAW organizer and CPUSA member Tom Parry

arrived in Windsor to take charge of negotiations for the reinstatement of the victimized men, over 100 of the 185 plant employees had joined. Parry, with Napier and Ken Clark, another Local 195 founder member, immediately sought a meeting with management. When this was flatly rejected, Parry called a strike, and Windsor was for four hours treated to the spectacle of Canada's first "sit-down" strike. After the police quietly removed the strikers, the struggle reverted to a traditional pattern: militant picketing, arrests, strong solidarity from the unemployed, strikebreaking and mass meetings. During the strike, which ran from 16 to 29 December, the Windsor strikers received strong verbal support from the Detroit strike leaders. At a mass meeting on 19 December Richard Frankensteen inspired wild enthusiasm when he promised his Windsor audience that the two strikes would be settled in tandem. Pledging the support of 4,500 Detroit workers, he urged the Canadians to toughen up their picket line vigilance and make sure "that no-one goes into that damned plant tomorrow." The following morning a pitched battle with police and strikebreakers effectively kept out the scabs, but also led directly to the arrest of five pickets, including Tom Parry who was held in custody for the remainder of the strike. Three days later, the Detroit strikers returned to work, seriously denting morale in Windsor. The arrival of Dominion Conciliation Officer M. S. Campbell on 26 December brought the strike to a swift conclusion. By 29 December he had convinced the 70 men who

remained out to return to a five cents an hour increase - but without the reinstatement of the victimized activists. Detroit UAW leaders greeted the Windsor settlement, which with the exception of the five activists' case was comparable to that gained in Detroit, as a "signal victory". In James Napier's opinion, however, "Reuther sold us out."[130]

The Kelsey-Hayes strike might seem to lend support to Irving Abella's argument that in 1936-37 UAW affiliation was of doubtful benefit to Canadian auto workers. For Frankensteen and Reuther the Windsor strike was probably little more than a sideshow: in his family autobiography, Victor Reuther fails even to mention it.[131] It seems likely, however, that the speed with which Reuther and Frankensteen reneged on the latter's promise to fight for a joint settlement had less to do with the Americans' lack of trustworthiness or genuine concern for international solidarity than with the possibility that Frankensteen had been caught up in the heat of the moment when he made his promise and, more importantly, with the necessity of winning the much larger Detroit strike. Moreover, in the spring of 1937, after the UAW had won the GM sit-down strike in Flint, the union's communist Vice President Wyndham Mortimer successfully pressured Kelsey-Hayes, Windsor, to reinstate the five victimized men.[132]

Mention of the Flint sit-down points to the main

conjunctural reason for the UAW's slow and reluctant incursion into Canada in winter 1936-37. In the months leading up to the first action in Flint the UAW leadership meticulously prepared their battle strategy and nervously tried to prevent or contain any local rank and file initiatives that might have prematurely touched off the Flint struggle.[133] With that decisive struggle approaching, there was no possibility that the UAW would devote time and resources to a Canadian drive. Hence, in Canada as elsewhere, the growth of the UAW continued to depend on rank and file activity and the quality of interventions by local radicals and activists. As we have seen, the discontinuity of the industrial union tendency in Canada, the reluctance of the TLC to take a lead in coordinating organization of the unorganized, the communists' reluctance to push the TLC in this direction and, not least, the fact that to all appearances rank and file auto workers remained unconvinced of the value of unionism, all contributed to Canadian isolation. Communists continued to do what they could at the local level, but as one organizer reported from the McKinnon plant, where UAW Local 199 was chartered in late December 1936, "we have only scratched the surface ... The sentiment for unionization is here. Lack of forces must not hinder us."[134]

The situation was finally transformed by the UAW victory at Flint in February 1937, an event that had as cathartic an effect on American as on Canadian auto workers. Before the

Flint victory, UAW membership stood at 88,000; in the next six months it soared to 400,000. The GM Oshawa workers whose strike in April 1937 gave the UAW its first real foothold in Canada were thus participants in a trans-national class struggle based on an upsurge of working class confidence that itself stemmed from membership of an organization of proven potency. Whether, as Irving Abella has argued, the Oshawa strikers gained their victory entirely through their own efforts and without any material assistance from the UAW, it was their identification with the industrial union that gave them the inspiration to exploit their objective resources.[135] Could the Oshawa strikers and the Canadian auto workers who followed them into the UAW have accepted the UAW's inspiration and rejected its authority? It is doubtful. In the previous ten years they had learned a good deal, albeit in fragmented fashion, about unionism. Their support for the UAW was almost certainly inspired by the lessons they had absorbed. The UAW was an <u>industrial</u> union; it had humbled one of the giants of the industry; it was anxious - belatedly - to recruit Canadian auto workers; and there was no alternative to it. After Oshawa its international leadership was assured.

What, then, can be said in conclusion of CPC efforts in the auto industry? First and foremost, it is obvious that the AWIU and AWU were incapable of the cultural breakthrough,

the mass transformation of working class consciousness, achieved by the UAW. Nevertheless, the communist unions were responsible within the Canadian context for unparalleled efforts in disseminating mass awareness of the concept of industrial unionism as a means of collective protection and a tool for the attainment of a workers' voice in the auto industry. Quietly in discussion groups, raucously at plant gate meetings - to the eve of the Oshawa strike it was members of the unemployed organizations who sold the United Auto Worker at Canadian plant gates - and furtively within the plants themselves, Communists provided information and a political focus that prepared handfuls of cadres for the long haul of building the union. They also activized hundreds of auto workers through strike action and unemployed agitation, providing experience of class struggle vital to the development of class consciousness. If the CPC and WUL converted only a few auto workers to the revolutionary viewpoint, they undeniably awakened the vast majority of activists to the possibility of challenging their industrial subordination. While it is an exaggeration to argue that communists alone built the UAW in Canada, there is no doubt that in the decade before the arrival of the CIO they were responsible for laying the lion's share of its foundations.

Chapter 7, Notes

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35. Henry Ford, quoted in Aikman, The Automobile Industry, 41

36. "Chrysler Expansion", Saturday Night, 43 (31 March 1928), 27; "Durant Profits Increase", SN, 43 (7 April 1928), 24; "Studebaker Will Expand in Canada", CMMN, XXXIX (14 June 1928), 53

37. Oshawa Daily Times, 27 March 1928, quoted in House of Commons, Debates, 30 March 1928, 1857; S.K., "Bosses Stool Pigeons", Worker, 2 March 1929; Harvey Murphy, "Ford's Fake Trade Schools", YW, July-August 1928; Murphy, "Auto Workers' Union Launches Drive", YW, April 1929; Auto Workers' News, June 1928, March 1929; New York Times, 26 August 1928; Sward, The Legend of Henry Ford, 203. For a comparison of the operation of group piece-work systems in Britain and the USA, see Jonathan Zeitlin, "The Emergence of Shop Steward Organization and Job Control in the British Car Industry", History Workshop Journal, 10 (Autumn 1980), 123, 135n. 21 and Joyce Shaw Peterson, "A Social History of Automobile Workers Before Unionization", Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1976, 106. For a Canadian example of how it could be manipulated in favour of workers, see "Solidarity Wins Point", The Worker, 4 April 1936

38. On strikes at Willys-Overland and Russell Motors, see Industrial Banner, 21 June 12, 19 July 1918; The Globe,

13-18, 27 June 1918; LG, XVII (July 1918), 529; (August 1918), 611. On the later IAM, see James Somerville, "The IAM in Canada", AF, XXXVI (October 1929), 1211-16; Craig Heron, "The Crisis of the Craftsman: Hamilton's Metal Workers in the Early Twentieth Century", Labour/Le Travailleur, 6 (Augumn 1980), 40-42; Lewis L. Lorwin, The American Federation of Labor: History, Policies and Prospects (Washington, D.C., 1933), 244-48

39. The Worker, 22 January 1927

40. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Census of Canada, 1921, I, 546; Census of Canada, 1931, II, 416

41. "Ford Employees Demand Increase", The Globe, 29 June 1918. It is worth noting that in the USA Ford recruited an unusually large number of black workers who, according to one writer, "could be expected to be loyal, docile and anti-union." James A. Geschwender, Class, Race and Worker Insurgency: The League of Revolutionary Black Workers (Cambridge, 1977), 18-25

42. WSU, Reuther Library, Robert W, Dunn Papers, Box 1, typescript report on the Oshawa strike, (n.d., probably written by Harvey Murphy); PAC, Michael Fenwick Papers, Vol.2, interview with Michael Fenwick; Workers' Benevolent Association, Friends in Need (Winnipeg, 1971), 109-111

43. The Worker, 7, 14 March 1925

44. WSU, Reuther Library, UAWOHC, interview with Phil Raymond; Roger Keeran, The Communist Party and the Auto Workers Unions (Bloomington, Ind., & London, 1980), 46-59

45. MT, 78 (27 May 1927), 4; The Globe, 17 October 1927; Keeran, The Communist Party, 40-41

46. The Worker, 22 August 1925, 16 July 1927

47. PAC, David Millar collection, interview with Harvey Murphy; Murphy to the editor, YW, December 1925; Multi-Cultural History Society of Ontario, interview with Harvey Murphy (MCHSO)

48. Maurice Spector, "The Outlook - The Oshawa Strike", Canadian Labour Monthly, 1 (April 1928), 3-6; "A Lesson from Canada", Detroit Labor News, 13 April 1928

49. The following account of the strike is based largely on PAC, SLF, Vol. 340, file 15 and James Pendergast, "The Attempt at Unionization in the Automobile Industry in Canada, 1928", Ontario History, 70 (December 1978), 245-62. See also the Steering Wheel, 15 June 1928. This appears to have been the first and only issue of the Oshawa union's paper. A copy is in the Reuther Library, WSU.

50. Herb C. Braund, "Iron and Steel Market Review", CMMN, 39 (8 March 1928), 50

51. See, in particular, PAC, SLF, Vol.340, file 15, H. A. Brown to Peter Heenan, 30 March 1928

52. Philip S. Foner, The Policies and Practices of the American Federation of Labor 1900-1909: History of the Labor Movement in the United States, III (New York, 1977), 199-200

53. TDS, 31 March 1928; Spector, "The Outlook"

54. The Steering Wheel, 15 June 1928

55. "General Motors Record Year", SN, 43 (17 March 1928), 40; Canadian Labor Herald, 31 May 1928; "Report of Board in Dispute Between General Motors of Canada Limited, and Certain of Its Employees", LG, XXVIII (May 1928), 452-53; "Border Cities Workers Go One Better", Canadian Unionist, 2 (September 1928), 21 (CU)

56. LG, XXVIII (September 1928), 960. The case of the federal local at Canadian Top and Body provides an interesting example of the TLC's cautious methods. The local was probably organized in June, following which nothing seems to have happened until in August the workers took matters into their own hands by striking. The TLC immediately announced that the strikers had acted without "proper authorization", in effect disowning the strike which duly collapsed.

57. BCS, 18, 19 May 1928; Detroit Labor News, 25 May 1928; Canadian Congress Journal, VII (June 1928), 30-31

58. WSU, Dunn Papers, Box 1, CPC, District 3, "To All Automobile Workers in the Border Cities", leaflet, June 1928

59. "Big Meeting at Ford Gates", Auto Workers News, July 1928

60. The Globe, 5 November 1928; CU, 2 (October 1928), 53; The Worker, 17 November 1928; YW, November 1928

61. WSU, Reuther Library, Henry Kraus Papers, Box 1, Phil Raymond, "Program of the National Provisional Committee for the Organization of a National Industrial Auto Workers' Union", undated; WSU, Dunn Papers, Box 2, Minutes of the Conference on Organization of the Auto Workers, Detroit, 13 January 1929; PAC, Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) Papers, Vol.146, "Auto Workers! Unite!: Manifesto to the Automobile Workers of Canada", undated

62. Auto Workers Life, April 1929, copy in Reuther Library

63. WSU, Reuther Library, Joe Brown Papers, folder marked "Espionage-Labor", "Statement of John Scarbury, 22 January 1929". Accompanying this document, which consists of the confession of an unmasked labour spy, are

reports of his activities, an expense account and a list of 145 questions he had to keep in mind. For more on the Corporations' Auxiliary in Canada, see Fred Rose, Spying on Labor (Toronto, n.d., probably 1939), 6-19

64. The Worker, 25 August 1928

65. The Worker, 6 April 1929

66. WSU, Brown Papers, "Statement of John Scarbury"; UAWOHC, interviews with Sam Sage, Phil Raymond; Auto Workers News, March 1929. It was standard practice for labour spies to take leading roles in the early auto unions.

67. PAC, Vol.342, file 14; "Employees at General Motors Plant Again Strike", Labor Statesman, 5 April 1929; "Displacement of Workers in Auto Industry", The Worker, 20 April 1929

68. Charles Sims, "Pre-Party Convention Discussion: Some Opinions", The Worker, 8 June 1929; PAO, Communist Party Papers, 10C 1796, "Income and Expenditure of the TUEL of Canada, 1 April 1928 - 1 October 1929". Total expenditure on auto was $991.15

69. Sam Carr, "Why So Many Failures in the Industrial Work?", The Worker, 4 May 1929

70. Sims, "Pre-Party Convention Discussion"

71. Carr, "Why So Many Failures"; MCHSO, interview with Stewart Smith. See also, Francis Graham Stevens, "A History of Radical Political Movements in Essex County and Windsor, 1919-1945", M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1948, 70-72

72. Fred Shoesmith, "Comrade Buhay's 'Self-Criticism' - of the Other Fellow", The Worker, 13 April 1929; Beckie Buhay, "On the Inner-Party Situation", The Worker, 30 March 1929

73. The paper also contained an article by left wing labour journalist Robert W. Dunn and several workplace reports.

74. PAC, CLC Papers, Vol. 103, M. M. McLean to W. T. Burford, 7 June, 16 July 1929; Vol. 146, Burford to All ACCL Labour Councils, 23 July 1929

75. Arthur Seal to Murray Body Strike Committee, Detroit, in Auto Workers News, August 1929; Report of the Executive Board, ACCL Third Annual Convention, Winnipeg, 4 November 1929

COMPARATIVE AUTO PRODUCTION BY MONTHS, MARCH-OCTOBER, 1928-1929

	1928	1929
March	17,469	40,621
April	24,211	41,901
May	33,942	31,559
June	28,399	21,492
July	25,226	17,461
August	32,245	14,214
September	21,193	13,651
October	18,536	14,523

Source: Financial Post, Business Year Book 1930 (Toronto, n.d.), 67

76. Financial Post Business Year Book 1930 (Toronto, n.d.), 67; FPBYB 1932 (Toronto, n.d.), 95; FPBYB 1933 (Toronto, n.d.), 57; O. J. MacDiarmid, "Some Aspects of the Canadian Automobile Industry", Canadian Journal of Economic and Political Science, 6 (May 1940), 261

77. Canadian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry (Toronto, 1959), 3

78. TDS, 22 August 1934; Financial Post Survey of Corporate Securities 1934 (Toronto, n.d.), 102-3; "Report of the Department of Labour, 1931", OSP, No.10, 1932, 41

79. "Automobiles III - Competitors", Fortune, IV (December 1931), 144

80. Stevens, "Radical Political Movements", 435; "Report of the Department of Labour, 1931", OSP, 1932, No.10, 27, 41-2; "Report of the Department of Labour, 1932", OSP, 1933, No.10, 1933, 26

81. "General Motors Cuts Salaries in Canada", Labor Statesman, 30 October 1931; "$6 Minimum Wage Restored by Ford", TDS, 22 May 1935

82. Border Cities Labor News, 24 May 1932; "Ruthless Exploitation in Windsor Ford Motor Shop", The Worker, 29 July 1933; "Report of the Department of Labour, 1931", OSP, No.10, 1932, 75; The Worker, special automobile issue, 6 October 1934; Moulton, "Ford Windsor 1945", 131, 154-55

83. PAC, SLF, Vol.345, file 22; Vol.350, file I; Vol.353, file 166; "Unemployment Hits Workers in Automobile Centre", The Worker, 13 December 1930

84. PAC, CLC Papers, Vol.146, John Dowling, "Good News for the Auto Worker!", undated leaflet; Vol.152, W. T. Burford to A. E. Wood, 6 March 1930

85. The Worker, 31 May 1930. An account of Wanden's ill-fated trip is contained in Lita-Rose Betcherman, The Little Band: The clashes between the Communists and the political and legal establishment in Canada 1928-1932 (Ottawa, 1982), 106-9

86. PAO-CPP, 2A 113-34, 2A 1164-65, George Andrew, "Reports of Work and Situation in the Border Cities", No.1, 21 March 1931, No.2, 11 April 1931

87. MCHSO, interviews with Harry Binder, William Kashtan; Department of National Defence, Directorate of History (DND-DH), Ottawa, File 161.009 (D63), William Griesinger to District Officer Commanding (DOC), Military District No.1, 17 September, 18 December 1931; Windsor City Police, report re "Communist Meeting at Lanspeary Park", 3 September 1931, 1 May 1932; J. Brown to W. Griesinger, 2 May 1933; George Andrews, "How to Organize Local Councils of the NUWA", Party Organizer, 1 (June 1931), 6-9; "Windsor Women Win Big Victory", Workers' Unity, March 1934; Stevens, "Radical Political Movements", 89-90, 96-100, 106, 113

88. James Cochrane, "Winning Our Way to the Factories", Workers' Unity, May 1933

89. WSU, Reuther Library, Joe Brown Papers, scrapbook 1, Detroit Leader, 11 February 1933, clipping. See also Keeman, The Communist Party, 77-95

90. The Worker, 14 October 1933

91. DND-DH, File 161.009 (D63), RCMP, reports re "Labour Conditions and Unemployment - Western Ontario District", 3 November 1933, 6, April, 2 March 1934; W. Griesinger to DOC, Military District No.1, 28 March 1934

92. The Globe, 2 May 1934; PAC, SLF, Vol.361, file 71, "Summary of Employment Conditions in the Province of Ontario, week ending 17 March 1934 - Windsor"; MT, 92 (9 February 1934), 10; "Canada's Motor Industry", Canada's Weekly, 104 (4 October 1934), 13.

93. DND-DH, File 161.009 (D63), W. Griesinger to DOC, Military District No.1, 8, 27 February 1934

94. PAC, SLF, Vol.361, file 79, Border Cities Star, 14 April 1934, clipping. Much of the next section is based on four files - 71, 79, 80, 122 - in Vol.361. Henceforth these will be designated simply by the file number.

95. SLF, file 71, BCS, 26 March 1934

96. SLF, file 71, BCS, 27, 28 March 1934

97. SLF, file 71, BCS, 29 March 1934

98. Fred Collins, "Victory of Big Significance to All Auto-

mobile Workers", The Worker, 7 April 1934

99. The Worker, 14 April 1934

100. SLF, file 80

101. SLF, file 79, BCS, 17 April 1934

102. Josephine Grimshaw, "Problems and Policies of Labour and Management in the Automobile Industry in Relation to Prices, Competitive Conditions and Economic Structure", M.A. thesis, University of Toronto, 1946, 24, 104-6, 124-26

103. SLF, file 79, BCS, 16 April 1934

104. SLF, file 79, BCS, 16, 17 April 1934

105. SLF, file 79, BCS, 14 April 1934

106. SLF, file 79, M. S. Campbell, memo re "Strike of Employees of Canadian Motor Lamp Ltd., East Windsor, Ont.", 26 April 1934

107. Auto Workers' News, 19 May 1934; TDS, 22 May 1935; D.G., "Mass Lay-Offs in Automobile Factories as Border Industries Slow Down", The Worker, 26 May 1934; Moulton, "Ford Windsor 1945", 131

108. SLF, file 122, BCS, 29, 30 May 1934, Toronto Telegram, 31 May 1934

109. The Worker, 6 October 1934

110. The Worker, 6 October 1934

111. The Worker, 6 October 1934

112. First Canadian Congress Against War and Fascism, Proceedings, Toronto, 6-7 October 1934, 10

113. Keeran, The Communist Party, 128

114. Stevens, "Radical Political Movements", 124-25

115. The Worker, 4 June 1935

116. TDS, 1, 2 November 1935; DND-DH, File 161.009 (D63), A. E. Reames, Supt. 'O' Division, RCMP, report re "Unemployment Conditions - Western Ontario District", 6 November 1935

117. PAC, SLF, Vol.368, file 46; New Commonwealth, 20 April 1935

118. The Worker, 31 August 1935. See also, UAW, Proceedings of the First Constitutional Convention, Detroit, 26-31 August 1935; A. J. Muste, The Automobile Industry and Organized Labour (Baltimore, 1936), 25-6

119. "Solidarity Wins Point", The Worker, 4 April 1936

120. Keeran, The Communist Party, 148-59, 184

121. Canadian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry (Toronto, 1959), 3

122. TDS, 1, 2, 4 May, 16 July, 16 August 1935; Daily Clarion (DC), 18 June, 8 August 1936

123. TDS, 9 November 1935

124. David Montgomery, "The Past and Future of Workers' Control", Radical America, 13 (November-December 1979), 14-16

125. "Solidarity Wins Point", The Worker, 4 April 1936

126. M.L. to the editor, DC, 21 November 1936

127. WSU, Reuther Library, Henry Kraus Papers, Box 7, "Strikers Feel Information Carried By Spotters Cause of Strike", no date; James Napier, Memories of Building the UAW (Toronto, 1975), 8-10

128. "Ford Plant Union Talk Siezes Men", DC, 8 August 1936

129. The account of the Kelsey-Hayes strike provided here is based on Napier, Memories; the account in the Henry Kraus papers: PAC, SLF, Vol.380, file 190; WSU, Reuther Archives, Joe Brown Papers, Scrapbooks, Vol.4

130. Napier, Memories, 15; Joe Brown Scrapbooks, Detroit News, clipping, 30 December 1936

131. Victor Reuther, The Brothers Reuther and the Story of the UAW: A Memoir (Boston, 1976), 140-41

132. Napier, Memories, 17. It is instructive that Napier targets Reuther for special blame. The latter, of course, became the arch-adversary of the communists in the UAW, whereas Richard Frankensteen became a CP ally in the faction fights after 1937.

133. Keeran, The Communist Party, 158-59

134. Reports from Frank Haslam, DC, 19 December 1936, 9 January 1937

135. Abella, Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour, 23-24. Abella's failure to contextualize the Oshawa struggle leads him to explain the strikers' insistence on aligning with the UAW rather condescendingly, in terms of a national inferiority complex: "workers in Oshawa and across the country seemed to think that only American unions could provide the necessary muscle to protect and forward their interests. It was such an attitude, based, perhaps, more on sentiment than fact, which, more than anything else, has doomed national unions in Canada." The burden of my argument has been that the demand for affiliation to the UAW was entirely rational given the history of earlier attempts at unionization in Canada. Conversely, "national" versus "international" unionism, as far as I have been able to determine, was a non-issue.

CHAPTER EIGHT

COMMUNISM AND THE NEEDLE TRADES: FACTIONALISM AND DUAL UNIONISM, 1922-1936

The first union formed independently by the CPC during the 1928 "left turn" was the Industrial Union of Needle Trades' Workers (IUNTW), the creation of which represented the first climax of the "left" versus "right" factionalism that had pervaded garment industry unionism in the 1920s. Why was this phenomenon endemic in the needle trades? What impact did factional struggles have on the character of needle trades' unionism? And what specific contribution did communists make as factionalists and as organizers of the unorganized? This chapter considers these and other issues. In general, the particular intensity of needle trades' factionalism arose out of the nexus of the industry's structure, production relations, and profoundly politicized workforce. We begin by examining their interrelationships.

The decisive structural features of the Canadian garment industry were extreme seasonality of production, small productive units in both men's and women's clothing, and extensive utilization of outside contractors, all of which contributed to the problems of maintaining union organization. Seasonality was a major source of instability and economic hardship. In the spring and fall "busy seasons", running

respectively from February to April and July to October, production proceeded at a frantic pace with long periods of overtime. Relatively high earnings attracted a huge workforce to the garment districts of Montreal and Toronto. But in the "slack periods" this workforce experienced "inordinate and oppressive unemployment." In the busy season unions built their memberships; in the quiet seasons, with individuals vying for jobs and struggling to avoid victimization, union organization invariably slumped.[1]

In Canada both men's and women's clothing were typically manufactured in small shops. In 1931 sixty per cent of men's clothing workers were in factories with less than 200 employees; 127 of 182 shops had fewer than 50 workers, and only two had more than 500.[2] Women's garment shops were smaller still. Between 1922 and 1928 the number of factories rose from 293 to 444, but the average number of employees fell from 38 to 32.[3] Small shops proliferated because of the ease with which would-be entrepreneurs could set up contract shops with a few sewing machines and minimal capital. Outside the larger manufacturers and wholesalers there existed in effect a dispersed system of assembly-line production, with contractors producing one part of a garment or assembling pre-cut sections. Contract shops were almost always non-union, operated on a piece-work basis and had wage rates as much as 50 per cent lower than in the sporadically organized "inside" shops. The latter, by threatening further contracting-out, regularly forced the

unions to accept wage reductions or increased production quotas. Nothing approaching stable union control existed in this period.

Union leaders considered outside contracting the industry's greatest evil. At a mass meeting of Montreal cloakmakers in 1922 International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) President Ben Schlesinger pilloried the "riff-raff [who were] strangling the legitimate manufacturers and .... doing much harm to the workers."[4] The ILGWU and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACW), the dominant union in men's clothing, tried to forge an alliance with the "legitimate" manufacturers against the contractors, ignoring the fact that the larger companies benefited from the system. The Toronto ACW on one occasion informed the "inside" manufacturers that it was "not the union's business" to organize the contract shops. The manufacturers disagreed and the contract shops remained non-union.[5]

Immediately before and during the world war, the garment unions were in a sufficiently powerful position to enforce union-management cooperation. After the 1920-22 employers' offensive, however, their appeals for cooperation stemmed entirely from a perceived position of weakness. All the garment unions suffered severe membership losses in the early 1920s. The ACW was driven out of Hamilton and seriously weakened in Montreal and Toronto, while after a defeated

strike in 1920 the ILGWU saw its Toronto membership slump from 1,400 to 300.[6] The ACW staged a partial recovery when the economy turned upwards after 1925, but the ILGWU's revival had to wait until the mid-1930s.

Rebuilding union strength in the 1920s was complicated by internal divisions in an increasingly heterogeneous workforce. Many manufacturers, a Montreal correspondent reported to the ACW's weekly Advance, "made it a practice to recruit ... workers from among different nationalities ... to keep the workers divided among themselves."[7] The ACW combatted this difficulty by chartering "language" locals on an industrial basis, supplementing the established Jewish and Anglo-Canadian craft locals (of cutters, pressers, operators and so forth). Although this tactic carried a danger of institutionalizing ethnic rivalry, there was general agreement by both left and right that it was necessary to organize and hold increasing numbers of Italians, Slavs and French Canadians.[8] One of the ILGWU's main problems concerned the influx of Anglo-Canadian and French Canadian women into the industry, particularly into dressmaking. The union began discussing the possibility of organizing these women in Toronto as early as 1922, and with the assistance of the Toronto District Labour Council (TDLC) launched an organizing drive in 1924, only to see the attempt founder on the "mutual suspicion" prevailing between Anglo-Canadian women and the Jewish unionists who ran the ILGWU.[9]

Both the ACW and ILGWU actively recruited a female membership, in which regard they were considerably more progressive than the many unions which avoided organizing women or actually proscribed them. On the other hand, with women making up 50 per cent of the workforce in men's clothing and 75 per cent in women's, failure to organize them would have been suicidal. It was a generally held belief in the labour movement that women were fundamentally lacking in class consciousness and therefore especially difficult to organize. Women, it was felt, tended to look on wage labour as a brief interlude between adolescence and marriage and failed to perceive the long-term importance of building trade unionism.[10] Some male-dominated trade unions used this argument as a pretext for apathy. The garment unions, unable to afford the luxury of condescension, drew the lesson that special efforts were necessary to recruit women. Hence they periodically reduced initiation fees for women, used women organizers whenever possible and encouraged women to be active in union affairs. It appears that women unionists were more active on the "social" side of union life; at one dance convened by the Toronto ACW English Local 233 it was the "Ladies' Committee - Sisters Finch, Hilley, Wigley, Moore, Kelly, Cliff and Gracey" who "provided and served" the refreshments. This does not mean that women were shunted into "auxiliary" work by male prejudice; women may have preferred to play their part in a familiar, unthreatening environment. On the other

hand, Mary Finch, a veteran garment worker, was President of Local 233 in 1927.[11] Moreover, when Montreal ILGWU business agent Israel Feinberg found that several hundred women coat finishers in the industrial Local 43 were "staying away from meetings because they don't find it congenial to meet together with the men", he informed the international office that he was considering chartering a separate women's finishers' local.

The garment unions found that during upswings in class struggle they could recruit women members. The ILGWU was delighted to organize 400 French Canadian women during a cloak-makers' strike in Montreal in February 1925, and ACW organizer Julie Lesniak had some success in organizing Polish women during another Montreal strike in March 1930.[12] It does seem, however, that women were usually less likely to join and more likely to leave. Apart from the cultural barriers which may have left women reluctant to intrude on a masculine environment, it was also the case that the garment unions did little to challenge the super-exploitation of women or their job "ghettoization". The systematic existence of sexual wage differentials, frequently paying male workers double the female rate for the same job, and the exclusion of women from the most highly paid crafts, such as cutting and pressing, made union membership relatively much more expensive for women and sustained the material basis of their "lower" class consciousness.[13]

When the left's factional challenge got under way in the mid-1920s, one of the communists' main criticisms of right-wing leadership was that it "lacked the will to organize ... [or] the required mental baggage for the task." There is evidence that attempts to organize newcomers to the industry were prompted by this criticism. Certainly communists had significant influence among Slavic and Italian garment workers, suggesting that it was they who were the most active rank and file organizers.[14]

At the core of the communist critique was the view that the right had abandoned the socialist principles on which both the ILGWU and ACW had been founded and had come to terms with the bourgeois order. In the 1910s mass strikes and rank and file shop control had co-existed with, but were gradually being superseded by, more bureaucratic forms of unionism: city-wide collective bargaining between union joint boards and employers' organizations, mediation of disputes arising in the life of a contract by "impartial arbitrators", and union-enforced "standards of production" as an alternative to piece-work and the threat of uncontrolled sub-contracting.[15] The central figure in the development of what was termed, borrowing from another time and place, the "New Unionism" was ACW President Sidney Hillman. A pragmatic radical who stood outside the New York Jewish socialist mainstream, Hillman saw the institutionalization of industrial relations in the needle

trades as a simple tactical necessity. Unlike several of his colleagues who insisted that the "New Unionism", with its labour banks, insurance companies and real estate investments, was "in the fullest sense anti-capitalistic", Hillman unashamedly acknowledged its collaborationist essence. "If the firm makes a good profit", he observed, "the workers are in a better position to ask for a raise. When the employer goes out of business, the workers lose their jobs. The success of the business is something which both the employer and the union consider of first importance."[16]

Some union leaders were embarrassed and defensive about their deviation from pure class struggle principles. An editorial in the ILGWU's weekly Justice in 1925 argued that everything the union did was aimed ultimately at "weakening the power of capital in our industry". Presumably, the decision of the union's 1924 international convention to drop the socialist preamble from its constitution was one such anti-capitalist act. The ILGWU's official biographer, writing also in 1924, was more candid: socialism had become "a more or less distant goal which [in the view of the ILGWU leadership] can be attained only by means of a general change after the workers have acquired the qualifications necessary for the responsibilities of economic life."[17] To the left, deferral of socialist goals, categorical rejection of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism for the foreseeable future, and the realities of acquiring "qualifications" for the exercise of

political power were symptoms of degeneration and defeatism.

Factionalism had been an accepted part of life in the garment trades since the early 1900s. But until the emergence of the Trade Union Educational League (TUEL) splits had been based largely on questions of tactics and organization. After 1922, such issues became "complicated by general political and social questions" as the New York-based Jewish left, of which sections of the Jewish communities of Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg were satellites, split culturally and politically into bolshevik and non-bolshevik groupings, each with its discrete set of politico-cultural institutions: Jewish Daily Forward or Freiheit; Arbeiter Ring or Arbeiten Kultur Ferband; Socialist Party or Communist Party.[18] Partisans of the two ideological positions worked and fought together daily in the needle trades.

A needle trades' section of the TUEL first appeared in Canada in September 1922, and immediately extracted a promise from ILGWU President Ben Schlesinger to "ferret out the rats ... undermining our local [Montreal] union edifice."[19] In reality, however, its early activities were sporadic and carried little threat to the right-wing leadership. As late as 1924 only a handful of communist shop "nuclei" were operating in Toronto, while in Montreal the entire party "fraction" in all branches of the needle trades, with a total workforce of over 10,000, numbered 19 persons.[20] On the other

hand, 1924 also saw the ILGWU international convention proscribe the TUEL and the CPC's Jewish Propaganda Committee launch its own Yiddish weekly, the Kampf.[21] These developments quickened the pace of ideological division.

Compared with contemporary events in the United States, factionalism in the ILGWU's Canadian locals was remarkably muted.[22] When the international office underwrote organizing drives in 1924-25 and 1927-28, communists actively participated, restricting their opposition to criticism of the international organizers' aversion from strike action and emphasis on class collaboration.[23] Such opposition as they offered, however, still proved offensive to the right-wing ILGWU leadership in Toronto and New York. During Julius Hochman's 1925 organizing drive the Toronto Joint Board (TJB) announced plans to investigate the lefts, and an editorial in Justice counselled the Canadian rank and file to beware the "Satan of internal disorder, factional fighting and disunion", portentously observing: "We may yet have to return to this subject at some other time."[24] In 1927 TJB Manager Sol Polakoff attributed the union's weak condition "in considerable measure, to the pernicious activity of a group of Communists ... who acting jointly with their fellow disrupters in other cities, have diverted the energy of the workers from constructive work to strife and confusion."[25]

With both left and right accepting that the external

pressures of contracting and the influx of non-Jewish women workers into the industry had to be combatted, an individual's position in the factional fight depended on whether he/she approved the left's call for continuous struggle or the right's collaborationist approach. The CPC placed its line on a more solid organizational footing after April 1925, when following the renewed call for bolshevization the Jewish section in Toronto became increasingly "active in organizing shop committees ... [to generate] ... a maximum number of left wing sympathizers" in the forthcoming ILGWU elections.[26] In the autumn the left won a dominant position in Cloak Operators' Local 14, electing CPC member Max Shur President. Although Local 14 remained a left-wing bastion until 1928, the left's lack of influence elsewhere suggests that most rank and filers at that moment were not predisposed to engage in militant struggle. When Polakoff reneged on a promise to launch a general strike in the spring 1928 season - on the basis of which he had won communist assistance in organizing through the previous winter - there was little protest from the rank and file.[27] The right responded by moving against communist influence in Local 14; the left by formulating plans for an entirely new union.[28]

While these events were taking place, factional struggle developed to a much higher level in the ACW, not least because the men's clothing union was more capable of

withstanding the strain of a sharp political struggle. Yet ironically, until 1924 Communists portrayed the ACW as a shining example of the united front in action; so much so, the union's Secretary-Treasurer Joseph Schlossberg observed in 1927, that their effusive praise was actually embarrassing![29] The reason for the left's approval was Sidney Hillman's sponsorship of the Russian-American Industrial Corporation, by means of which funds were raised and American machinery and expertise exported to reconstruct the Russian clothing industry. When support for the Soviet Union was the left's yardstick of political probity, Hillman's pro-Soviet role stifled criticism of his domestic role as protagonist of the "New Unionism". In 1924, however, this situation changed when Hillman supported the expulsion of the CPUSA from the Conference of Progressive Labor Action in order to win Robert M. LcFollette's acceptance of its nomination as Farmer-Labor candidate in the 1924 Presidential election.[30] From that point, Communists referred to him in exactly the same terms as his counterparts in the ILGWU.

Several factors contributed to the vigorous nature of the left's factional challenge in Canada. There was a particularly strong residue of support in the ACW for class struggle tactics and socialism. As one historian has noted, the ACW was "the lodestone of the leftward movement" among immigrant workers in the period of the First World War and its aftermath.[31] Even in the political downturn of the 1920s

these views persisted. They were reflected in Schlossberg's and The Advance editor J.B.S. Hardman's efforts to place a radical veneer on Hillman's unapologetic pragmatism, but were held more convincingly by several CPC members who had played pioneering roles in building the ACW in Canada: John Boychuk, James Blugerman and Abe Temkin in Toronto; Mike Buhay, Jack Margolese and Isaac Shulman in Montreal. Communists had a sufficiently high profile in the ACW to be considered as a genuine alternative leadership before the emergence of factionalism; through the 1920s they frequently held local office.[32]

The CPC's strongest argument against Hillman's "New Unionism" was its predication on a degree of cartelization that simply did not exist in Canada. While some of the largest men's ready-made clothing companies in the USA were willing to grant union recognition, their equivalents in Canada - Eaton's and Simpson's - were resolutely anti-union. Moreover middle-sized companies found sub-contracting and the "runaway" system too convenient. Where a high degree of union control did not already exist, establishing city-wide "standards of production" was virtually impossible, and even where union recognition existed it was frequently meaningless. Manufacturers played one union shop off against another: "each shop or each man fighting for himself took the place of collective action, with the result of favoritism, discrimination, and still further demoralization." By 1924,

Mike Buhay claimed, the dues-paying membership in Montreal was 700 - out of a paper membership of 5,000 - and the only rank and filers who attended union meetings were the unemployed, who were endeavouring "to impress the officialdom with the seriousness of their situation."[33]

Sidney Hillman's biographer provides support for this account. In both Montreal and Toronto, he admitted, the rank and file "had real grievances against the local leadership."[34] They were therefore receptive to the TUEL manifesto issued in April 1925, which called on them to reappropriate the militant traditions of "the Amalgamated Spirit" and prepare themselves for a more active role in running the union, with the shop committee rather than the Joint Board the centre of union life. The left called for a fight to achieve the 40-hour week, complete eradication of piece-work and the institution of maximum standards of production; and also for strengthened shop control by eliminating probationary periods and the bosses' right to suspend workers without a hearing.[35]

At the end of the fall season, the Montreal Joint Board responded to mounting criticism by resigning en masse and refusing to run a single candidate in the ensuing elections. The entire left wing slate was returned by acclamation.[36] In Toronto left-wing expectations of a similar coup were dashed by a surprisingly conclusive victory for the incumbent Rosenberg-Strom Joint Board leadership. It transpired,

however, that the election had been rigged. Full disclosure of the facts coincided with a visit to Toronto by Joseph Schlossberg, who had been called to Toronto to help the Joint Board resist demands for fresh elections. Confronted with the true facts, an embarrassed Schlossberg had no alternative but to dismiss Rosenberg and Strom. A new election resulted in the victory of a united front slate of Temkin and S. Stolberg, who was not a communist, as Joint Board Managers.[37] Thus, by April 1926 the left was a dominant force in both major garment centres.

Communists knew that the hard part of their programme lay ahead. It had been relatively easy to supplant a discredited leadership, but mobilizing the mass of the rank and file was another matter. In Montreal they spent the winter of 1925-26 instilling confidence in the membership. They fulfilled promises to reduce operating expenditures by cutting the number of business agents from five to three and the level of full-timers' salaries to below that of the average industrial wage, encouraged workers to attend regular shop meetings, and called several shop strikes to enforce the 44-hour week.[38]

The union also faced the problem of winning the international leadership's support for its planned organizing drive: Sidney Hillman's response would be crucial. Perhaps surprisingly, Hillman gave the left its head. From June onwards he lavished assistance on Canadian organizing drives,

not only in Montreal but also in Toronto and Hamilton. At the same time, he made sure that the international leadership gained the maximum amount of kudos, first by presenting its three international organizers, Hyman Schneid and Sander Genis in Montreal and Nathan Wertheimer in Toronto/Hamilton, as the orchestrators of the drive - conveniently ignoring the left's preparatory work - then by striking a militant posture that wrenched back possession of the "Amalgamated spirit". Hillman and Schlossberg spent several days in Montreal before and during the general strike, which began on 28 July, urging mass meetings to remember the value of unity and solidarity. As The Advance pointed out, their presence provided "ample proof ... that [the ACW] will spare no efforts ... to completely unionize the Montreal clothing market." The union endorsed militant picketing, and after 5,500 workers returned to union conditions on 9 August, it kept the strike going for a further three months at three hold-out shops. Although these strikes petered out, the international leadership had done enough to outflank the left's challenge.[39]

The campaign in Toronto and Hamilton was less dynamic and less successful. Instead of proceeding with a general strike in Toronto, as the left urged, Wertheimer concentrated on reviving the union in Hamilton, arguing that as the main "out-of-town" centre for Toronto manufacturers, Hamilton had to be made secure before Toronto could be tackled. But despite

claims that Hamilton was "well on the way to becoming unionized", the drive foundered.[40] Not until September were strikes called there, and even then only at two shops. Moreover, the international union contributed only a tiny fraction of the cost of maintaining them: local members contributed $15,200 of the $16,000 raised for their support. The strikes were kept going throughout the winter, but despite the approach of the spring season, which raised hopes that the shops would be forced to settle, Hillman personally intervened to call them off in February 1927.[41]

Why the international's role in the two organizing drives was so different is hard to explain, but over all it was surely designed to combat the left wing challenge. Hillman underlined his tactical flexibility by replacing the militant postures of 1926 with a new campaign of class collaboration in 1927. Piece-work had long been anathema to the ACW membership, but with even increasingly demanding "standards of production" proving incapable of buying cooperation from the manufacturers, Hillman decided that the union had to permit piece-work in its contracts. In May 1927 he sent Sander Genis and Elias Rabkin, editor of Fortschritt, the union's Yiddish weekly, to conduct an "educational campaign" in Montreal and Toronto. The Advance was tactfully silent on the course of their campaign, but the content of their educationals can be gleaned from one of the paper's contemporary editorials. This denied that the union intended

wholesale introduction of piece-work, adding that in any event piece-work would still be governed by "standards of production" agreements and hence would not be detrimental to union conditions. However, it concluded by asserting that "the only tenable position [is] that whether or not piece-rates are preferable to a time-basis of pay, the union shop is preferable to a non-union shop, under all circumstances."[42] In effect, the union was recognizing its inability to sustain existing union conditions.

According to The Worker 700 ACW members at a mass meeting in Toronto gave Genis and Rabkin a "hot reception". Time-work had been a recognized principle ever since the formation of the ACW in Canada, while the case against piece-work was stronger than ever. As the left saw it, apart from intensifying the work process, piece-work would raise productivity to a level that would inevitably lead to increased unemployment, which in turn would undermine job security for the employed. Its logical outcome was a return to the open shop. As always, the left's answer was militant struggle until every contract shop was in the union.[43]

On this occasion, however, the left failed to carry the rank and file In June Hillman joined Genis and Rabkin in Canada to prepare the ground for an all-out assault on left-wing control. In the run-up to the September local union elections He used his prestige to discredit the "puppets of

the Trade Union Educational League", alleging that they had failed to carry out such basic union tasks as collecting dues and had undermined working class unity by campaigning against the international leadership. The ACW, Hillman observed, had a deserved reputation for encouraging political debate, but since the TUEL had abused the limits of tolerance, it had to be met with "firmness".[44] Hillman's attack transformed the elections into a vote of confidence: the international leadership or the left? Not surprisingly, the left suffered a smashing defeat in the election of business agents, all five of its candidates losing by margins of between five and twenty to one.[45]

The international leadership then moved to consolidate its victory in the election of Toronto business agents and local executives in the two cities. For this struggle propaganda alone was not enough. According to The Worker, Hillman issued a blanket warning to leftists that they faced expulsion if they continued overt factional activity, while international officials spent over $10,000 buying the support of those they could not intimidate.[46] Whether all these charges were true, the international officials did suspend several leading militants, personally supervised elections in two left-wing locals - Local 209 in Montreal and Local 211 in Toronto - and lifted the charter of Italian Local 235 in Toronto, placing themselves in a position to determine eligibility both to vote and to stand in the election.

Deprived of its best known candidates, the left had to run replacements who lacked personal standing. All went down to defeat.[47]

The most surprising feature of the second batch of elections was that the left's margin of defeat in the election of Toronto business agents was much narrower, running at less than two to one in the right's favour. A possible explanation of the discrepancy is that while the majority of the rank and file supported Hillman with varying degrees of enthusiasm, some Toronto rank and filers may have felt that the international's role in the 1926-27 strikes vindicated the TUEL's case, whereas their Montreal counterparts had seen the left fail to consolidate union control in the year since the general strike (the only two strikes fought in 1927, against a wage-reduction and the imposition of piece-work, had been lost). The majority in the two centres may have hoped that in supporting Hillman, even if it meant accepting piece-work, they might exert a degree of control over what, apparently, could not be defeated.[48]

In the early months of 1928 the left was encouraged by evidence of residual influence in Toronto to step up its anti-administration propaganda. When it issued a series of leaflets attacking the Joint Board's conduct of negotiations for a new contract, it brought the factional struggle to a climax. The Joint Board, moving to complete the "liquidation

of leftism", imposed a total ban on factional literature and warned that any member distributing TUEL leaflets or copies of the Kampf in union shops would face severe disciplinary action. Six tailors were subsequently charged with flaunting the ban, and after refusing to turn up at their disciplinary hearing they were expelled from the union and fired from their jobs. An attempt by the TUEL to call out workers from the shops involved only brought further expulsions, of around twenty-five unionists. And when the TUEL then tried to make political capital from the union's repressive acts, The Advance suggested that workers tempted to show sympathy for the expelled men think first about the case of Trotsky and his followers.[49] With anti-communism on the rise in both main garment unions, it was an appropriate moment for a tactical stocktaking.[50]

The decision to launch the IUNTW was taken with remarkable swiftness, given that in the United States, where expulsions from the international garment unions had occurred on a much heavier scale, the same decision came several months later.[51] In May 1928 an account of the "Present Situation in the Toronto Cloakmakers" in the Young Worker indicated that the Canadian left had been holding discussions with the "New York and Chicago rank and file" and were in agreement with the necessity of "tak[ing] the situation into their own hands and build[ing] up a strong industrial union."[52]

If the implications here were not entirely clear, Maurice Spector removed any doubt that the CPC planned to launch a dual union when he announced to a meeting of 5,000 Montreal garment workers on 1 June that: "We will now build our own unions; build them from the bottom up; unions of and for the rank and file and not company unions for the benefit of the bosses."[53] But why were hew "rank and file" unions necessary? And why, in particular, was the go-ahead given so promptly to the IUNTW?

The party's explanation for the formation of the industrial union was that the "company" unions (this became a stock pejorative) had signally failed to organize more than a fraction of their potential membership, had ventured outside Montreal and Toronto with reluctance, and had been indifferent or insensitive to Canadian needs.[54] The last consideration was the most novel and the most significant. It pointed to the left's increasing orientation on the All-Canadian Congress of Labour (ACCL), using the national dimension as the main argument against renewed and intensified factional struggle and the ACCL itself as an answer to the inevitable complaints that dual unionism was a recipe for isolation. After the IUNTW's launch in August 1928 it had considerable contact with the ACCL, and the latter's leaders expected to gain its affiliation. As late as September 1929 J. B. Salsberg, IUNTW National Secretary, held out this prospect in an article in the ACCL's Canadian Unionist. In this instance,

however, Salsberg was making a last personal stand against the party's rapid progress towards complete trade union independence. The IUNTW never affiliated to the national centre, and by the end of 1929 Salsberg had resigned from the union and been expelled by the party.[55]

Two other factors influenced the early launch of the IUNTW. One was the party's desire to comply with the decisions of the Fourth Congress of the Red International of Labour Unions, held in Moscow in March 1928, at which Canada's representative, Mike Buhay, won approval for the CPC's "present policy that unorganized workers should be encouraged to join Canadian unions", and where the main tactical thrust was towards the formation of "red" unions.[56] Another was the role of youth in the industry and in the party. The YCL had always been particularly active in the garment trades, agitating for full right of union participation for young workers, as well as reduced initiation fees and membership dues commensurate with their lower earnings. It had long argued that one of the garment unions' main shortcomings was a hidebound leadership lacking in concern for the problems of younger members. When debate on splitting from the internationals began, it seems likely that YCL members pushed hardest for a break, playing the same role in the garment unions as their organization did generally.

Like the later decision to launch the WUL, the creation

of the IUNTW was not preceded by any substantial discussion at the rank and file level. It was not clear, for example, whether the union would concentrate solely on organizing the unorganized or intended to recruit members of the existing unions. It gradually became clear that its first priority was to organize dressmakers in Toronto and Montreal and all branches of the trade in the growing but largely neglected Winnipeg market. Nevertheless, before the IUNTW was officially launched, it operated as the Cloak and Dressmakers' Union, indicating its intention to challenge the ILGWU.[58] Its early policy with regards to other garment unions, such as the ACW and the International Fur Workers' Union (IFWU), was also vague. Immediately after the IUNTW's founding convention, for example, Communists tried to set themselves up as an alternative leadership during an ACW general strike in Montreal. But even after the international union seized this perfect opportunity to present itself to the public as a responsible organization, voting at a mass meeting to expel communists "non seulement des rangs de l'Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Union, mais aussi de tous les ateliers de la confection des vetements d'hommes", the CPC continued to follow factional tactics aimed at making the ACW a "fighting" union.[59] Similarly, in the Toronto locals of the International Fur Workers' Union (IFWU) the party made a major push to force a split early in 1929; then in June, while claiming that it controlled Local 40, Toronto's largest, it announced that no

split would be carried out until the left had built its influence in Locals 35 and 65, and urged leftists to stay in and "strengthen the fight against reaction".[60] In November 1929, however, the party Political Committee voted to discipline members in the needle trades who refused to leave the internationals.[61]

Called on to operate a murky strategy on which they had scarcely been consulted, rank and file party members exhibited "a lot of nervousness - almost pessimism." One needle trades' organizer described a fraction meeting as "fruitful (though rough)", an indication that rank and filers were not loathe to point out the dangers of openly identifying themselves as communists.[62] As far as activity in the "company" unions was concerned, lack of tactical unanimity remained a nagging problem.

The party's internal problems did nothing to ease those of the union, of which one of the most pressing was a lack of competent organizers. The various purges of Trotskyists and Lovestoneites in 1929-30 deprived the union of a valuable cadre of needle trades activists. In January 1929, for example, ten of twenty expelled Trotskyists were garment workers, while early in 1930 Mike Buhay and Jack Margolese were among those expelled as "right opportunists".[63] In his year as National Secretary J. B. Salsberg appealed time and again for additional organizers and financial support, and

grew increasingly disillusioned when not only was neither forthcoming, but two of his best organizers, Norman Freed and Joe Farbey, were dispatched to YCL jobs. When Salsberg left the union in November 1929, it was in desperate straits.[64]

Many of the difficulties facing the fledgling union were exposed during its first industrial action, at the Durable Waterproof Factory in Toronto. There was no questioning the union's militancy or resolution. It kept the strike going from November 1928 to February 1929, maintained militant picket lines, and sustained the strikers' morale by house-to-house collections and dances. However its argument that "it should be the duty of all class-conscious workers" to support the strike only underlined the union's lack of preparation. Defeat produced an immediate slump in morale and membership.[65]

Against this experience, the union could claim early successes in Winnipeg, where communists had gained a small foothold in 1926 when they led an unsuccessful furriers' strike. Since then, despite a growing garment industry, both the furriers' local and a small ILGWU local had gone out of existence, leaving the IUNTW with only the manufacturers to fight. Between March and July 1929 the industrial union led five strikes involving various groups in both men's and women's clothing. All but one brought gains, and even the single defeat at the Western Glove Company was to some extent offset by the union's success in bringing out in solidarity

150 workers from other shops.[66] It was instructive, however, that all the gains made were economic. In every instance a demand for elimination of piece-work was not conceded, an indication that the IUNTW shared the international unions' inability to reverse the erosion of workers' control.

Outside Winnipeg successes were scarce, a fact the party leadership attributed to the union's retention of craft locals. In 1930, therefore, the union abandoned its old structure in favour of a "revolutionary" democratic centralist arrangement based on industrial shop groups. This change, Annie Buller predicted, would activize the membership and bring forward fresh rank and file cadres.[67] In fact, it made no difference. The union was virtually inactive in 1930, unable to make a breakthrough among the unorganized and still unsure of how to operate, if at all, inside the internationals. A major source of its difficulties was revealed by Tom Ewan's response to Joshua Gershman's request for clarification on the position of party members in the international unions. Instead of examining concrete evidence from the membership's accumulated experiences, Ewan chose to pour over comintern documents before coming up with the answer that "a certain amount of flexibility" was required.[68] When the party leadership reviewed the development of the IUNTW in preparation for its Second National Convention in 1931, this same refusal to consider seriously the realities of the Canadian situation was evident. Scarcely a mention was made of working class

demoralization, police repression or mass unemployment. Instead, the union's stagnation was primarily attributed to bureaucratic tendencies on the part of the union leaders, who had allegedly been more concerned with the quality of their office furnishings than with building the union.[69]

The union's only consolation in the early 1930s was that its rivals were suffering just as much hardship. After 1931 the ILGWU Toronto Joint Board conceded so much ground to the employers and clamped down so firmly on the minority of rank and file members who wanted to fight that TJB Manager Abe Kirzner informed the international office that unless "we take a drastic step and put some teeth into our organization ... we will be wiped off the map."[70] A succession of wage-cuts granted by the ACW between 1929-32 resulted in a massive rank and file revolt in Montreal, which resulted in the international union's replacement by a new ACCL union, the United Clothing Workers of Canada, in the summer of 1932.[71] With "spreading pessimism and uneasiness in the ranks" of the international unions, openings began to appear for the IUNTW.[72]

The IUNTW shared with its international counterparts the same problems of rank and file demoralization, poorly attended union meetings and sporadic dues payments. Where it differed from them was in its refusal to be intimidated by the depression. The communist leadership's stress on willpower and resoluteness may have blinded them to genuine practical

difficulties, leaving them vulnerable to defeat and more demoralization, but it also drove them to make efforts that brought real gains in union organization. When the IUNTW concentrated on organizing the unorganized, it began to prosper. Its largest achievement was organization of the dress trade.

When the IUNTW was first organized, a Trotskyist observer wrote in 1930, "over 300 young dressmakers flocked to join", only for the dressmakers' local to collapse because of the party's failure "to give the young leadership of the local the necessary lead and advice."[73] Its rapid rise and fall motivated the ILGWU, which in the view of the same source had long been skeptical about the possibility of organizing the dressmakers, to launch a new drive. After the ILGWU won a Toronto cloakmakers' strike in February 1930 - a victory that proved short-lived -- it chartered Dressmakers' Local 72 and recruited on the basis of a promise to strike against the "unspeakable" conditions prevailing in the dress trade. Not until the latter part of 1930, however, when it was faced with renewed industrial union activity, did the ILGWU begin serious preparations for a general strike.[74]

Although the IUNTW made heavy play of the illusory nature of the cloakmakers' 1930 "victory", it was clearly losing the competition for the dressmakers' allegiance when it called a dress strike on 13 January 1931. On the same day as an

ILGWU mass meeting attracted 1,000 dressmakers no more than 300 dressmakers answered the IUNTW strike call. In less than a week the strike collapsed, the ILGWU having provided strikebreakers from among its own unemployed members.[75]

The dressmakers' preference for the international union probably stemmed from the same reasons that, for example, sent Oshawa's striking auto workers into an AFL Federal Labour Union rather than the communist-led Auto Workers' Industrial Union in 1928. As one participant in the American organizing drives of the 1930s later put it: "Workers becoming newly unionized tend to gravitate towards the official labor movement, no matter what its condition may be at the time."[76] The ILGWU had tradition, prestige, financial backing and a style of organizing which probably related more effectively to the consciousness of the dressmakers. When it told them there was "a proper manner to handle a trade dispute", meaning in this instance the exploration of every possibility of finding a peaceful settlement before authorizing strike action, it spoke to their inexperience in trade unionism and, no less important, their desperate economic situation.[77] On the other hand, it also spoke to its own desperate desire to avoid a strike. The ILGWU established 23 January as the first strike deadline, but that date was only one of several to come and go before the union finally took a strike ballot. Exactly one month later, the dressmakers voted by 863 to 126 for strike action. On 24 February 1,500 of them answered the call.[78]

The second dressmakers' strike placed a question mark against several of the CPC's contentions regarding the irredeemably treacherous character of the ILGWU leadership. The latter may have been reluctant to fight; they may even have hoped that by providing strikebreakers during the IUNTW strike they would encourage the dress manufacturers to offer a satisfactory compromise; but when the strike was called, they fought with a vigour belying their earlier caution. Their strike demands were no less extensive than the industrial union had demanded: wage increases of 10 to 15 per cent; a 44-hour week with over-time limited to 2½ hours a day and no weekend work; and shop level arbitration of such issues as piece-rates, vacancies, discipline and dismissals. One contemporary analyst noted: "Naturally such control is opposed by the employers who see threatened not only their authority ... but also their profits if the chance of taking rush profits is denied them."[79] The militancy of the union's picketing was reflected in over 100 arrests made in the course of the ten week strike. The hard-pressed international office contributed $30,000 in strike pay - additional funds came from the Jewish labour movement locally - and also made available a women organizer, Sadie Reisch of the National Women's Trade Union League. When the strike was terminated on 7 May, the ILGWU announced that 75 per cent of the strikers were now working under union conditions and that the struggle would continue to earn similar gains for the remainder. Although

it did not say how it planned to continue the fight, the union had clearly established a base in the dress trade.[80]

The industrial union responded to its apparent political defeat with a display of philosophic calmness: in the long run, it argued, the really important aspect of the two strikes was that over 1,500 young women had gained the concrete experience of class struggle out of which political understanding and class consciousness would flow; moreover, when the ILGWU inevitably sold the dressmakers out, this increased class consciousness would push them to the left.[81] Refusing to be daunted by the worst years of the depression, the IUNTW began educational programmes designed "to develop a cadre of leading comrades", entered into "revolutionary competition" with its English counterpart, and even called some strikes: 6 in 1931, 7 in 1932, and 9 in 1933.[82] Meanwhile, Local 72 folded during 1932.[83]

Between 1931-33 the IUNTW dress campaign had to be more a war of attrition than a frontal assault. The union set aside its earlier predilection for striking on any pretext and quietly abandoned its pure "revolutionary" structure. In both Toronto and Montreal, where in 1931 it had two French Canadian organizers at work, the union established dress pressers' and cutters' clubs as transitional union forms. In 1932 further flexibility was shown, when the Montreal Dress Cutters' Union (MDCU) was formed under communist leadership. This was a concession to craft se[redacted]tism, but as one of its organizers later

noted, it was simply easier to recruit "men ... who knew that they were going to make a living by remaining in the trade." Moreover, the MDCU's left-wing leadership was notably successful in winning their members' support for dressmakers' strikes. In Toronto the pressers' and cutters' clubs were not as advanced, but by 1933 the industrial union claimed to have organized 25 per cent of the cutters and 80 per cent of the pressers. The latter, a traditionally privileged group now threatened by heavy steam presses, were often involved in IUNTW strikes.[84]

ILGWU officials were well aware of these developments. Hyman Langer reported from Toronto that the pressers' and cutters' clubs were bedevilled by "inner strife and lack of accomplishment" and if necessary could easily be "smashed". He was quite prepared to do the smashing, since "if we ignore [them] it will afford the [IUNTW] an opportunity of entrenchment and this would prove detrimental to us." He had allowed a group of ILGWU sympathisers in the dress trade to use the premises of the defunct Local 72, but "in spite of our personal sympathetic leanings ... we have avoided directly taking part or assisting them."[85]

While the ILGWU continued only to observe developments in the dress trade, the IUNTW went from strength to strength. In the latter part of 1933 it held numerous shop meetings to sound out rank and file opinion on demands to be placed before

the Toronto manufacturers at the start of the following spring season. In December it moved to spacious new premises on Spadina Avenue, celebrating the event with a New Year's ball and banquet.[86]

This institutional growth reflected a general trend in the WUL towards "professionalism". Similarly, its leaders' conduct of the 1934 Toronto strike indicated the extent to which WUL practice had converged with that of the reformist unions. By the end of December 1933 the IUNTW's basic demands were known: union recognition, abolition of contracting, the 40-hour week and general wage increases. On 9 January a meeting of 800 dressmakers authorized strike action, but IUNTW Toronto Joint Board Manager Myer Klig then gave the dress manufacturers another week to come to terms. On 16 January he made an unsuccessful last-ditch attempt to achieve a peaceful settlement, and the strike began the following day.

By 22 January the vast majority of the dress shops had settled, speedy termination of the strike having resulted partly from the strikers' solidarity but mainly as a consequence of the union's willingness to compromise. The union gained recognition and some of its wage demands, but accepted a 44-hour week and, as a "small concession", agreed to permit a further 4 hours to be worked before overtime pay became due; in effect, it accepted a 48-hour week. Joe Gershman announced that "the union as well as the strike

leadership consider the agreement satisfactory. It will help in the abolition of sweatshop conditions ... and help do away with the growth of the contracting system which is a menace to the industry." Gershman's statement, and especially his new-found concern for "the industry", could have come from any ILGWU official.[87]

Despite this hint of emergent class collaborationism in the IUNTW, the communist union was still much more willing than its competitors to organize in the face of capitalist resistance; and nowhere was resistance stronger than in the Montreal dress trade. In the latter part of 1933 and immediately after the January strike, several Toronto dress manufacturers relocated in Montreal to escape the IUNTW's attention.[88] The prospect of a massive "runaway" movement made organization of the Montreal trade essential.

One of the main reasons for industrial relocation in Montreal was the sharply defined ethno-religious divisions which seemed to have immunized French Canadian workers from the WUL. Communists were intensely conscious of their persistent failure to connect with the French Canadian working class, which for them had an exotic/symbolic quality comparable to that which blacks had for the CPUSA. On one occasion, the Canadian Labour Defence League and the International Labour Defence, its American counterpart, actually entered into "revolutionary competition" over recruitment—

within these two groups.[89] The belief that French Canadians were "backward and priest-ridden" had a contradictory impact on Montreal communists. On the one hand, it was not unknown for Young Communists in particular to dismiss French Canadians as "something ... not worth bothering about ... not part of our class." But at the same time, the IUNTW was making special efforts to draw French Canadians into membership and activity by means of needle workers' "social clubs" and exposure of the widespread custom of paying young French Canadian women a dollar a day less than their Jewish colleagues.[90]

After 1932 the industrial union had increasing involvement with the mainly young French-Canadian dressmakers. As Joshua Gershman, Salsberg's successor as IUNTW National Secretary, explained, however, the French Canadian "girls" tended to take a back seat to the "more active, more militant ... Jewish girls". Organizers had to "go visit many parents ... and convince them that it's ... all right to belong to the union, that they will, because they now belong to the union, assume the dignity of labour ... Many parents agreed with us, but the Church really worked against us."[91] By 1934 the union had broken down some of the cultural barriers to unity and solidarity, but clearly much remained to be done to create a rank and file to whom these qualities came automatically.

In preparing for the Montreal dress strike, the IUNTW leadership pinned considerable hope on the possibility that the Dress Cutters' Union might enter the IUNTW, or that it would at least come out in solidarity with the dressmakers.[92] The DCU's strategic power had been demonstrated in August 1933 when a two-week strike earned it contracts in almost 100 dress shops.[93] Frank Breslow, the DCU's communist manager, supported uniting the two unions and urged his rank and file to strike in concert with the IUNTW, but was forced by his members to enter negotiations for a renewal of the 1933 contract. Fearing that a new contract signed before the dressmakers came out would almost certainly keep the cutters at work, Breslow contrived an impasse on the issue of compulsory arbitration, and when the dressmakers struck on 22 August, negotiations were still in progress. Two days later the DCU broke them off and joined the strike.[94]

The dressmakers' strike was a major manifestation of the 1934 working class upsurge and a testament to the IUNTW's increasing effectiveness as an organizer of the unorganized. Over 3,000 dressmakers struck, a figure that probably surprised the union as much as it did the Dress Manufacturers' Protective Association (DMPA). But with so many workers on strike, it was crucial to the ever-penurious union that a settlement be reached quickly, as in Toronto. Unfortunately for the union, the DMPA chose to make a stand, and the strike was lost well before the union officially called it off on

21 September.[95]

According to the CPC, defeat in Montreal stemmed from two factors. First, Montreal's capitalist class saw an industrial union victory as a potential threat to its control in all branches of industry and therefore provided the DMPA with the financial support needed to starve the union out. Secondly, the DMPA was given assistance by the ACW and ILGWU - although what this assistance consisted of was never specified.[96] There may have been something to these claims. Both groups involved had their own reasons for wanting to see the IUNTW crushed.[97] There were, however, other factors involved.

The union made one major tactical error. One week into the strike it flatly refused to accept Quebec Minister of Labour C. J. Arcand's offer of arbitration under the recently passed Labour Agreements' Extensions Act. Given the CPC's contemporary opposition to all "labour code" legislation, the union's position was understandable. Moreover, at that juncture rank and file militancy was at its peak, with strikers fighting pitched battles against police and company "goons", and Arcand's intervention was seen as a blatant attempt "to break the mighty mass strike."[98] But notwithstanding the union's justified cynicism about the likely effect of state intervention, its position was short-sighted. On the same day that Arcand made his offer, Gustave Francq,

pillar of the Montreal labour establishment and Chairman of the Provincial Minimum Wage Board, made a scathing attack on the "shameful" conditions in the dress trade and the "flagrant violations of the law" routinely perpetrated by the manufacturers.[99] In any arbitration procedure the union could have used Francq's authority to prove the justice of its demands. When it rejected this course of action out of hand - without consulting the rank and file - it played into the hands of the manufacturers, who had immediately accepted Arcand's offer and who had consistently argued that the IUNTW was more interested in making political capital than in improving conditions for its members.

The "red bogey" may well have contributed to the breakdown of solidarity among French Canadian workers. Although the union denounced as "foul lies" allegations that large numbers of French Canadians were scabbing on the strike, a view consistent with the party's desperate desire to believe that French Canadians generally were surging to the left, it does seem that the opportunity to move out of unemployment into work or from lower to better paid employment proved too great a temptation. ILGWU official Bernard Shane wrote to a Toronto colleague that 550 Jewish pressers and cutters had been replaced by French Canadians, and Joe Gershman later admitted that hundreds of Jewish dressmakers experienced similar treatment.[100]

This crushing defeat virtually ended any hope of sustaining the industrial union in Montreal. It also compromised the left's position in the international unions. In the ILGWU, Shane gloated, communists were "not to be seen nor heard ... [they] are dead to the world."[101] An indication of the unrest among the ranks of left-wing garment workers was the MDCU's decision in December 1934 to enter the ILGWU as Local 205, a decision that helped earn Frank Breslow's expulsion from the party.[102] By the spring of 1935 Gershman was privately admitting that "the possibilities of building an IUNTW in Montreal are very slim."[103] Indeed, the union never really recovered.

Outside Montreal the picture was different. The union continued to organize the unorganized, moving into previously neglected sectors such as work clothes and leather goods and into outlying garment centres such as Hamilton and Kitchener. It consolidated its hold on the Toronto dress trade by renewing its contract - without strike action - in January 1935 and by increased attention to social and cultural activities: "Stag Nights" for the dress cutters, an Industrial Union Athletic Club, weekly educationals on "trade union problems", and "Moonlight Excursions" from Toronto to Port Dalhousie, complete with orchestra and dancing.[104] And until mid-1935 it remained the only garment union active in Winnipeg.

But while these signs of growth were real enough, they were

only part of a general revitalization of needle trades' unionism. From a point in 1932 when its membership had slumped to 24,000 and the international office could not afford to pay its telephone and electricity bills, the ILGWU seized the opportunities opened up by the New Deal to rebuild its membership to 200,000 in 1934.[105] The ACW enjoyed a similar revival. In Canada it regained control of Montreal in 1933 and launched a drive to organize the Quebec "country towns" in 1934.[106] This rediscovery of militancy caused further erosion of the IUNTW's distinctiveness and stimulated discussion of trade union unity.

There was a certain irony in the fact that Winnipeg should see the first reunification of the IUNTW and ILGWU, since with the exception of a brief and unsuccessful attempt by Abe Kirzner in 1931 to resurrect Local 32, the IUNTW had struggled in isolation to organize the Winnipeg shops throughout the worst depression years.[107] Its efforts deserve consideration.

The flurry of IUNTW activity in 1929 hinted at the readiness of Winnipeg's garment workers to accept a militant lead. But any suggestion that the union might enjoy a smooth path to industrial dominance was rapidly put to rest by the impact of the depression: in 1930 not only were there no needle trades' strikes in Winnipeg, there was not a single strike of any kind recorded in the entire province.[108] As was

the case nationally, the union's fortunes were closely bound up with party factionalism. In February 1930 local IUNTW organizer Max Dolgoy, a left-wing activist in the Winnipeg garment trades since the OBU period, was one of the "right opportunists" expelled in the purge of alleged Lovestoneites.[109] The party's search for a suitable replacement ended with the appointment of Izzy Minster - a Toronto housepainter! By the end of 1930 Minster was the scapegoat for the union's chaotic state, and his replacement was demanded.[110] Instead, a hard-pressed Tom Ewan sent Joe Gershman and Annie Buller at various junctures to give Minster support. He was in charge when the Jacob and Crowley Manufacturing strike broke out in February 1931.[111]

This strike, which veterans remember as the industrial union's real breakthrough in Winnipeg, was almost a paradigm of contemporary revolutionary unionism. Before it, union organizers had concentrated on building links with one group, the cloakmakers, and when rank and file support for positive action developed they actually urged caution, fearing that their lack of influence among dressmakers and furriers made the fate of strike action unpredictable. In the event, not only were all three groups equally willing to fight, but the Winnipeg labour movement generally rallied round it with its most inspiring show of solidarity since the 1926 furriers' strike. Nevertheless, the strike was lost.

Events followed a standard pattern. Twenty-seven of the 126 employees refused to join the strike, adding a certain sharpness to picket-line activity which resulted in predictable clashes and arrests. The company made heavy play of the union's communist connections, and was backed up by Winnipeg's rabidly anti-communist Mayor, Ralph Webb, who claimed he had received a death-threat from the party. The IUNTW countered with its usual argument that the strike had arisen purely out of economic necessity, the main issues being wage-cuts and firings. Joe Gershman even denied that the WUL was a communist organization. This claim reflected the union's lack of confidence in its ability to sustain the strike against a resolute employer. So, too, did its oscillation between intransigence and accommodation. It initially refused point-blank to accept a proposal for arbitration by a city council committee headed by ILP member and Provincial Labour Bureau Secretary Edward McGrath, then changed its mind under red-baiting pressure. Having made this decision, it demonstrated its good faith by suspending picketing but simultaneously made regular announcements that preparations were going ahead for a general needle trades' strike should arbitration fail. The results were two-fold: on the one hand acceptance of arbitration offered a bolt-hole for the "immature" workers; while the resilience of the militants was undermined by the union's failure to carry out its threat to call a general strike.[112] Moreover, when the

company saw the union's fearfulness exposed, it broke off negotiations and announced that it considered the strike terminated. When the union put the question of continuing the strike to a mass meeting on 25 February, the workers voted by 70-40 to return.

After this defeat, the union entered a period when it was "in a hell of a state", with low attendance at shop meetings and organizers experiencing severe difficulties in squeezing union dues out of the membership.[113] Yet it was sufficiently organized to pull out 70 workers at the Wall, Matoff and Stone factory in October, in an unsuccessful attempt to win the reinstatement of three union cloak cutters.[114] Its willingness to take on the employers even in the most adverse circumstances may have earned it the tacit respect of workers who were as yet largely unprepared to take strike action - there were no garment strikes in 1932. When conditions changed, as they did in a small way in 1933, the IUNTW could expect to reap the benefits.

In the six months between the WUL's "March Drive" and its Second National Congress in September 1933, total WUL membership in Winnipeg rose from 170 to 955, of whom 500 were garment workers.[115] This upward growth undoubtedly continued into 1934, in line with the economic upturn. Between July 1933 and August 1934 the WUL led 19 of 20 strikes in Winnipeg, involving as well as the IUNTW, workers

in baking, meat packing, textiles, furniture and metals. In the garment industry the IUNTW lost no time in taking a bolder public role and exploiting the new opportunities. When employers began granting voluntary wage rises to forestall union activity, the union urged workers not to be complacent, but to realize that their interests lay in strengthening workplace organization to a point where they could wrest further concessions. It won a variety of demands in a number of shops, but was particularly active in the Model Cloak Company. It won recognition and reinstatement of an activist there after a one-day strike in May; in July it won by negotiation wage increases for one department and the right to provide new employees as vacancies arose; and in August it won further wage increases and the abolition of piece-work and sub-contracting.[116]

All of this was achieved without a written contract. With rank and file confidence at a high, the union chose to rely on verbal agreements that placed little constraint on its freedom of action. Indeed, one federal offacial complained, the union had said that contracts "had no meaning as far as they were concerned."[117] The union underlined its militant mood in other ways. In a strike against victimization at the Hurtig Fur Company it supplemented aggressive picketing by calling out all its members in a two-hour mass picket of the plant; over a thousand garment workers and other sympathizers answered the call.[118] It also gave backing to weaker groups, such as

strikers at Standard Textiles and Western Packing.[119]

By 1934 the IUNTW was a major component of an increasingly mature left-wing movement in Winnipeg. Communist aldermanic candidates Jacob Penner and Martin Forkin, the latter local WUL secretary, ran up record vote totals in their successful campaigns in 1933 and 1934. May Day 1934, according to the Winnipeg police department, saw a lower turn-out than in previous years. Nevertheless, at the Winnipeg Free Press's possibly conservative estimate, 4,500 workers and their families marched in the main communist parade (The Worker's figure was 6,000). Winnipeg communists were also precociously active in anti-fascist work, and were beginning to develop a socialist cultural politics through the Progressive Arts Club and the Workers' Photo Group. To all of these developments, however, the industrial struggle was central, as indicated by the Workers' Photo Group's first public exhibition, consisting mainly of "snaps" of May Day marches, unemployed demonstrations and strikes.[120]

It was the communists' strike activity in the early months of 1934 that inspired an apoplectic Ralph Webb to urge new federal legislation to "deal with them [communists] in a summary way, without remands or appeals, deportation contributing part of the sentence in every case possible." Webb would have been dismayed by IUNTW Secretary Louis Vassil's confident announcement, at the union's Fifth Anniversary

Banquet in March 1934, that preparations were already under way for a general cloakmakers' strike "to take place about the end of July."[121] Preparations evidently went better than expected; the strike was called on 5 July amidst confident predictions of quick success.[122]

The union's confidence seemed well-founded. It had recruited around 95 per cent of Winnipeg's 500 cloakmakers, among whom there was a high degree of support for the strike; workers voted by 313 to 39 for strike action. In addition, the union was led by two experienced organizers, Louis Vassil, union secretary since early 1933, and Myer Klig, who had recently arrived from Toronto but who had lived in Winnipeg from 1918 until 1927, when his activities in the furriers' strike earned him a blacklisting.[123] Over 400 cloakmakers answered the strike call, and although some shops continued to operate, they did so "in a badly crippled condition." In two shops where the union had a long-standing presence, Montreal Cloak and Wall, Matoff and Stone, the strike was 100 per cent.[124]

But the strike was lost. Although the union doggedly emphasized economic issues - its demands were 20 per cent increases for workers earning less than $20 a week and 15 per cent for those earning more, time and a half for overtime, and union recognition with a <u>signed</u> city-wide contract - the employers equally doggedly played on the red-bogey, a tactic

that gained resonance from the ideological campaign currently being waged against communist "subversion" at Flin Flon. It is more likely, however, that the decisive factor in the strike's failure was, as on so many occasions, the left's inability to sustain a major strike for any length of time. The Workers' International Relief and Farmers' Unity League did what they could, but with the Flin Flon strike soaking up most of their resources, the manufacturers were able to sit tight and let economic hardship do its work. As soon as the union signed an individual agreement with Model Cloak and announced its willingness to do so elsewhere, it more or less acknowledged that the strike was failing. Jacob and Crowley's announcement of a return to full production was only one illustration of a gradual drift back to work of cloakmakers who had probably not expected such strenuous employers' opposition. On 10 August Klig called off the strike. Although he tried to put the best possible face on this "tactical retreat", claiming that the employers had promised 15 to 20 per cent increases and no discrimination, the union had undoubtedly suffered a major setback.[125] When this was followed in quick succession by the Montreal débacle, the union's entire future was thrown into question.

Given that the industrial union's difficulties coincided with the resurrection of the internationals, the latter's, especially the ILGWU's, reluctance to push positively for

trade union unity was surprising. In June a Winnipeg correspondent urged the Toronto and New York offices of the ILGWU to send in an organizer to pre-empt the forthcoming cloakmakers' strike. Sam Kraisman endorsed this line, writing to the union's Executive Secretary Frederick Umhey that "if the Communists gain some recognition from the employers ... they will entrench themselves and will be in a position to do us a great lot of damage."[126] No action was taken, however, perhaps because the international office felt it was simply a matter of time before the IUNTW melted away, a view that could only have gained in influence after the Winnipeg and Montreal strikes. In this situation, the unity movement needed a push, and this came from a quarter that underlined the endemic character of needle trades' factionalism: the Left Opposition (ILO).

Canada's Trotskyists had originally welcomed the formation of the IUNTW as a potentially militant organizer of the dress trade. Early in 1934, however, paradoxically at the moment the IUNTW was gaining its first major success in Toronto, they began to revise this opinion; and after the Montreal strike they finally concluded that the IUNTW was incapable of fulfilling its early promise. During the January dressmakers' strike they saw the IUNTW leadership purposely avoid an opportunity to forge working class unity in practice. A day before the IUNTW walk-out, the ILGWU had brought out its 2,000 Toronto cloakmakers, and with members

of the two women's clothing unions crowded together on the streets around Spadina Avenue, it seemed in the strikers' best interests that the two unions should coordinate their strike action. When the LO issued a leaflet to this effect, however, the CPC District Committee immediately countered with its own leaflet, characterizing the LO's "fake appeal" as an abject attempt to pull the dressmakers into the ILGWU. It then called on the ILGWU rank and file to reject their "treacherous" leaders and prepare for unity "in the single Industrial Union ... UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE WORKERS' UNITY LEAGUE."[127]

The CPC leaflet also reiterated the essential distinction between a "revolutionary" and a "reformist" union, a distinction which the actual conduct of the two strikes questioned. In this regard, Trotskyists became increasingly cynical about the union's claim to be a radically different kind of organization. One, a member of the IUNTW, wrote to the Kampf (in response to its appeal for pre-IUNTW convention discussion articles) that union life was marked by "passivity", with a union leadership quite content to keep the rank and file inactive. Since there was no principled difference between the two ladies' clothing unions, there was no reason to avoid the issue of trade union unity, which was not an "abstract slogan ... [but a] stern necessity ... rapidly impressing itself ... on the rank and file." He called for the broadest discussion of the issue, carried out in public

and free from "any manoeuvring for 'domination' and 'control' [by] any particular union or officialdom." The Kampf declined to print the letter.[128]

The CPC's contention that the LO was in the ILGWU's pocket was incorrect, as scathing Trotskyist criticism of the international union's leadership of a strike by dressmakers at Eaton's Toronto factory made plain.[129] Nevertheless, it was also clear that, despite its reservations about the ILGWU, the LO increasingly considered it a better vehicle for garment workers' interests. When the IUNTW issued a leaflet to the ILGWU rank and file in September 1934, calling now not for them to abandon their union but to force its leadership to discuss unity, the LO responded by asking whether the industrial union leadership would now state plainly that "they will ... accept unity without it being under the leadership of the Workers' Unity League."[130] The industrial union refused to consider such an unequivocal declaration.

Towards the end of 1934 the ILGWU finally started to move against its communist rival. In December Sam Kraisman spent several weeks in Winnipeg preparing the ground for the installation of a new local. According to one report, the Winnipeg needle workers were unimpressed and sent Kraisman packing. But he had evidently seen enough to justify perseverance; in May 1935 the union allocated a full-time organizer, Sam Herbst, to Winnipeg. In June it launched an

ideological campaign to win over the Toronto dressmakers, holding a mass meeting at which Charles Zimmerman, International Vice President, Manager of the New York dressmakers' local and ex-communist, used the winding-up of the IUNTW in the United States to appeal for a break from its Canadian counterpart. As the Toronto Daily Star reported, however, the vast majority of the 850 dressmakers present emphatically rejected Zimmerman's appeal.[131] In the wake of this decision, the Toronto Dressmakers' Progressive Unity Group (PU) was formed.

Trotskyists were the organizing force inside this new faction, which announced its existence with the publication of its manifesto in the Workers' Party paper, The Vanguard (the LO had become the Workers' Party at the turn of the year). The manifesto reiterated Zimmerman's arguments and attacked the IUNTW leaders' irresponsibility in "playing politics" at the membership's expense. Yet it also offered a generous and radical unification programme, reflecting its own political sympathies and its awareness that the industrial union retained substantial rank and file support: immediate IUNTW disaffiliation from the WUL and application for an ILGWU charter; admission of all existing IUNTW members to the ILGWU "without discrimination"; a power-sharing agreement between the IUNTW and ILGWU Joint Boards until new elections were held, these to come within 40 days of the merger; the new leadership to begin immediate preparations for a spring

1936 organizing drive; and, as the first practical step towards unity, an immediate meeting between the two executives, to iron out practical details.[132]

Had Gershman and Klig grasped the opportunity, the IUNTW could well have entered the ILGWU intact, with communist leadership entrenched in a dressmakers' local. As yet, however, the party line on trade union unity remained confused. According to a report from Winnipeg, the liquidation of the IUNTW in the United States had caused tactical problems for the industrial union. On several occasions party members had travelled to New York to defend the IUNTW's continued existence in Canada on the grounds that the left had "too much to lose."[133] As the CPC prevaricated, the PU faction's position hardened.

The industrial union's immediate response to the PU group's appearance was to write it off as a "few disrupters". It then went on to impose fines and suspensions on PU supporters, one of its most frequent targets being S. Macy, the Trotskyist who had written the attack on the union's bureaucratization noted earlier. This only succeeded in driving the PU group into closer alliance with the international labour movement - both the TDLC and the Arbeiter Ring allowed the PU group to use their facilities - and into an aggressive anti-WUL stance.[134]

While this campaign proceeded, similar events were

developing rapidly in Winnipeg. The crucial figure here was ILGWU organizer Sam Herbst. A crafty, unorthodox individual, Herbst spent the first month after his arrival establishing cordial relations with the local CPC and IUNTW leadership, becoming particularly friendly with Louis Vassil. He played the left leaders along, encouraging them to believe that unity within the IUNTW remained a possibility, and was so plausible that he was welcomed at party and industrial union policy meetings. On one occasion he even called a discussion meeting in the WUL hall and advertised it in the Kampf. While apparently working with the left, Herbst was secretly negotiating with a number of clothing manufacturers and signing up members into ILGWU Local 16. He concentrated on the decisive Jacob and Crowley shop, where he was aided by the arrival of a young Toronto Troskyist, Harry Clairmont, one of the group of garment workers expelled from the party in 1929. While Herbst worked on management, Clairmont pushed the PU arguments among the rank and file.[135]

In July Herbst was sufficiently confident in the ILGWU's position to make his real intentions public. In an address to the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council he launched a scathing attack on the industrial union's record in the city. In his view the IUNTW, especially after the 1934 strike when its leaders had "begged" for workers to be taken back on any terms, had a nerve to consider itself a real union. Sooner or later, he claimed, the Canadian IUNTW locals would have to

follow their American counterparts in re-entering the ILGWU. He would welcome a prompt decision in order to build Local 216 and establish union control. If, however, the IUNTW continued to dodge the inevitable, it would lose all its remaining influence as rank and file cloakmakers came to see that the past seven years had been wasted. When Herbst followed up this attack with the announcement a few weeks later that Jacob and Crowley had signed a contract with Local 216, outraged communists responded with vitriolic denunciations of Herbst and Clairmont, and on one occasion, Herbst claimed, with physical violence.[136]

The unionization of Jacob and Crowley marked a turning-point in ILGWU/IUNTW relations in Winnipeg. The industrial union's position there was easily the most vulnerable in terms of the unity debate. Unlike in Montreal and Toronto, it was essentially a cloakmakers' organization. In the manouvrings around the unity debate, it became a useful bargaining tool: the industrial union could afford to surrender it, and thereby underline its own good faith, without surrendering its claim to represent the mass of the dressmakers. In late August, therefore, Gershman and Sam Kraisman, who at least in public was the most conciliatory Canadian ILGWU official, travelled together to Winnipeg to supervise the IUNTW's entry into Local 216. A mass meeting on 29 August voted for the merger, based on the PU programme but with a proviso that only "goodstanding" IUNTW members

would automatically receive ILGWU membership.[137] With that decision the industrial union passed peacefully from the Winnipeg scene.

In the dress trade the party still ruled out "unconditional liquidation" of the IUNTW, continued to suppress the PU movement and, as late as October, spoke only of the need for "mutual understanding" when it approached the ILGWU with a proposal for a new organizing drive in the Montreal dress trade.[138] The ILGWU saw no need to make any concessions. Already, it had enrolled the Montreal dress cutters, and it was aware that every passing day made more embarrassing the gap between the IUNTW's professed desire for unity and its reluctance to accept the inevitable. When the WUL National Convention finally set the seal on the unity line, the Vanguard was quick to make political capital:

> The Progressive Unity Group ... have for months been subjected to the most bitter attacks ... Now without a blush [the communists] accept the group's program holus-bolus. Two leaders of the International Cloakmakers, [Hyman] Langer and Herbst, who but yesterday were black reactionaries, are singled out at the League convention as "truly progressive elements." In fact, Boss Gershman, probably with a job in the International in mind, asks to be placed on record that this is his honest opinion.[139]

Whatever Gershman's aspirations, if the party thought that its belatedly conciliatory rhetoric would smooth the way to a simple takeover of ILGWU Local 72, it was soon disabused. By the end of November the IUNTW had applied for an ILGWU charter for the Toronto dressmakers; in December or January it was given the WUL's permission to disaffiliate, to make the unification process easier. Nevertheless, the WUL continued to press for terms of entry identical to those originally suggested by the PU group which continued in existence until at least February 1936. The ILGWU simply handed over the issue to International President David Dubinsky, who, according to Gershman, was "too busy looking after New York affairs" to attend to Toronto. Both Gershman and Salsberg voiced mild criticism of the local ILGWU's foot-dragging approach, but Salsberg was quick to dismiss the suggestion of some WUL members that the left trade union leaders should subject reformist obstructionism to "a merciless broadside", arguing instead that the WUL should patiently agitate for unity among the reformist unions' rank and file and, through frank discussion, dispel any remaining qualms about communist motives.[140] In March 1936 the two sides finally concluded a compromise settlement, whereby Hyman Langer would supervise a two-month registration period during which IUNTW members would enter Local 72 either as individuals or as shop groups on payment of a nominal initiation fee, followed by the presentation for rank and file

endorsement of "a unified slate on a fifty-fifty basis." By the end of May unification was complete - with a local executive consisting of three communists and three Trotskyists![141]

In an article in Justice Hyman Langer provided an interesting postscript to these events. Reporting "no ground for regrets", he remarked that his confidence in the viability of unification stemmed from the knowledge that the "rank and file leadership" - the CPC - would "pursue the 'New Line' inexorably." He had not been disappointed: the left-wing had not only "done yeoman work to wipe out from the memory all previous conceptions of the International, which they bestowed on the membership", they had also "done much to silence the incorrigible elements in the organization."[142] This, surely, was the final irony.

Between 1922-36 communist policy in the garment trades, despite the formal tactical changes of 1928 and 1935 and even the abject lurch into bureaucratization towards the end of the period, had as its stated aim the development of "class struggle unionism". This was never achieved. Although from time to time communists did prove capable of promoting and leading interludes of working class militancy - a quality never far from the surface of an industry where daily class antagonisms were unusually sharp - their argument that the one way to combat the "chaos" of the garment trade was through unrelenting

struggle to organize every "bedroom", "kitchen" and "cockroach" shop convinced only the tiny minority of the rank and file who were already close to communism. As the majority knew, and as communists themselves realized when they were in power in the international locals and the IUNTW, the likely consequence of a series of frontal assaults on the employers was a series of defeats.

To defeat both class collaborationist trade union leaders and intransigent employers required rather more tactical flexibility than the left possessed. The struggle for power in the 1920s made no political sense. Not only did it cut against the grain of the united front strategy, but it could only conceivably have been successful in conditions of a general political crisis within the garment unions on both sides of the border. Such was not the case. In the United States factionalism developed to its highest level in the ILGWU and International Fur Workers' Union, but scarcely troubled the ACW. In Canada, while there was skirmishing in the ILGWU and IFWU, left/right conflict was at its sharpest in the ACW. The latter, however, expertly led by Sidney Hillman, was more than capable of absorbing the communist challenge. Throughout the 1920s there was never the slightest possibility of a left-wing takeover of a single international garment union.

What, then, of the decision to form the IUNTW? In a

sense, to ask whether that decision was justified is not very helpful, since the situation in the Comintern dictated that such a decision would have come sooner or later. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to absolve the CPC leaders from responsibility for their actions, if only because those who took the vital decisions have continued to maintain, in the words of Joshua Gershman: "We never took orders from anyone!"[143] The crucial question is whether, by forming the IUNTW, the CPC advanced the working class's capacity for struggle.

A good case could be made for the pioneering organizational work of the IUNTW in the dress trade and in Winnipeg and elsewhere. While the response of the international unions to the depression was to go limp, communists did go out and organize: this was the positive side of their emphasis on sacrifice and willpower. And even when they failed to establish functioning unions, as in the Montreal dress trade, they laid the foundations of future progress.[144] It is doubtful whether they could have performed equivalent tasks as oppositionists in the internationals.

This situation changed in 1934. On the one hand, the international unions rediscovered some of their militant traditions in the working class upsurge provoked by the economic upturn and the New Deal. On the other hand, the exigencies of daily trade union life eroded much of the IUNTW's distinctiveness. There is insufficient evidence to

draw a firm conclusion on the validity of the Trotskyist critique of the union's bureaucratization, but Hyman Langer's observations on the communists' voluntary adoption of a disciplinary function in controlling the "incorrigible element" in the unified union, does suggest that the communist commitment to rank and file self-activity was at best tactical. After 1934 there was no sound reason to delay unifying the garment unions. The left's inability to formulate a coherent policy ultimately deprived it of much of the influence its organizational contributions warranted. More importantly, it delayed rank and file unity at a moment when opportunities to exploit the changing balance of class forces had never been better. Thus, as in so many cases during the depression, while tribute can be paid to the commitment shown by numerous individual communists in organizing and leading class struggle, questions can still be asked of the over-all quality of their leadership.

NOTES

1. This account is based on Justice, The Advance, F. R. Scott and H. M. Cassidy, Labour Conditions in the Men's Clothing Industry (Toronto, 1935), 5-6, the proceedings of H. H. Stevens' Special Committee and Royal Commission on Price Spreads (1934-35), and Provincial Archives of Ontario (PAO), Department of Labour Records, Deputy Minister's Files, II-4, Vol.2, J. L. Cohen to Louis Fine, 18 February 1935. The Worker and Young Worker also contained considerable material.

2. Canada Year Book, 1924-31; Scott and Cassidy, Labour Conditions, 69.

3. Canada Year Book, 1924-31; Benjamin Stolberg, "The Collapse of the Needle Trades", The Nation, 124 (11 May 1927), 524-25.

4. "Strike Threatened of Clothing Workers", Labor Leader (LL), 3 November 1922

5. The Advance, 28 March 1924

6. Lewis Levine, The Women's Garment Workers (New York, 1924), 343; LL, 14, 28 October 1921, 26 May 1922; "Garment Workers", Maritime Labor Herald, 20 October 1923

7. The Advance, 4 April 1930

8. The Worker, 1 August 1925; "Slav Workers Organized", The Advance, 23 July 1926

9. Sol Seidman, "Organization Work in Toronto", Justice, 6 October 1922; Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Toronto District Labour Council Minutes, 3 January 1924, containing Report re "Organization in Ladies Garment Industry". On continued use of anti-semitism against the ILGWU, see Royal Commission on Price Spreads, Vol.6, 4573

10. Multi-Cultural History Society of Ontario (MCHSO), interviews with Muni Taub and Max Dolgoy; and above, chapter 1

11. "News from Our Toronto Locals", The Advance, 31 January 1930; Israel Feinberg, "The Last Two Months in Montreal", Justice, 20 March 1931

12. Justice, 13 February 1925; The Advance, 4 April 1930

13. 83 per cent of female garment workers in Toronto, where wages were normally much higher than in Montreal, earned less than $20 a week in 1926; 50 per cent earned less than $14. "Quite a nice wage" for men at this time was $24-25 a week.
"Sixth Annual Report of the Minimum Wage Board, 1926", Ontario Sessional Papers, LIX (1927), No.38, 13-14; Irving Abella, "Portrait of A Jewish Professional

Revolutionary: The Recollections of Joshua Gershman", Labour/Le Travailleur, 2 (1977), 197 (henceforth, Gershman). See also, Department of Labour, Wages and Hours of Labour in Canada, supplement to Labour Gazette, 41 (April 1941), 93-97.

14. Justice, 19 December 1924

15. J. M. Budish and George Soule, The New Unionism in the Clothing Industry (New York, 1920); Matthew Josephson, Sidney Hillman: Statesman of American Labour (Garden City, N.Y., 1952), chs. 8-10; Levine, The Women's Garment Workers, ch. XXXIII; Earl Dean Howard, "Labour in a Constitutionalized Industry", in J.B.S. Hardman, American Labor Dynamics (New York, 1928), 329-31; Jesse Thomas Carpenter, Competition and Collective Bargaining in the Needle Trades, 1910-1967 (Ithaca, N.Y., 1972), 97-101; W. M. Leiserson, "Problems for an Impartial Chairman", Atlantic Monthly, 136 (September 1925), 301-10; William G. Haber, "Workers' Rights and the Introduction of Machinery in the Men's Clothing Industry", Journal of Political Economy, 33 (August 1925), 388-409

16. Sidney Hillman, "The Importance of Labor Banks", The Advance, 13 March 1925; Louise Lamphere, "Fighting the Piece-Rate System", in Andrew Zimbalist, ed., Case Studies on the Labor Process (New York, 1979), 260-61

17. Saul Yanofsky, "Some Thoughts Anent Trade Union Capitalism", Justice, 3 April 1925; J.B.S. Hardman, "Class Collaboration and Generalizations", The Advance, 13 March 1925; Levine, The Women's Garment Workers, 450; Max D. Danish, The World of David Dubinsky (Cleveland and New York, 1957), 85

18. Gershman, 192-93; Paul Buhle, "Jews and American Communism: The Cultural Question", Radical History Review, 23 (Spring 1980), 9-22

19. Joseph Schubert, "Among the Cloakmakers of Montreal", Justice, 17 November 1922

20. The Worker, 16 October 1922, 17 October, 29 December 1923, 9 February 1924

21. Nathan Fine, "Left and Right in the Needle Trades Unions", The Nation, 118 (4 June 1924), 639-40; "The Convention and Our Main Tasks", Justice, 23 May 1924; The Worker, 22 November 1924

22. For a recent study which reviews the mainly anti-communist historiography of needle trades' factionalism, see James Robert Prickett, "Communists and the Communist Issue in the American Labor Movement, 1920-1950", Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA, 1975, ch.2

23. "Crisis in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union", The Worker, 1 August 1925; "Present Situation in the Toronto Cloakmakers", Young Worker, May 1928

24. "The Strikes in Montreal and Toronto", Justice, 13 February 1925

25. Justice, 8 July, 12 August 1927

26. "Minutes of Toronto CCC Meeting", The Worker, 16 May 1925

27. Justice, 20 April 1928

28. "Local 14, Toronto, Loyal to Union", Justice, 22 June 1928; "Toronto Cloakmakers Vote to Clean Up Local Industry", Justice, 21 September 1928; "Present Situation in Toronto Cloakmakers".

29. Joseph Schlossberg, The Workers and Their World: Selected Essays (New York, 1935), 101

30. Melech Epstein, Profiles of Eleven (Detroit, 1965), 288-91; Josephson; Sidney Hillman, 269-70; Peter G. Filene, Americans and the Soviet Experiment 1917-1933 (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 166-69

31. David Montgomery, Workers' Control in America (Cambridge, 1980), 106

32. Temkin was President of Tailors' Local 211; Shulman was President of Operators' Local 209. Information on union officers comes from Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada.

33. Mike Buhay, "Awakening of Clothing Workers in Montreal", The Left Wing, March-April 1926

34. Josephson, Sidney Hillman, 279

35. "What the Left-Wingers in the Amalgamated Are Fighting For", The Worker, 11 April 1925

36. Mike Buhay, "In the Amalgamated, Montreal", The Worker, 10 October 1925. Events that reflected badly on local administrations which carried the international office's support went unreported in The Advance.

37. A. Temkin, "The Fight to Cleanse the Toronto Amalgamated of Fakir Officials", The Worker, 6 March, 10 April 1926

38. Buhay, "Awakening of Clothing Workers". When the right regained control of Montreal in 1927, it raised the number of business agents from 3 to 6. Whether this was designed to bring about more effective administration or strengthen the right bureaucracy - perhaps both - is not known.

39. The Advance, 9, 30 July, 27 August, 15 October 1926

40. The Advance, 2, 23 July, 13 August 1926.

41. "Efforts of Toronto Amalgamated", The Worker, 5 March 1927

42. Josephson, Sidney Hillman, 279; The Worker, 14 May 1927; "Political Demagoguery and Industrial Radicalism", The Advance, 22 July 1927

43. The Worker, 12 February, 13 August 1927

44. Sidney Hillman, "The Liquidation of Leftism in the Amalgamated", The Advance, 28 October 1927

45. "Montreal Members Rout Disruptionists", The Advance, 16 September 1927; The Worker, 8 October 1927

46. The Worker, 10 December 1927

47. The Worker, 29 October, 19 November, 17 December 1927; The Advance, 2 December 1927

48. Hillman, "The Liquidation of Leftism"; The Advance, 2 December 1927

49. The Worker, 10, 17, 24, 31 March 1928; LL, 9 March 1928; The Advance, 16 March 1928

50. Anti-communism was also on the rise in other garment unions. J. B. Salsberg was expelled from his post as Chicago business agent (he had previously held the same post in Toronto and Montreal) in 1928. Melech Epstein, Jewish Labour in the USA (n.p., 1953), 182

51. The IUNTW was formed in the USA in January 1929

52. "Present Situation in the Toronto Cloakmakers"; also Sam Carr, "Organize the Unorganized Youth", Young Worker, May 1928

53. The Worker, 16 June 1928

54. "Industrial Union of Needle Trades Workers Formed", Canadian Unionist, 2 (September 1928), 18 (CU)

55. Canadian Trade Unionist, 24 August, 22 September, 15 October 1928; PAC, Canadian Labour Congress Papers (CLC), Vol.104, W. T. Burford to A. A. Mosher, 28 December 1928; Mosher to Burford, 31 December 1928; Burford to Mosher, 12 March 1929; Mosher to Burford, 15 March 1929; J. Salsberg, "Organizing the Needle Workers", CU, 3 (September 1929), 44; PAO, CPC Papers, 1A 0741-42, "Statement of the Political Committee of the Communist Party of Canada on the Expulsion of Salsberg", no date.

56. "Montreal Gets Report on RILU Congress", The Worker, 14 July 1928

57. The Worker, 29 December 1923; "Lessons of the Conference of Young Workers", Young Worker, April 1926; Abe Kirzner, "Toronto Cloakmakers Vote to Clean Up Local Industry", Justice, 21 September 1928

58. Young Worker, July-August 1928; PAO, CPC Papers, 1A 0037-38, J. [Salsberg?] to Tim Buck, 26 September 1928

59. La Presse, 14 August 1928, clipping in PAC, Strikes and Lockouts Files (SLF), Vol.341, file 78; "Amalgamated 'Spirit' Means Workers Loss", The Worker, 6 October 1928

60. "For a United Trade Union Movement: Statement of the TUEL, Furriers' Section, Toronto", The Worker, 29 June 1929. Harry Englander, Toronto Business Agent of the IFWU, was either a CPC member or a very close sympathizer; he contributed to and helped produce the Kampf. The Worker, 10 March 1928. Englander is also frequently mentioned in Philip S. Foner, The Fur and Leather Workers' Union (Newark, N.J., 1950)

61. PAO, CPC Papers, 8C 0209, CPC Political Committee Minutes, 16 November 1929

62. PAO, CPC Papers, 1A 0052-53, unsigned letter to J. B. Salsberg, 28 February 1929

63. The Militant, 1 February 1929, 17 May 1930; Ian Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada (Montreal, 1981), 307-8; Tom Ewan, "Rank Opportunism in Needle Trades Organization Work", The Worker, 19 July 1930

64. PAO, CPC Papers, 1A 0054-59, Salsberg to Buck, 7 March 1929; Norman Freed to Salsberg, no date; Salsberg to CPC Trade Union Department, 3 April 1929; Salsberg to 'Dear Comrades', 16 April 1929; 1A 0133-34, Bertha Dolgoy to Buck, 20 August 1929; 8C 0177, CPC Central Executive Committee Minutes, 12 July 1929; 8C 0209, CPC Political Committee Minutes, 16 November 1929

65. The Worker, 8 December 1928 clipping in PAC, SLF, Vol.342, file 111; PAO, CPC Papers, 1A 0052-53, letter to Salsberg, 28 February 1929

66. PAC, SLF, Vol.343, files 9, 12, 29, 57, 71

67. Annie Buller, "Some Shortcomings in Our Trade Union Work", The Worker, 7 February 1931

68. PAO, CPC Papers, 1A 0244-45, 1A 0282-90, J. Gershman to Tom Ewan, 26 November 1930; unsigned letter to Gershman, 11 December 1930; Gershman to Ewan, 18 December 1930; Ewan to Gershman, 20 December 1930

69. PAO, CPC Papers, 10C 2020, Workers' Unity League internal bulletin, "Two Important Conventions: Needle Trades and Lumber Workers Must Face Issues", no date [c.April 1931]

70. MCHSO, ILGWU Papers, microfilm reel 8, Manager, Toronto Joint Board to David Dubinsky, 8 February 1932; unsigned letter to Max Kayser, 24 August 1932. (All references to ILGWU Papers are taken from this reel.)

71. The contest between the ACW and UCWC was a complicated affair. Although Communists were involved, they were not initially the directing force behind the Canadian union, as the ACW alleged, but were actually caught napping when the union made its first move against the ACW in Montreal during July 1932. In September 1932 the Montreal ILGWU reported that the UCWC had moved into the CPC's headquarters and had three (of six) communist business agents. It is doubtful if this was true. However, by early 1933 J. B. Salsberg (who had recently rejoined the CPC) was Montreal organizer for the UCWC. When the two unions merged in August 1933, Salsberg was the whipping-boy of the ACW, although ironically he was an early advocate of uniting inside the international union.

72. Israel Feinberg, "President Dubinsky Visits Montreal", Justice, October 1932

73. "Plan Two Toronto Dress Strikes", The Militant, 17 May 1930

74. Bernard Shane, "What's Doing in Toronto", Justice, 12 September 1930; PAC, SLF, Vol.344, file 4; Vol.346, file 3; Vol.347, file 14

75. PAC, SLF, Vol.346, file 3

76. Farrell Dobbs, Teamster Rebellion (New York, 1973), 40

77. The Globe, 21 January 1931, clipping in PAC, SLF, Vol.347, file 14

78. PAC, SLF, Vol.347, file 14

79. I. M. Biss, "The Dressmakers' Strike", Canadian Forum, XI (July 1931), 367-69

80. "Final Victory in Sight in Toronto Dress Strike", Justice, May 1931

81. The Worker, 24 January 1931, clipping in PAC, SLF, Vol.346, file 3

82. Workers' Unity, 30 October 1931

83. MCHSO, ILGWU Papers, Hyman Langer to David Dubinsky, 27 June 1933

84. MCHSO, Muni Taub interview. On the pressers' problems generally, see Haber, "Workers' Rights and the Introduction of Machinery in the Men's Clothing Industry". On their participation in IUNTW strikes, see PAC, SLF, Vol.349, file 110; Vol.350, file 8; Vol.351, file 79; Vol.352, files 122, 123; Vol.353, files 149, 150; Vol.355, files 40, 50

85. Langer to Dubinsky, 27 June 1933

86. The Worker, 30 December 1933

87. PAC, SLF, Vol.359, file 9; "The Dressmakers' Strike", The Vanguard, February 1934

88. Montreal Herald, 5 September 1934, clipping in PAC, SLF, Vol.364, file 34

89. New York Public Library, Manuscripts Annexe, International Red Aid Papers, Vol. TDl. nc.6, Canadian Labour Defence League press release, 11 August 1932. According to one historian, the CPC's French Canadian membership never exceeded 50 before the late 1930s. Andrée Levesque Olssen, "The Canadian Left in Quebec During the Great Depression: The CPC and the CCF in Quebec, 1929-1939", Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1972, 82, 140

90. Anne Bobb, "Work Among French Canadian Youth Is Our Central Task", Young Worker, 21 May 1934 (YW); Ruth Morris, "Youth Activity in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Union, Montreal", YW, 11 June 1934; Roy Davis, "For A Youth Programme in the Needle Trades Workers' Industrial Union", YW, 18, 25 June 1934

91. Gershman, 201-2

92. PAC, SLF, Vol.364, file 34, especially Montreal Gazette, 2 July 1934, clipping. This refers to the IUNTW's aspirations of becoming "a larger and more comprehensive and representative organization".

93. PAC, SLF, Vol.355, file 72

94. MCHSO, ILGWU Papers, Bernard Shane to Sam Kraisman, 17 September 1934

95. PAC, SLF, Vol.364, file 34, passim

96. Ibid., The Worker, 29 September 1934, clipping

97. Both the ACW and ILGWU had recently signed contracts with the Montreal manufacturers when the IUNTW struck. Their relations with the communist union remained unfriendly, to say the least. See Bernard Shane, "Cloak Strike and Victory in Montreal", Justice, September 1934; "Smash the Pact Between the Montreal Amalgamated Officials and the Arcand Bill", YW, 3 November 1934

98. PAC, SLF, Vol.364, file 34, Montreal Star, 29 August 1934; The Worker, 1 September 1934, clippings; Beatrice Fearneyhough, "Taschereau's Fascist Bills and What They Mean", Canadian Labour Defender, 5 (April 1934), 8; Levesque Olssen, "The Canadian Left in Quebec", 137

99. PAC, SLF, Vol.364, file 34, Montreal Star, 29 August 1934, clipping

100. Shane to Kraisman, 17 September 1934; Gershman, 201

101. Shane to Kraisman, 17 September 1934; PAC, SLF, Vol.364, file 34, E. McG. Quirk to C. W. Bolton, 17 October 1934

102. Bernard Shane, "Dress Industry Drive Under Way in Montreal", Justice, 1 January 1935; "Breslow-Rudin Conviction Strikes at Trade Unionism", New Commonwealth (NC), 4 May 1935; letters to the editor, NC, 9, 23 March 1935

103. PAC, R. B. Bennett Papers, 94348, RCMP, weekly memorandum re "Revolutionary Activities in Quebec", 26 March 1935

104. Jack Hilf, "Needle Workers Win Many Improvements in New Agreement", YW, 26 January 1935; "Unionizing Shirt Shops in Ontario", The Worker, 10 November 1934; Sam Lapedes, "Leather Workers Agreement Made", ibid., 6 April 1935; "Shop Paper Again Siezed by Police", ibid., 13 June 1935; "New Hamilton Unit Shows Splendid Work", YW, 16 February 1935; "The Needle Workers' Page", Unity, May 1935; The Worker, 11 June 1935 .

105. Carpenter, Competition and Collective Bargaining in the Needle Trades, 648-54; Benjamin Stolberg, Tailor's Progress: The Story of a Famous Union and the Men Who Made It (Garden City, N.Y., 1944), 202-4

106. The Advance, July, September 1934

107. The Worker, 14 February 1931

108. Labour Gazette, XXXI (February 1931), 148-54

109. Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks, 305. On Dolgoy's OBU past, see Public Archives of Manitoba, R. B. Russell Papers, Box 4, file 16, OBU Central Labour Council Executive, Minutes, 28 March 1922; MCHSO, Max Dolgoy interview. In his interview Dolgoy omits mention of his expulsion; by the end of 1930 he seems to have returned to the party fold, although he was still referred to as a dissident as late as February 1931.

110. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 3A 1694-96, Tom Ewan to Victor Friedman, 26 January 1931

111. The following account of the strike is based mainly on PAC, SLF, Vol.346, file 8, and PAO, Communist Party Papers, 3A 1777-81, Joe Gershman, "Report on the Strike at the Jacob and Crowley Manufacturing Company", 26 March 1931

112. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 3A 1782-83, unsigned letter [almost certainly from Tom Ewan] to Gershman, 31 March 1931. This was the view put forward in this letter. It seems entirely plausible.

113. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 3A 1887-91, Ben Winter to Ewan, 3 June 1931; 3A 1975, Annie Buller to Ewan, 24 July 1931

114. I. Minster, "Report on Winnipeg Strike of Needle Workers", Workers' Unity, 2 December 1931; PAC, SLF, Vol.349, file 93

115. Joe Forkin, speech to WUL Second National Congress, The Worker, 23 September 1933

116. PAC, SLF, Vol.355, files 38, 79

117. PAC, SLF, Vol.355, file 79, M.B. Crawford to H. H. Ward, 16 August 1933

118. "Crown Evidence in Strike Riot Case", Winnipeg Free Press (WFP), 11 January 1934; PAC, SLF, Vol.355, file 71

119. The Worker, 5 May 1934; "Victory in the Model Cloak", undated handbill, in PAC, SLF, Vol.360, file 34 (30)

120. Donald Avery, "Ethnic Loyalties and the Proletarian Revolution: A Case Study of Communist Political Activity in Winnipeg, 1923-1936", in Jorgen Dahlie and Tissa Fernando, eds., Ethnicity, Power and Politics in Canada (Toronto, 1981), 81-3; "May Day Devoid of Trouble in Winnipeg", WFP, 2 May 1934; Bill Ross, "The United Front and the Young Labour Federation", YW, 19 July 1933; "Penner Elected Leader of League Against Fascism", WFP, 24 March 1934; Maurice Sair, letter to the editor, Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 30 June 1934; "PAC Holds Art and Photo Exhibit", YW, 3 February 1934

121. PAC, R. B. Bennett Papers, 93791-94, Ralph Webb to W. A. Gordon, 21, 22 March 1934; "Anniversary Banquet Held By Workers of Needle Trades Union", WFP, 20 March 1934

122. WFP, 5 July 1934

123. Biographical material on Klig is taken from Philip S. Foner, The Fur and Leather Workers' Union (Newark, N.J., 1950), 514-15. Klig later became a prominent organizer for the International Fur Workers' Union (later still, the Fur and Leather Workers' Union) after the liquidation of the WUL. Foner is mistaken, however, in having Klig active in Winnipeg until 1930. He was, in fact, an active participant in the Toronto "Free Speech" campaign of 1928-30. See Lita Rose Betcherman, The Little Band (Ottawa, 1982), esp. chs. VI, VII

124. WFP, 6 July 1934

125. WFP, 11 August 1934

126. MCHSO, ILGWU Papers, unsigned letters to Abraham Kirzner and David Dubinsky, 3 June 1934; Sam Kraisman to F. F. Umhey, 27 June 1934

127. "The Dressmakers' Strike", The Vanguard, February 1934; "The Need for Honesty with the Workers", ibid., September 1934; "Left Winger Fights Red Baiting in Needle Trades", Socialist Action, May 1940

128. "Organization in the Needle Trades", The Vanguard, July 1934

129. "Eaton's Wage Slaves Strike", The Vanguard, September 1934

130. "The Need for Honesty with the Workers", The Vanguard, February 1934

131. YW, 12 January 1935; "Needle Trades Workers Hear Plea for Unity", Toronto Daily Star, 12 June 1935. The IUNTW dressmakers in New York had re-entered the ILGWU in April 1935. See Foner, The Fur and Leather Workers' Union, 470

132. "Toronto Progressives in Dressmakers' Union", The Vanguard, 15 July 1935

133. "Cloakmakers Fight Sweatshops in Winnipeg", The Vanguard, 15 July 1935

134. The Vanguard, 1 August, 2 September, 1, 15 November 1935; LL, 25 October 1935

135. MCHSO, ILGWU Papers, Sam Kraisman to Sam Herbst, 20 July 1935; Herbst to Kraisman, 19 August 1935; MCHSO, Harry Claremont interview (Claremont fails to mention his Winnipeg sojourn); H. Claremont, "Winnipeg Cloakmakers", The Vanguard, 15 October 1935

136. "Trades and Labour Council Notes", Manitoba Commonwealth, 19 July 1935 (also the same column in the 26 July, 16, 23 August issues); Herbst to Kraisman, 19 August 1935

137. WFP, 30 August 1935; YW, 7 September 1935; Justice, 1 September 1935

138. MCHSO, ILGWU Papers, J. Gershman to Montreal Joint Council ILGWU, 17 October 1935

139. The Vanguard, 15 November 1935

140. "Main Decisions Adopted by G.E.B.", Justice, 15 December 1935; Joseph B. Salsberg, "Toronto Trade Union Unity Problems" and Joshua Gershman, "ILGWU Leaders Must Change Their Tune", both in Unity, January-February 1936; "Dressmakers Hold Meeting", The Vanguard, 1 March 1936

141. "Dress Workers Line Up Inside International", New Commonwealth, 2 May 1936; Hyman Langer, "How Toronto Dressmakers Rejoined ILGWU", Justice, 15 August 1936; "Left Winger Fights Red-Baiting in Needle Trades". The appointment of three Trotskyists to the Local 72 executive (they seem also to have taken one of the business agent's posts) may well have been a reward for their work in the PU group.

142. Langer, "How Toronto Dressmakers Rejoined ILGWU"

143. Gershman, 204

144. Interview with Lea Roback (Educational Director, Montreal ILGWU, 1937-38), in Irving Abella and David Millar, eds., The Canadian Worker in the Twentieth Century (Toronto, 1978), 200

CHAPTER NINE

'FIGHT, DON'T STARVE': ORGANIZING THE UNEMPLOYED, 1930-1936

Few working class activists from the depression years would have denied that the CPC played an unequalled part in the unemployed movement. Lakehead organizer Michael Fenwick, who later broke with the party, has observed that communists were "the only ones who fought in the unemployed ranks. Nobody, but nobody cared." As Vancouver CCFer Alex Fergusson remembered it, the CPC "was very militant in those days and very aggressive and hard-working and they organized the unemployed."[1] In reality, communists were not the only activists in the unemployed movement. Virtually every left wing organization - and some on the right - contributed to the struggle. The CPC's uniqueness lay in its attempt to build a national movement with concrete political aims. The main question to be answered in this chapter is: how well did it succeed? In the course of answering this question we will also examine how and why the CPC's analysis of and relationship to the movement changed over time. At the onset of the depression, communists saw mass unemployment as the key to the creation of a revolutionary situation. Following "the estimates of prominent Marxists in the Soviet Union", Leslie Morris claimed early in 1930 that the mass of the

unemployed had already assimilated the concept of "structural unemployment" and were prepared for "a political offensive against the capitalist government and its chief ally, the social reformist traitors."[2] Five years later, in the rather different political moment of the Popular Front, anti-capitalist struggle had been diluted to the single demand of "adequate and genuine unemployment and social insurance", around which the party was striving to unify "the widest progressive forces".[3] In the first section of the chapter we will explore some of the obstacles standing in the way of the party's aspirations to hegemony over a revolutionary unemployed movement; in the second we will examine the development of its strategy and tactics between 1930-33; and in the final section we will examine the process and consequences of the CPC's reversion to united front politics.

Contrary to Leslie Morris's assessment, the onset of the depression did not spark an imediate outburst of working class struggle. A full year elapsed before there was broad recognition that workers were experiencing, in the words of the Carpenters' Monthly Bulletin, "a new kind of depression".[4] To most workers economic downturns were part of the natural order of things, a fatalism very much encouraged by the state and the capitalist class. Together they strived to present an optimistic face to the world, responding to any sign of a levelling-out of the slump with a confident prediction that

"the tide of economic adversities has now turned."[5] Politicians, loathe even to admit that there was such a "tide", rejected out of hand any suggestion that some system of unemployment insurance or a massive public works programme were needed and would support only the most minimal tinkering with the system.[6] One popular panacea was the semi-private make-work scheme run by committees of local businessmen, industrialists, clergymen and other civic leaders. Such schemes could absorb small pools of unemployment and bring "into active and sympathetic contact the more and the less fortunate members of the community". Toronto, Hamilton, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Stratford all operated "Man-a-block" or "Give-a-man-a-job" schemes.[7]

The political impact of mass unemployment was further dulled by the CPC's failure to achieve hegemony over the organized working class response. A large proportion of the Canadian working class exhibited the apathy and demoralization that, according to the American historian John A. Garraty, were typical responses to the depression. As he saw it, by the time workers had "suffered enough to become rebels ... they [had] lost the capacity for militant protest."[8] Many contemporary social scientists observed "feelings of hopelessness and lowered morale", "loss of self-respect", "broken spirits ... hopeless despair ... [and] dependent attitudes" among the unemployed of Toronto, Montreal and elsewhere.[9] Building a militant unemployed movement on such

a base was no easy task.

But this was only part of the story. Garraty, for example, draws very selectively from his single Canadian source - Harry M. Cassidy's 1932 study of unemployment in Ontario - and fails to note Cassidy's comment that "faith in the existing social and economic institutions of Canada is being broken down daily", or his observation that "social disaffection" was growing among employed and unemployed alike.[10] The same social scientists who observed demoralization also reported an inchoate - and sometimes not so inchoate - critique of the state growing among the destitute. McGill sociologist Leonard Marsh heard unskilled workers in particular make "vindictive ... emphatic and outspoken ... criticisms of existing conditions".[11]

Against the view that apathy was the typical response of the unemployed, it is more plausible to argue that attitudes ranged across a broad spectrum, between apathy and class-conscious activism. It was the activists' job to win over the vacillating intermediate bloc. And in Canada they undeniably, if sporadically, succeeded. Tens of thousands of Canadian participated in the unemployed movement at some point in the 1930s.[12] The problem for the CPC was that most of them did so as members of non-party organizations.

When the unemployed began to organize, they were less concerned with the politics of unemployment than with having

something done about an exceedingly grim existence. Lacking in "formal education and experience in public office", they often deferred to leaders who possessed these skills. In many instances individuals with labour movement backgrounds were prominent in the leadership of independent unemployed groups.[13] But proletarian credentials were by no means mandatory, and it was quite common for ex-army officers, professionals and activists in the establishment parties to be in leading positions.[14] Not surprisingly, they brought with them an aversion from political radicalism and, especially, from involvement with communism. Distance from the radical wing of the movement was preserved by the principle of non-partisanship, which was itself facilitated by the movement's political heterogeneity. Thus, during a relief workers' strike in New Toronto in 1935, Workers' Unity League representatives were twice refused permission to address mass meetings on the grounds that the struggle was "entirely non-political ... not a move to further the interests of any political party, but definitely to obtain adequate relief for all unemployed."[15]

Some unemployed groups, especially those in which veterans' organizations were active, consciously strived to keep the movement passive. But this became increasingly difficult as the state continued its feckless response to the crisis. Even the most moderate organizations were forced to adopt militant methods. The secretary of the Mount Dennis

(Toronto) branch of the avowedly anti-radical Canadian Workers' Association expressed well the moderates' dilemma. "Our organization", he wrote to provincial Premier George Henry, "has done quite a lot to keep encouraging the men who are unemployed from engaging in radical demonstrations. But Sir, it is going to be hard to keep them in check if something is not done soon." The unemployed, he added, wanted to work. But if there was no work, families had to be fed, and the "huge accumulation of profits" by employers, stock brokers and insurance companies would have to bear some of the cost.[16]

This single reference to the "huge accumulation of profits" in capital's hands reveals the extent to which the language of militancy was gaining acceptance among the jobless. The "extremist manifesto" issued to North York municipal council by a joint delegation of four workers' organizations in March 1933 was almost a paradigm of this development:[17]

> The money, food, clothing and houses are here. We, the workers, have built them; we have produced them by the sweat of our brow. By our labor we have made it possible for the capitalist class to accumulate millions of dollars in profits and dividends. All over the country there are huge stores of the necessities of life in the warehouses while thousands are starving.
>
> Thousands of houses and buildings are empty while workers are evicted from their homes and single men are herded into slave camps.
>
> Hundreds of millions of dollars produced by the toil of the Canadian masses are being paid in profits and dividends to capitalists in Canada and abroad, while the wages of workers

> are cut, and workers and poor farmers starve. The workers have created and are creating all the wealth in Canada. We must demand that the needs of the unemployed be looked after before profits are paid. Dividends must be cut, taxes must be increased on the incomes of the rich, the stored-up food and clothing and the empty houses all must be used to satisfy the needs of the million unemployed and their families.

It is impossible to read this statement without seeing some communist influence: in the assertion of labour as the source of all value; in posing the contradiction of poverty in the midst of abundance; in demanding production for use before profit; and in the general terminology of class struggle. In addition, the statement was appended to concrete demands for a 10 per cent winter increase in the value of relief vouchers and the right to use vouchers outside the municipality. Drawing the linkages between immediate economic needs and wider political perspectives was one of the CPC's basic strategic aims. The movement, therefore, was adopting positions first mapped out by the CPC in 1930 - but still, for the most part, independently of the party. To understand how this position was reached, we have to return to 1930.

The National Unemployed Workers' Association (NUWA) began life as a section of the WUL. In reality, its national character was purely nominal. Tom Ewan was under so much pressure trying to launch the "red" unions that he had little opportunity to build the NUWA. Throughout 1930 no

unified campaign plan for the unemployed movement was issued, and such development as took place depended on prevailing local circumstances. Thus, while police harassment made open activity virtually impossible in Montreal, Toronto and Hamilton, in Vancouver, where the battles between the police and the unemployed were often ferocious, an active NUWA branch with its own weekly paper, the Unemployed Worker, was in existence by late 1929.[18]

Vancouver's early pre-eminence was based on the presence of Allan Campbell, an articulate and extremely militant "Red Clydesider" whose experience of organizing the unemployed went back to the early days of the communist movement in Scotland; and also to the presence, in the first depression winter, of a huge number of single, transient unemployed. According to Campbell, there were 10,000 such men in January 1930, the vast majority "without any assistance". At least until the provincial and Department of National Defence relief camps siphoned off a large proportion of them, this group provided the mainstay of a particularly active and militant organization. The Vancouver NUWA held over 100 public demonstrations in the course of 1930, with crowds of a thousands or more quite unexceptional.[19]

Vancouver's confrontational mode, which was consistent with the "leftist" temper of the international movement, tended to set the NUWA's early standards. By the end of

1930, however, activists in other centres were finding this orientation unsatisfactory. Whereas the Vancouver branch benefited from the transient unemployed's tendency to settle in the city, elsewhere the unpredictability of the transient population made the building of a stable organization impossible. Organizers in Montreal and Toronto went so far as to argue that concentration on the transient population indicated a failure to throw off a "seasonal unemployment complex". Because mass unemployment was now permanent, they argued, the NUWA had to be established on a permanent basis, rooted mainly in working class neighbourhoods. This would require fewer - but better prepared - demonstrations and the adoption of concrete demands to which ordinary workers could relate. As one Montreal organizer pointed out, when $15 a week was a good industrial wage, the NUWA's demand for $25 a week unemployment relief seemed more than a little "far-fetched".[20]

The unfolding tactical reorientation did not go unchallenged. Vancouver communists saw it as part of a conspiracy to depreciate their efforts and as an indication of growing "opportunist" tendencies at the centre. Mainly through the voice of Malcolm Bruce they entered into a polemic that, the CPC Political Bureau claimed, "could very easily become the basis of a factional struggle within the Party".[21] Vancouver's opposition possibly contributed to the centre's failure to generalize the emerging trend until

the latter part of 1931.

One city where the new tactics were quickly assimilated was Windsor. The NUWA had enjoyed a shadowy existence there since its formation, and it was not until early 1931 that its demonstrations and meetings aroused any great interest. By then the unemployment situation was acute, "largely due to inactivity on the part of automobile and kindred industries and to the rigid enforcement of commuting regulations by the Immigration authorities at the Port of Detroit."[22] A shop-gate meeting at Ford in mid-February drew a crowd of 800, and on 25 February an even larger number of unemployed rallied to the "International Day of Struggle against Unemployment". The arrest of 14 NUWA members on this occasion was taken as a sure sign that the movement was on the rise.[23]

While never abandoning mass demonstrations, the Windsor NUWA consolidated itself by combining them with painstaking work at the neighbourhood level. By mid-1931 it had developed a standard procedure that brought it into continuous contact with the unemployed. Two or three comrades would be delegated to a neighbourhood where they would familiarize themselves with local residents and their problems simply by knocking on doors and talking about the NUWA. They would leave each household with two cards. One gave basic information about the organization and urged families facing problems with landlords or the utility companies to get in

touch with the local secretary; the other consisted of a questionnaire on that household's particular concerns. On the basis of information received, the NUWA branch would draw up a brief leaflet for different neighbourhoods, showing how their various social needs would best be met by forming an unemployed council affiliated to the NUWA. Each new member recruited to the organization would then be issued with a membership card which read on one side: "HANG THIS REMINDER IN THE KITCHEN".

> When the cupboard is bare; when threats are made to cut off relief, when electricity, gas or water is discontinued, or if any worker is to be thrown out on the street because he cannot pay his rent, or at any time that the unemployed are discriminated against, COMMUNICATE WITH THE LOCAL COUNCIL OF THE NATIONAL UNEMPLOYED WORKERS' ASSOCIATION, 61 Pitt Street East, Windsor.
>
> The NUWA organizes and fight for NON-CONTRIBUTORY UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE, FOR IMMEDIATE CASH RELIEF, FOR FREE ELECTRICITY, GAS AND WATER AND AGAINST EVICTIONS. ORGANIZE UNEMPLOYED COUNCILS. FIGHT, DON'T STARVE. - Executive, NUWA.[24]

By no means every campaign of the Windsor NUWA successfully mobilized the unemployed. An attempt to organize a city-wide boycott of an increase in gas rates had limited impact.[25] Nevertheless, the organization was taking root. Initially, like the party itself, it was based predominantly among Ukrainian, Hungarian and Croatian immigrants. By the end of 1931, even after a period of harsh police repression following the arrest of the CPC leadership, it was clear that the NUWA was breaking down Anglo-Saxon workers' alleged

immunity from radical infections. "It is surprising", the Intelligence Officer of the local Essex Scottish Militia reported in December, "to see how many English-speaking people are joining. However, it is presumed that this is merely caused by the lack of unemployment [sic] and when business conditions turn for the better their ideas will change materially."[26] The Eastern European community did remain the mainstay of the left wing movement, but there were no obvious signs that Anglo-Saxon support diminished.

The turn towards "permanent activity" received Comintern sanction in the spring of 1931. An article by RILU head Lozovsky called for more effective intervention in daily struggles in order to show the masses that Communists were "the only advocates of definite demands for the defence of the daily needs of the proletariat, who propose at the same time forms and methods of struggle."[27] Later the same year, Osip Piatnitsky, Secretary of the Comintern Executive Committee, elaborated on this theme in a booklet urging party members to pay the closest attention to such issues as food allowances, housing, and cultural/educational work, all of which had to be linked where possible to industrial and trade union intervention.[28] But it was not the Comintern's <u>imprimatur</u> which finally pushed the NUWA to adopt "permanent activity" as a national strategy. Rather, it was forced to do so in response to growing state coercion, which itself had been induced by the NUWA's massively successful

national demonstrations in February and April 1931.

In January 1931 the WUL launched the "biggest mass campaign ever undertaken" by the party: the struggle for the WUL Bill for State Non-Contributory Unemployment Insurance. According to the party, this campaign was of a revolutionary character, arising from the contradiction between the objective necessity of the central demand and the impossibility of its achievement within a decaying capitalist system. The belief was that, as more and more workers became convinced that the demand was just, they would inevitably be forced to consider the methods necessary to win it and would grow in class consciousness with the realization that they were confronting the issue of state power.[29] The party set itself an initial target of 500,000 signatures for the WUL Bill, but hastily reduced this figure to a more realistic but still sizeable 100,000.

Seven weeks before the bill's planned presentation, the CPC was able to gauge the campaign's progress by observing the response to the 25 February Day of Struggle. It was pleasantly surprised. According to The Worker, at least 50,000 people took to the streets, with demonstrations at least a thousand strong in Vancouver, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Port Arthur, Fort William, Timmins, Sudbury, Windsor, Hamilton and Toronto. According to an internal publication, "Thousands and thousands" of hitherto unapproachable workers

had been drawn towards the party. The WUL, Tom Ewan added, had firmly established its "ideological force and influence".[30]

Even allowing for an inflation of the numbers turning out, the Day of Struggle did provide evidence that the communist message was getting through to the masses. It was surely more than coincidence that in the wake of this demonstration the state stepped up the tempo of its anti-communist activities and took the decision to move towards outlawing the party.[31] The events of 15 April gave further proof of left wing advance. The WUL just failed to reach its target, gaining 94,000 signatures. An estimated 85,000 workers demonstrated across the country, and most important of all, the WUL delegation garnered raw material for reams of propaganda when it interviewed R. B. Bennett. His comments, ranging from the observation that unemployment was the rightful reward for those who had not practiced thrift to his unequivocal statement that "neither this government nor any other government that I am a member of will ever grant unemployment insurance. We will not put a premium on idleness and we will not put our people on the dole", immediately earned him the title of "Starvation Bennett". The NUWA invoked them in urging the unemployed to continue the struggle "ruthlessly and relentlessly, with the same degree of class consciousness exhibited by the millionaire premier of an imperialist government."[32] When the RILU praised the

"very significant success ... achieved ... in the struggle for the Unemployment Insurance Bill which found its highest point in the demonstrations throughout Canada on April 15th", the party must have felt that its years on the side-lines of the class struggle were over.[33]

This intervention performed two very positive functions for the CPC. It undeniably brought communists into contact with more workers and their families than ever before: in the first six months of 1931 the WUL national office issued 16,000 NUWA membership cards, with an unknown number, independently enrolled (against national instructions) by several local NUWA branches.[34] Of equal importance was the therapeutic impact on the party's internal relations. After two solid years of inactivity and internal strife, the opportunity to engage in collective, practical action towards a definable goal helped clear up a host of personal and political disagreements. A euphoric Charlie Marriott reported from Winnipeg that not only were the local "boss papers" still discussing the 15 April demonstration "in different tones of alarm", but that "the rapprochement between the [Anglo-Canadian and Ukrainian] leaderships is very good.". During the campaign in Winnipeg, the party distributed 200,000 leaflets on the WUL Bill, and on the week-end after 15 April kept the momentum going by calling another mass demonstration when almost as many people turned out and over a hundred copies of <u>The Worker</u> were sold.[35]

These successes inevitably provoked a coercive response from the state. The NUWA was a prime target, and several branches suffered raids between March and July 1931. Allan Campbell, who had become something of a bête noire for the British Columbia authorities, finally pushed his luck too far. Arrested once again in January on charges of "inciting to riot" and "sedition", he was tried and convicted in March, sentenced to a year in Oakalla prison and later deported.[36] A similar fate befell Ron Stewart, leader of the Victoria Workers' Alliance, who received a two-year sentence for "inciting to mutiny". After his arrest, the British Columbia Provincial Police (known to the left as [Attorney General R. H.] "Pooley's Hooligans") and RCMP raided the headquarters of the Workers' Alliance and its paper, the Workers' Voice, taking away its typewriter, stencils and other office supplies. For the time being, the organization was driven underground.[37]

The combination of political success and state repression stimulated communist sectarianism. The Canadian Labour Defence League urged members to look on these attacks as part of a world-wide process of "fascization" (other examples were the Scottsboro case in the United States and the alleged subversion by the "Industrial Party" in the Soviet Union), which would actually help communists establish themselves as the only guardians of the proletariat.[38] Rather than suggest the advisability of seeking political

allies, repression made it more essential for communists to differentiate themselves from class collaborationist fakers. Party literature thus constantly presented labour and socialist spokesmen in the most derogatory terms. A cartoon in the first issue of the Ottawa NUWA's Unemployed Worker summed up this approach in representing R. B. Bennett as the classical top-hatted, pot-bellied plutocrat, whose relationship to reformist labour was symbolized by his holding up a hoop through which Labour MPs A. A. Heaps and Angus MacInnis were jumping. Elsewhere in the drawing, J. S. Woodsworth is shown as a goat ramming its head against a brick wall, over which two rats named Tom Moore and Aaron Mosher are disappearing. In the background, a huge mass demonstration demanding "Work of Full Maintenance" is gathering.[39]

The practical aim of this cartoon was to undermine attempts by the federal parliamentary Labour group to organize, apparently in concert with the ACCL, a "General Union of Workingmen" among the Ottawa unemployed. The party considered it a duty for comrades to challenge physically any attempts at organizing unemployed groups outside the NUWA. "We must not be afraid", Tom Ewan told a Vancouver organizer, "to set up new organizations of the unemployed because we might be called splitters ... we will be called this anyway, so what does it matter?"[40] This meant that members were to disrupt rival meetings, a tactic with thoroughly negative consequences. In Ottawa, where the NUWA had only been formed

in April 1931, the handful of party and NUWA members - as usual, mostly Eastern Europeans - who tried to disrupt Woodsworth's meetings invariably lost out in the physical exchanges. NUWA organizer Saul Cohen, "a small, insignificant, gentle guy", reported in June that it was "getting positively dangerous for me to go out unless I have a big bunch with me." He asked to be replaced.[41] In Windsor, where the NUWA had several hundred members by mid-1931, communists successfully broke up meetings addressed by Heaps and Woodsworth, ostensibly called to launch a new Labour Party in Windsor but which, in the local NUWA's opinion, were really designed to encroach on NUWA successes. The Heaps meeting on 26 June ended in chaos, with fights inside the hall and in adjoining streets. Hostilities only ceased when a detachment of the Essex Scottish Militia arrived. The CPC tried to use the development for propaganda purposes, arguing that when "the fakers pressed the police and militia into their service", many members of the international unions present were so disgusted that "they tore up their AFL cards". It added that Heaps had exposed himself as a "social fascist".[42] The most important consequence of the affair was that several NUWA leaders received lengthy jail sentences.

Until the August arrests, the party appeared almost to welcome repression. Despite private admissions that this was making public activity more and more difficult, the leader-

ship convinced itself that the working class would come to the rescue if the state attempted a major crackdown. In reality, the party's sectarian behaviour was having an immobilizing impact on working class solidarity. This became all too clear after August, when communists had to come to terms with the fact that workers were not becoming revolutionized at anything like the rate once imagined. The party's subsequent generalization of "permanent activity" methods of unemployed work and adoption of less abrasive attitudes towards the non-party left were necessary accommodations to this unpleasant reality. By the time the RILU issued a critique of the NUWA as too narrowly "leftist", the organization had already been detached from the WUL and reconstituted as the National Council of Unemployed Councils (NCUC), the change of name symbolizing a thoroughgoing shift towards small-scale struggles based on the neighbourhood and the block.[43]

Although this change was in many respects a rationalization of existing practices, the broadening-out process it envisaged went much farther than many local activists expected. It was based on two premises. First, the unemployed <u>were</u> being pushed by "the logic of experience" into collective, increasingly militant activity. Unfortunately, they were gravitating in too many cases not to the NUWA but into "hundreds of independent neighbourhood unemployed organizations ... most of them under reformist ideology and

leadership." Second, the NUWA had to change its sectarian habits and reach out to workers who were not already militant, countering the popular belief that "one [had] to be a 'red' or a Marxist to attend" NUWA meetings. Indeed, it was now possible to attract those who "might never attend a meeting or read a workers' paper ... It does not matter if they voted for R. B. Bennett, or if they still believe capitalism is the only possible system." Communists had to pull this non-political layer into activity by organizing around small local struggles. Moreover, they had to give the politically inexperienced room to lead. It was a "sectarian folly" to insist that unemployed councils affiliate to the NCUC. Affiliation would happen in due time as the network of activists thrown up by the new unemployed councils became convinced of the superior organizational capacities of the party nucleus. This did not mean a depoliticisation of the unemployed movement: communists still had to provide political analyses of events, expose labour fakers and show how local struggles related to the political demand for state non-contributory unemployment insurance. Rather, it meant that concrete activity should always take priority over abstract propaganda. In effect, the unemployed councils were to be miniature united fronts.[44]

In some centres the change to the unemployed council system was welcomed. In Windsor it was already well under way by January 1932, prompted, however, less by the positive

virtues outlined above than by the fact that surveillance and harassment of NUWA mass meetings had frightened off many supporters. Fear of being struck off the relief rolls was an increasingly strong deterrent to public identification with radicalism.[45] Conversely, in Vancouver the belief that the new tactics marked a "retreat in the face of the Bennett government's offensive" led to strenuous resistance. Many Vancouver activists, who had managed to combine a substantial amount of neighbourhood work with regular mass agitation, felt that the likeliest consequence of the new orientation would be to give "reformist fakers" an opportunity to establish an undeserved base. As late as October 1932 a section of the unemployed movement, retaining the original name, split off from the main body.[46] Yet, ironically, once the political purpose of the change was fully accepted, the unemployed council movement probably achieved its most complete expression in Vancouver. An examination of the Vancouver movement, therefore, points the way towards an explanation of the national movement's restricted impact.

By January 1933, after roughly six months of the new system, there were 114 "block committees" with a total active membership of 2,287 men and women in the Vancouver area.[47] Around this nucleus there was a much larger periphery which could be mobilized as situations arose, as at one demonstration in February 1932 (part of the preparations for that month's British Columbia "Hunger March") when between

15,000 and 30,000 people attended a rally at Cambie Street grounds.[48] Increasingly, though, the unemployed were drawn into the daily life of the unemployed councils, fighting over such issues as evictions, health care, gas and electricity disconnections and the myriad of issues arising out of the relief system: getting on the relief rolls, levels of relief, emergency allocations and so forth. One campaign brought about decentralization of relief dispensaries, thus freeing residents from the irksome necessity of joining the weekly "gunny sack parade" to the central dispensary in downtown Vancouver.[49]

Another important area of concern was health care. Mass unemployment, Leonard Marsh observed in 1938, "increased enormously the demand for free or subsidized [medical] services, which even in ordinary times are not available on a sufficiently comprehensive or systematic scale."[50] Such was the case in Vancouver, where the city provided only two doctors to cope with demand in the free out-patients department of the General Hospital. "Needless to say, they cannot even begin to handle even the emergency work ... the city has simply left it to the private practicioner to carry on without pay."[51] Much of the unemployed councils' work was taken up with finding sympathetic private doctors who would accept new patients without guaranteed payment.[52] They also collaborated with the Women's Labour League to press for birth control clinics and improved care of expectant mothers.[53]

In this regard they sought to challenge entrenched ideas about accepting "charity" and build support for state intervention. They urged the unemployed to take a critical view of existing services, for example by exposing the failings of public health officials. According to the Unemployed Worker, Burnaby's Medical Health Officer regularly confused patients and treatments. The Burnaby Unemployed Council, believing that "the unemployed ... have been at his tender mercy long enough", gathered data to support a demand for his dismissal.[54]

In attempting to convince workers of their right to make demands on the state, unemployed activists had no desire to promote passive reliance on an instrument of bourgeois class rule. At all times they encouraged the unemployed to see themselves as the prime agents of change. Each eviction successfully resisted, every concession squeezed from the state by direct action, the argument ran, was an increment of working class power. If only a small minority of the unemployed councils' rank and file saw the struggle quite so clearly, there were instances when large numbers of unemployed showed a willingness to think and act in new ways. A good example was the well-organized campaign mounted by the Burnaby Unemployed Council in winter 1932-33 against price increases in stores where relief vouchers were cashed. Initially, resentment focussed on the storekeepers (one block committee felt it was a pity the "gentry" could not be sent to the Soviet Union, "as we know what fate [they] receive

there.") By the time the campaign culminated, however, attention had been shifted to the municipality's duty to increase relief allowances. By January 1933 the unemployed council had sent several delegations on fruitless attempts to gain emergency allocations. Its patience exhausted, the council mobilized 400 men and women, occupied three stores and sent a final demand to the municipal relief office. When this was rejected it gave its members the order to take what they needed. It then left to avoid a police detachment, but promised to repeat the procedure as and when necessary.[55] On other occasions workers occupied relief offices and other public buildings - including the Maillardville police station! - to publicise their demands.[56]

A major contributory factor in establishing the basic solidarity underpinning direct action was the movement's social life. In his memoir of the movement in Vancouver, Ronald Liversedge devoted one brief comment to this aspect: "The social evenings of the Block unemployed councils were happy, well-attended affairs with a concert in which talent of all nations took part, and then a light refreshment of coffee and sandwiches."[57] This probably gives a false impression of the relative weight of social and political activities. At a time when commercial recreation was for many an unaffordable luxury, the unemployed councils provided numerous low cost diversions from the grimmer aspects of life on the dole: house parties, dances, children's outings,

films and sports. "Next Friday at 8 p.m.", the Waterfront Neighbourhood Council announced, "we will hold a social and dance and there will be some pep to it. This is the real stuff and the admission is free."[58] Organizers used social affairs to initiate contact and draw new members into political work. At one house party run by two block councils in the East End neighbourhood, three new members were signed up and a dollar was raised from the 25 party-goers to buy a subscription to The Worker.[59] Once introduced to the social programme of the unemployed movement, new members gained access to a complex of similar activities offered by the wider revolutionary movement. Between 9 January and 4 February 1932 anyone with the inclination and stamina could have attended seven social functions: WUL Concert and Dance (9 January); NUWA Youth Committee Banquet and Dance (18 January); YCL Dance (18 January); Lenin Memorial Week Concert (22 January); CLDL Scandinavian Branch Social (25 January); YCL Dance (28 January); Workers' Sports' Association Dance (4 February).[60] It seems reasonable to assume that some workers whose original concern was a cheap night out might well have later found themselves occupying a relief office or bolstering a lumber workers' picket line.

If socials and dances introduced new workers to the unemployed councils, political education was intended to consolidate their commitment. Ideally, each regular block committee meeting was to contain an educational component,

usually in the form of a short talk and questions at the end of normal business. With little time to put a message over to men and women who may often have had little previous exposure to left wing debate, organizers had to limit themselves to pithy expositions of revolutionary politics. One talk by "Comrade W. Alexander" to Kingsway Block council 3 on the issue "Why We Are Unemployed" may well have been typical. Alexander

> reviewed working class history and the abolition of exploitation - capitalist - [and] showed conclusively that under the present system unemployment was inevitable and that, the Sun and the Province to the contrary, 'prosperity' is something we will never have again.
>
> He also stated emphatically that parliamentary power is capitalist power, regardless of the political party administering it. Mass organization and mass pressure, he stated, were the only trustworthy instruments of the workers. Mr. Alexander concluded by comparing the lot of the worker in the USSR with our own and it is safe to say that none of us felt conceited or even contented with our own conditions.[61]

Members were encouraged to educate themselves by reading left wing literature, and the best organized councils regularly sold quite large quantities of the Unemployed Worker (which had a weekly sale of 1,250 copies in January 1933) and The Worker, as well as smaller sales of American and British communist periodicals and the usual selection of books and pamphlets, particularly those of the CLDL.[62]

The unemployed movement undoubtedly made a major contribution to the growth of the left wing movement in British

Columbia. The CLDL, for example, saw its British Columbia membership rise from 3,300 in May 1934 to 6,000 - 45 per cent of the national total - in March 1935.[63] Moreover, as the economy revived, the political groundwork laid by unemployed activists also supported trade union growth, most clearly in the lumber and longshore industries.[64]

The unemployed movement itself, however, reached a plateau in 1933, following which it lost much of its political momentum.[65] Writing in the fall of 1933, B.C. provincial unemployed leader Bill Purvis attributed the party's loss of dominance in the movement to the fact that leading members had forgotten that the vitality of the unemployed struggle depended on activity around immediate economic grievances. Instead of keeping in close contact with the rank and file, the party had concentrated on keeping control of the unemployed councils' committee structure. It compounded this error by sucking the best new recruits into administrative work and allowing "hair-splitting arguments" on tactics (precipitated by a fresh wave of police repression early in 1933) to penetrate the block committees. Most harmfully of all, it attempted to divert the unemployed away from their own immediate concerns into the provincial party's various campaigns, notably the November 1933 election when the CPC ran under the alias of the B.C. Workers and Farmers United Front. The upshot was that the unemployed voted with their feet, forming independent groups or moving

closer to the CCF and SPC.[66] By the end of 1934, less than a year after dismissing the CCF as an "agent of the boss class within the working class", the CPC was working with it in the "B.C. Joint Committee on Unemployment".[67]

In arguing for a return to fundamentals, Purvis was effectively admitting that the party's original view of an easy transition from economic to political action had been wildly optimistic. Yet, his analysis of political developments inside the B.C. working class was partial and unduly pessimistic. He could well have argued that communist tutelage had helped give the unemployed the confidence to take independent action when communists failed to deliver the goods. Nor was this simply a matter of the party's tactical shortcomings. It was also a reflection of the B.C. working class's growing political sophistication, as expressed in its discriminating <u>use</u> of its class forces. Looked at in this way, we can understand the concurrent growth in the province of the CLDL and CCF - and the failure of the communist electoral intervention, widely seen as fraudulent and manipulative.[68]

Purvis's account betrayed a vexation that can perhaps be attributed to the fact that the unemployed movement had not been used to build the party. If, however, party aspirations in this regard had been more modest at the start of the depression, some solace could have been derived from the growth that <u>had</u> taken place. Figures for party membership in

the province in 1930 are not known, but they were certainly much lower than the figure of 1,200 members which in mid-1935 placed District Nine second only to Southern Ontario.[69] Moreover, five times that number were members of the CLDL. They formed a small, but significant, periphery which for various reasons was broadly sympathetic to the CPC but unable to join it - perhaps because this was a step that required more commitment and selflessness than most people possessed.[70]

Yet the fact remains that the linkages of economic and political, local and national, campaigns had not become routine in the province where communist activity generally was most advanced. Did the failure to make these linkages mean, as the party had predicted, that "reformist illusions" were being fostered among the rank and file? Did it also mean that the communist world-view was being rejected? To answer these questions we have to look again at the national picture and the campaigns of the NCUC.

The NCUC was launched at the National Unemployment Conference of March 1932, the first of a series of national and provincial conferences and hunger marches; each of which was the culmination of several months' preparation. Activists used them to demonstrate their organizational capacities, present themselves as legitimate mouthpieces of the unemployed, exchange local experiences and connect them up with national and international events, and generally to

extend and deepen the struggle by directly confronting the state.

These events sharply defined the "us" and "them" of class struggle in unmistakeable physical terms.[71] When the Workers' Economic Conference met in Ottawa in August 1932, comparisons with the Imperial Economic Conference were inevitable. While the "pot-bellied ... empire economic big shots" enjoyed the best accommodations Ottawa could offer, the "lean and hungry lot" at the Workers' Economic Conference met in an abandoned garage, which the delegates themselves had cleaned and whitewashed and which served as the sleeping quarters for more than a hundred of them. Early arrivals even built from scratch the benches delegates were to sit on, not surprisingly in rather less comfort than the "imperialists" who met in the parliament buildings. A. E. Smith later emphasized the workers' moral superiority: "Their's was an empty show. But our conference throbbed with vitality."[72]

The basic demand proposed on all such occasions was non-contributory unemployment insurance. This differentiated the party politically from most other sections of the labour movement, which were generally in favour of some kind of contributory scheme encompassing workers, employers and the state.[73] For the CPC, non-contributory insurance was to come solely at the expense of the capitalist class, by means of a steeply graduated income tax, and was to represent a

reordering of state priorities in favour of the domestic and international interests of the working class. Speakers at the Workers' Economic Conference pointed out that a diversion of Canada's rising military expenditure into unemployment insurance would have the added value of reducing imperialist pressure on the Soviet Union.[74] Other demands were proposed in accord with local priorities. At the Nova Scotia Unemployment Conference in March 1933 delegates called for an end to Canada's trade embargo against the Soviet Union, to permit acceptance of a major Soviet order by the province's dreadfully depressed steel industry.[75] The Manitoba Hunger March in October 1932, concerned with the plight of the "agrarian proletariat", demanded waivers on tax arrears and moratoria on farm evictions.[76]

Organizers never expected these claims to be granted: the main benefit to be derived lay in the propaganda that could be made when they were refused. On the one hand, here were delegations claiming to represent not just an insignificant rabble but a national mass movement - precisely 214,614 strong, according to the Workers' Economic Conference.[77] On the other hand, they encountered capitalist governments unwilling to yield any significant concessions and content for the most part to surround themselves with the full panoply of state power. This, of course, documented the left's thesis that the essence of the bourgeois state was coercion.

In many instances it appeared that the state expected insurrection. Manitoba Premier John Bracken, having refused to meet a provincial unemployed delegation, deployed "a large body of provincial and city police to oppose any attempt at a forced entry." If the front-line proved inadequate, a "large detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police" was waiting in the basement, tear gas at the ready.[78] In the "police-thronged corridors" of the Nova Scotia Legislature there was so much confusion and apprehension at rumours of "a hunger march, of an attack on the building" that no-one noticed a handful of men from the Halifax Unemployed Council picking their way through to Premier Gordon Harrington's office, where they quietly handed over their demands and left.[79] R. B. Bennett's security precautions for the National Unemployment Conference were, in the editorial opinion of the Ottawa Journal, "uncalled-for, unnecessary, and un-British". In a "scene that smacked more of Fascism than of Canadian constitutional authority", the spectacle of an armoured car patrolling Parliament Hill seemed particularly excessive.[80]

For the subsequent Workers' Economic Conference Bennett actually tried to prevent workers from travelling to Ottawa, by having the RCMP conduct stop-and-search operations on all east-bound freight trains in western and northern Ontario.[81] When he met a delegation from the conference, he was surrounded by a personal bodyguard of RCMP detectives, and while the meeting took place several thousand Ottawa

residents were treated to the spectacle of a baton-charge by the city police on an open-air rally. Some of the bystanders, according to an account in Canadian Forum, were themselves beaten up "mercilessly", which disposed many of them to overlook the demonstrators' flaunting of a ban on the rally.[82]

By 1932 R. B. Bennett's repressive instincts were so well known that only very limited political capital could be made from them. But the same could not be said of the United Farmers of Alberta administration's handling of the provincial hunger march in December 1932. Premier J. E. Brownlee banned the march, a decision later endorsed by the ILP-controlled Edmonton city council. When 2,000 marchers, mainly farmers, coalminers, and unemployed Edmontonians, ignored the ban, an estimated crowd of 10,000 witnessed "one of the most sensational scenes ever presented" to an Edmonton audience. The RCMP rode into the march, tore down banners and indiscriminately beat up marchers and bystanders. The unemployed attempted to resist, building barricades and taking to adjacent roofs, "from which a fusillade of sticks and stones" was hurled at the RCMP and city police. Within minutes, however, the police had routed the march. They then drove their advantage home by raiding the premises of the Young Communist League and the Ukrainian Farmer-Labour Temple Association and arresting seven members of the ten-man delegation which had managed to interview Brownlee.[83]

In a letter to the Alberta Labor News, an ILP member summed up the political lessons of the affair: "in the city of Edmonton, with a Labor Mayor and a Labor council majority, and in the province of Alberta with a farmer government in the saddle, unemployed workers and destitute farmers are beaten up if they want to march to the government buildings to protest their sorry plight."[84] Communists could not have expressed it better. When, only a month later, the UFA voted to affiliate to the CCF, the party was able to add that the fate of the march was an object lesson in what workers could expect if they confronted any future CCF government.[85]

Gradually, the liability of overt coercion began to dawn on the state. The Ottawa Journal remarked on the change that had taken place between the Workers' Economic Conference and the January 1933 National Hunger March. On the latter occasion, demonstrators "were permitted to roam at will on Parliament Hill, and there was no display of armed force such as greeted the last invasion."[86] In several cities there were demonstrations in support of the national delegation, but only at Nelson, B.C., was there a clash between marchers and the police.[87] At the Ontario Hunger March in 1934, new provincial Premier Mitchell Hepburn was affability itself. Not only did he accord the 200 marchers a friendly welcome, but he declared his personal support of the unemployed's "full and unrestricted rights to meet, speak, and organize in every city and village of the province." To this end he

over-ruled a city council ban on the march's closing rally in Queen's Park. He also made vague promises to support unemployment insurance legislation, prevent evictions and take action against "gross industrial abuses". According to the Toronto Star, the marchers left the parliament buildings "cheering and shaking hands" with Hepburn and his two radical cabinet members, Arthur Roebuck and David Croll.[88]

Hepburn's adroit handling of the march won the CPC's grudging tribute. By jumping to defend freedom of speech and assembly, The Worker noted, Hepburn had helped deflect attention away from the essential economic issues into a largely abstract debate about bourgeois freedoms, and had managed to give no real guarantees about translating his slippery demagogy into action.[89] All this was true enough (and the Hepburn government did prove to be just as parsimonious as its Tory predecessor, as the CPC predicted). Yet while the Canadian state generally was demonstrating an improved ability to absorb dissent, it was nevertheless being forced to concede political space to the left, providing opportunities for an expansion of the arena and constituency of revolutionary politics. Precisely this process developed in Toronto during the summer of 1933, when communist organizers literally "seized the streets" after a three-year period when mass public activity had been non-existent.

According to a report in the internal bulletin of the

CPC's Toronto section, local intervention in the unemployed movement before winter 1932-33 had depended on "the concentrated effort of a few comrades and the sporadic work of a few others." Many comrades had "shown a despairing attitude which manifested itself in a vocal yearning for a spectacular mass demonstration such as is known in the West." Only in the recent past had the party as a whole accepted the need to get down to the small tasks that earned the unemployed's trust and confidence.[90] Within months, however, those who longed for more dramatic action had their wish fulfilled, when the Toronto Unemployed Council launched a new "Free Speech Fight". The "struggle against police terror and political reaction", local unemployed leader James Houston observed, would now develop the "more clearly ... political side" of the unemployed struggle.[91]

The party decided to launch the Free Speech campaign when it observed the unusually strong resistance put up by its unemployed audience in Alexandra Park against the police's dispersal of the meeting, usually a routine procedure when communists were involved. A few days later Houston persuaded the organizers of a CCF meeting in Queen's Park to let him speak from the platform. Houston announced that the Toronto Unemployed Council was using this opportunity to launch the Free Speech fight because of the political significance of Queen's Park: "the seat of the Provincial Government ... the place that Prime Minister R. B. Bennett

started his election campaign and a park where the workers and their organizations met and had discussions as far back as 1870; in short it is the historical battleground of the working class of Toronto and cannot be closed to the workers in this period." Once Houston started to speak, the police stepped in to break up the meeting, but were forced to give way when the CCF organizers threatened to prosecute them.[92]

The contemporary rise of the CCF was a tremendous boon to the Free Speech fight. Throughout 1933 the new party was both a catalyst and a beneficiary of working class activism in the Toronto area. The Toronto Star provided such extensive coverage of this new phenomenon that a Worker article claimed that the Liberal paper was trying to publicise the CCF as a suitably "harmless" medium for emergent working class consciousness.[93] Its main mode of organization during its infancy was the open-air propaganda meeting which, unlike those of the communists, were free of police harassment. When the party launched the Free Speech fight, it had no qualms about latching on to CCF meetings. Communists would approach the CCF with a request to address its audience. If this was granted, either the communists obtained an audience or the police broke up the meeting. If the CCF refused, the communists moved a short way off and held their own meeting; and if the police then moved in, the party could score points against both the police and the CCF. Communists denied that these were cynical tactics or that

communists were only interested in free speech for themselves. Houston stressed that the Toronto Unemployed Council was out to win "Free Speech for all workers and working-class organizations in the city of Toronto".[94]

Between May and July police harassment of communist open-air meetings was absolutely relentless. When normal methods failed, the police turned to harsh innovations. After one meeting in Trinity Park was broken up, communists turned out in greater force at the same venue the following night. Even the Globe, a staunch defender of the police department and Police Chief Dennis Draper, reported that the second meeting was proceeding peacefully until the single motor-cycle policeman in the park drove to the speakers' stand and, turning his cycle away from the crowd, revved his engine to expel exhaust fumes over the listeners. This was the signal for a further twelve motor-cycle officers to form a circle around the crowd. As the Globe described it: "just a few feet from the speakers they stepped on their throttles. In less time than it takes to write it, one could not see more than a few yards. This was too much for even the staunchest of radicals, and they scattered in all directions", pursued by eight horse-policemen. Later in the evening, an incipient demonstration on Spadina Avenue was broken up by the same method.[95]

The left's response was instantaneous. A combined CLDL/Unemployed Council delegation went the same night to the

meeting of the Toronto Board of Control and submitted to Mayor William Stewart demands for action against the Police Commission and a policy statement on free speech and assembly in city parks. Stewart gave the delegation short shrift, and was particularly hostile to the youthful Houston. A few days later, however, he announced that "free speech within the law" would be allowed in specific areas of three downtown parks; elsewhere, games-players and picnickers would be left in peace. The Globe was delighted at "Mayor Stewart's Good Plan" and ridiculed the left with an appropriate metaphor: "Just as it promised to bloom in finest flower, Mayor Stewart pulls park oratory up by the roots."[96]

The Globe's confidence was misplaced. As Houston explained in a letter to the rival Star, Stewart's plan was both unacceptable and unworkable since there were too many working class organizations holding open-air meetings to be accommodated by the three designated parks. The Unemployed Council alone had a schedule taking in seven parks, including three favourite venues which were not on the list - Trinity Park, Allan Gardens and Queen's Park. Decisively, the left had no reason to believe that the Police Commission would use impartially its discretionary powers to decide whether a meeting was "within the law".[97] His organization intended to ignore the plan.

Obviously the authorities could not allow such open defiance of the new policy and continued to harass communist

meetings. A combined force of horse, foot and plain-clothed policemen dispersed crowds of over a thousand in Trinity Park on 2 and 9 August.[98] On 10 August, however, the police intervened only to prevent Houston from speaking, an action which highlighted the arbitrary character of their surveillance.[99] On 15 August a major show-down took place. During that day, members of the Communist-led Workers' Ex-Servicemen's League (the "weasels") distributed handbills headed "Heroes of 1914 - Bums of 1933", advertising a meeting that night in Allan Gardens. A crowd of over 2,000 gathered, despite attempts by an unusually large police contingent to break up groups as they formed. Suddenly, the crowd moved to the eastern extremity of the park to mass around two organizers who had unfurled a banner bearing the meeting's slogan. At this point, a detachment of motor-cycle police arrived and repeated its exhaust fumes tactic. A number of fights broke out between police and demonstrators and it took almost two hours to clear the park. Several arrests were made.[100]

The Allan Gardens incident brought growing criticism of Chief Draper's methods to a head.[101] Under the headline "Toronto's Cossacks", the Star published a letter from an army veteran who had attended the meeting. Though "not a red", Ex-Company Sergeant Major William Smith, a veteran of the First Canadian Division in the World War and a current militia member, was disgusted at behaviour which reminded him

of Germany's treatment of the Belgians. He intended to make his feelings felt at the next municipal election.[102] Bourgeois commentators who opposed repression tended to take the pragmatic view that it gave "the communists the food and drink which they seek."[103] Among working class organizations, however, there was a positive rallying to the Communists' defence. At one solidarity meeting in Earlscourt Park the platform was shared by Maurice Spector of the International Left Opposition and John Buckley of the CCF. The very fact that the Trotskyist organization could convene a meeting in support of the CPC was an indication of the latter's success in making its fight a general working class issue.[104] Two nights after the Allan Gardens incident, a combined meeting of the Unemployed Council and the WESL drew 5,000 demonstrators to Earlscourt Park. All the speakers "shot defiance at the numerous plainclothesmen present and challenged the police to interfere." WESL spokesman William Willecombe argued that the orderly character of the meeting showed that responsibility for past disorders lay with the police. He added, however, that only the audience's size that night had prevented further attacks. This was "a great victory for free speech in Toronto". The implication was that sustained mass action could produce even greater victories.[105]

By the end of August, the Free Speech fight had been won. The police continued to disrupt some meetings, but there

was no systematic campaign of repression. In September the Toronto Police Commission finally ordered Draper to "cease interfering with public meetings unless the law was actually broken."[106] What, then, was the significance of this campaign? In common with the hunger marches and unemployed conferences, it made sure that unemployment remained a political issue. It helped the revolutionary left sink roots in the Toronto working class movement and brought new cadres forward. Three of the most active unemployed leaders, James Beattie, James Houston and Fred Collins (who was also WESL Vice President), within months were organizing WUL unions and leading major strikes.[107] Most significantly of all, in terms of later developments in the politics of unemployment, the campaign pushed communists into united action with other left wing organizations, notably the CCF, thereby hastening the CPC's shift away from ultra-leftism. As in the trade union field, change in the party's political perspective was slow and indecisive. But it was in its unemployed work that the process of working patiently inside the class, rather than as a remote vanguard, first took shape. This process, and its implications for the CPC's relations with the wider unemployed movement, will now be examined.

Breaking with sectarianism did not come easily for many comrades. One from the East End Toronto section, writing in

March 1933, remained unconvinced that broadening out the movement was in the party's best interests. "Is it not better", he asked, "to have a smaller movement under strong revolutionary influence than to build up large organizations and lose control?"[108] The NCUC replied the following month with the pamphlet Building A Mass Unemployed Movement, which stated that communists had a duty to be active in any unemployed organization "of a working class character and composition" which recognized the necessity of militant economic struggle.[109] WUL Secretary Charles Sims added that it was vital to break from the idea that potential allies had to accept every CPC proposal "lock, stock and barrel", a view that in the past had left communists in a "'united front' made up of ourselves".[110]

This tactical shift did not imply a reduction in independent party activity among the unemployed. Communist organizers continued their efforts to draw unemployed organizations together and generalize the struggle. The creation of the Lakeshore Central Executive of Workers' Associations, catering to the working class suburbs to the west of Toronto, seems to have been a party initiative; its President, Ernest Lawrie, was a party member.[111] After a visit by Ewart Humphreys, communist President of the Mount Dennis branch of the York Township United Workers' Association, unemployed organizations in Kitchener, Waterloo, Galt and Preston decided to form a central executive to

coordinate activity.[112] Similar developments took place in Calgary and Halifax.[113] And in March 1933 there was a particularly impressive unity initiative in York Township, with Humphreys' organization convening a "United Workers' Conference" which attracted delegates from 30 working class organizations, including CCF and ILP branches and property-owners', veterans' and rate-payers' groups. Even the Trotskyist Left Opposition, never inclined to mince words where "Stalinist" united fronts were concerned, considered this one "more in the nature of a correct Leninist approach", and therefore of considerable potential for broadening the scope of the unemployed movement.[114]

The party was always keen to grasp any opportunity to politicize the struggle. A good case in point was its attempt to make a cause célèbre of the Nick Zynchuk case. This occurred in March 1933 when Zynchuk, an unemployed Ukrainian, was shot in the back and killed by a Montreal policeman during an anti-eviction demonstration. Although Zynchuk's relationship to the party was never clear, the CPC had been active for some time among the Montreal unemployed, particularly in the Verdun and Rosemount districts, and immediately took up the case. The CLDL pilloried the results of a coroner's inquest, which not only whitewashed the police's actions but praised their forthright treatment of "les étrangers". When it was discovered that the officer who had shot Zynchuk, Constable Joseph Zappa, was a member

of a fascist organization, the CLDL made the case the centre-piece of a pamphlet comparing Canadian developments with "Hitler's Horrors". By then Zynchuk had been accorded a revolutionary martyr's funeral. This became a major political demonstration, with more than 10,000 Montrealers following the cortège. The WUL chipped in with a national appeal calling for the construction of an unemployed movement strong enough to ensure that no "cowardly police thugs" ever again drew "a murderous gun against unarmed workers". The Progressive Arts League illustrated this argument in a hastily written agit-prop play on the case, performing it at a number of unemployed conferences later in the year.[115]

Despite this effort, the case fizzled out, and after a tactful period of suspension Zappa returned to his beat. Outside party ranks it aroused minimal interest. J. S. Woodsworth waited three weeks to raise it in the House of Commons, and then only to ask a single innocuous question.[116] Canadian Forum would have ignored the case entirely had not a subscriber written demanding to know why it had gone unreported. The magazine's explanation was that repression in Montreal was so well-known that the incident was not especially newsworthy![117]

Woodsworth's response to the Zynchuk case helps explain the CPC's apparently contradictory policy of appealing for united action with the CCF leadership while subjecting the

new party's politics to an increasingly sharp critique. In summer 1933 the NCUC issued unconditional invitations to the CCF, TLC, ACCL, ILP and other labour groups to contribute to the planning of the September National Unemployed Congress, only for Woodsworth to dismiss the appeal out of hand, arguing that "we feel that even palliatives of this kind [unemployment insurance] may be secured not by means of resolutions or deputations, but by sending men to parliament who as their numbers increase will be able more and more effectively to demand rather than to beg." NCUC National Secretary Hannes Sula urged him to consider the possibility of a joint parliamentary/extra-parliamentary campaign - a significant concession - but warned him that unemployed workers would not forget his refusal to descend into the real arena of the daily struggle. Parliamentary oratory, Sula suggested, had not stopped a single eviction.[118]

Through 1933 the CPC gradually expurgated the personal element from its critique of "social fascism" but continued to construct an image of the CCF as a party whose exclusively parliamentary policies objectively operated to "hold the masses in passivity" and prepare their crushing "under the Fascist iron heel".[119] This argument received its most complete formulation in Stewart Smith's Socialism and the CCF, published in February 1934 and offered to working class activists as a "guide to struggle".[120]

The existence of this book gave the CCF leadership a sound reason - in addition to the mistrust built up since 1929 - for doubting the sincerity of the communists' unity appeals.[121] But it was not the case that it "effectively destroyed any single point of contact there might have been for some cooperative activities between the two parties or their members."[122] Rank and file members of the two parties actually debated the merits of the communist analysis, and the heat generated did not inhibit united action in a variety of areas. At the same time as they were debating the question "Can and does the CCF help the working class?", CPC member Mitchi Sago and CCFer Alex Stewart were working together in the Flin Flon Unemployed Association and laying the basis of trade union organization at the mine and smelter; in the 1934 strike Stewart was the leading rank and file militant.[123] On the specific issue of fighting evictions, the CCF national leadership's failure to give a lead left local members with no alternative but to work alongside the CPC. Particularly in Ontario, where the provincial leadership lacked a concerted policy until mid-1935, rank and file cooperation was a persistent embarrassment to the CCF, which was giving "considerable attention to the business of establishing and maintaining a distinct and favourable public image."[124]

Despite this high degree of local cooperation, the refusal of the CCF (and ACCL and TLC) leadership to consider

a united campaign for unemployment insurance meant that the unemployed movement remained largely a party affair. After 1933, while the CPC never formally abandoned its aim of building a national unemployed organization capable of exerting substantial pressure on the state, it effectively set aside this project in favour of more pressing tasks. Notable here was the shift, following the economic upturn, into trade union activity. This drew off several leading unemployed organizers, such as Houston, Collins and Beattie in Toronto, Lenihan in Calgary, and Tom Bradley in Vancouver; all moved sideways into the Workers' Unity League. Emphasis on immediate local struggles was intensified, with communists increasingly operating as the most militant elements in explicitly non-partisan coalitions. The insertion of their activism and organizing skills into united front work with the unemployed was reflected in the rising tempo of unemployed activity in 1933. But it was in the period 1934-36 that the unemployed struggle reached its depression peak.

The massive recrudescence of unemployed militancy in these years stemmed directly from the Bennett government's decision to change the form of its contribution to unemployment relief. From 1930 to mid-1932, the federal Tories had contributed $20 millio[illegible]a year to relief, 80 per cent of which went to municipal work projects. In 1932 Bennett swallowed his personal aversion to the dole by allowing

municipalities to distribute the federal contribution as direct relief. Bennett, however, never lost his fear that the dole would shatter self-reliance and encourage recklessness, and after adjuring the provinces at the August 1934 Dominion-Provincial Conference to toughen up conditions for admission to the relief rolls (many unemployed, he alleged, were squandering relief payments on "movies, candy and beer"), he introduced a $40 million Public Works Construction Act and abandoned direct relief contributions to the provinces. Although he later modified this decision and restored direct relief contributions, he did so in the form of fixed monthly grants which reduced the federal contribution by 22 per cent.[125] The cut was then passed on by the provinces to the municipalities.

Despite federal and provincial contributions, unemployment relief remained a municipal responsibility and from one municipality to another there were wide variations in both standards of provision and regulations regarding access to relief rolls, task work requirements and forms of payment (vouchers or cash or a combination of both).[126] All of these areas could be - and were - contested. Thanks in no small measure to the CPC's efforts to develop organizational links across municipal boundaries, unemployed organizations in the less favoured municipalities were constantly striving to achieve parity with the more favoured. At the same time, relief standards were nowhere so munificent that the

relatively better off could afford to stand still.[127] The threat to existing standards posed by the 1934 federal economies was promptly answered by mass resistance, nowhere more impressively than in Southern Ontario.[128]

No sooner had Mitchell Hepburn's Liberals won the 1934 provincial election than Minister of Welfare David Croll announced plans to "clean out the fakirs" from the relief rolls.[129] In February 1935 he imposed the first of several cuts in grants to the municipalities, which not only made him something of a hate figure, but inspired a wave of demonstrations, occupations and "strikes" by relief recipients. Notable here were the struggles in East York, York Township, Niagara Falls, London and Stratford.[130] In terms of the CPC's contribution one of the most instructive clashes was also one of the first: at Crowland Township in April-May 1935.

Located in Welland County, Crowland Township had established a radical reputation by 1933.[131] With more than a third of its population of just over 3,000 on relief in the spring of 1935, the local council's decision on 2 April to reduce relief payments and increase work requirements provoked a sharp response from the 300 family heads affected (single men were excluded from the relief rolls). They considered existing levels inadequate and were aware that work schedules in some neighbouring municipalities, such as

Welland and Niagara Falls, were less arduous. On 3 April they unanimously struck work and lodged counter-demands for a 25 per cent increase in relief rates and inclusion of single men. The council responded by ending relief payments to strikers and their families, and after nearly six weeks forced them to accept the cuts.[132]

Throughout the first month, the strikers displayed impressive militancy, solidarity and discipline in the face of totally intransigent local and provincial administrations. Twice attacked with tear-gas, they saw four of their leaders arrested and detained, had the threat of deportation held over them, and were accused by David Croll of being the dupes of "Lilliputian Lenins". Moreover, after agreeing to a week-long "armistice", they were only finally forced to submit after seeing their strike headquarters - the Ukrainian Labour Temple - burn down in mysterious circumstances. Conversely, they had the full support of their wives and children, with many of the latter staying away from school to participate in daily demonstrations; their ranks yielded a solitary strikebreaker; and they never publicly repudiated the communists in their strike leadership, despite persistent red-baiting by Hepburn, Croll and the local council. Attempts to cast leading communist Frank Haslam as an "outside agitator" and a "spellbinder" were seen as ludicrous. He was indeed an outsider - from Humberstone, five miles away! But he had been resident in Crowland for

eight months. The suggestion that he had cast a spell over the rank and file was actually offensive to such as strike committee chairman Thomas Martin, a non-communist war veteran whose personal experience and faith in the character of "the support we have behind us" gave him the confidence to trade verbal jousts with Hepburn.[133]

The strikers enjoyed the support of local shopkeepers. They also enjoyed the outspoken support of the Reverend Fern A. Sayles, Pastor of the Maple Leaf Mission and erstwhile chairman of the township welfare board, who argued that the strikers had been "bullied and bludgeoned" into striking by a hard-faced council. Sayles also scored the area's other churches for complacently accepting the council's claims and "remaining asleep while children are in danger of starvation".[134]

Most of the strikers' support, however, came from the CPC. Apart from Haslam, at least one other party member, William Douglas, who apparently was an "outside agitator", helped organize the strike. As already stated, strike headquarters were in the Ukrainian Labour Temple; the ULFTA also operated a strike kitchen and gathered food from sympathetic farmers. The CLDL organized a "smash the frame-up meeting" to mobilize a defence effort on behalf of the detained strike leaders (Haslam, Douglas and two others). The CPC arranged for 50 under-10 schoolchildren to be billeted with Toronto families. This initiative, however, lasted only a few days,

until Hepburn threatened to charge the Crowland parents under the Truancy Act. Leading communist unemployed activists Ernest Lawrie and Ewart Humphreys travelled to Crowland in an attempt to mediate the strike, and may have helped convince the strikers to accept the cooling-off period that began on 28 April. It was during this period that the Ukrainian Labour Temple burned down, after which it became impossible to sustain the strike's momentum. According to the Reverend Sayles, after the township council saved face it made several concessions, granting almost all the strikers' demands.[135]

The Crowland strike was a significant turning-point in the development of communist unemployed activity. The party's support of the strike was predictable, but the prominence it thereby derived was an embarrassment. Instead of a struggle around fundamental economic issues, the strike became an ideological struggle against the "red bogey" and an object lesson in the perils of political isolation. It did nothing to promote the party's contemporaneous goal of unity with the CCF (which, as the federal election approached, was more than ever anxious to establish its constitutionality) and the experience was never repeated. From the middle of 1935, the CPC's drift into popular front politics accelerated.

Individual communists continued to be the most outspoken critics of the failures of the capitalist state. They could be depended on to provoke sharp rhetorical clashes with state

officials when the latter received unemployed delegations, and were always in the forefront of local struggles. Thus, Young Communist League member Joe Derry, one of the leaders of a massive hunger march from the Toronto suburbs in April 1935, replied to Mitchell Hepburn's taunt that Derry would refuse a farm job if offered one (the Ontario Liberals had just announced a plan to ship single unemployed men out to the countryside), by agreeing with the premier: "In 1935 a young man doesn't have to work for two meals a day, a shirt and a pair of pants, for that's all the farmers will pay."[136] In December 1935 Ewart Humphreys unsuccessfully agitated for York Township's unemployed to come out in solidarity with the East York relief strikers. "A defeat in East York", he argued, "will be a defeat for the workers of York Township ... workers of other municipalities [must] join in militant action."[137] Ernest Lawrie did manage to bring his Long Branch Workers' Association out in concert with East York; he even took relief work expressly to pull out men who had refused to strike.[138]

But as a matter of general policy, the CPC increasingly gave priority to unity over militant struggle. To some extent it was forced to do so by local opinion. When the party-influenced Lakeshore Central Action Committee issued a pamphlet calling for intensified resistance to the Hepburn government's most recent relief cuts, without prior consultation with affiliated bodies, the New Toronto Workers'

Association refused to distribute the pamphlets and denied the Action Committee use of its hall for a previously arranged meeting. NTWA President A. McDougall, himself a militant, explained that while many of his members agreed with the sentiments expressed, they refused to have their organization used as a "political football".[139] Similarly, during the York Township relief strike in June 1936, the Ontario Veterans' Protective Association threatened "strike leaders that if any party politics were introduced, or propaganda spread around, the veterans would withdraw their support."[140] Especially in York Township, where the United Workers' Association was under communist control (a "Stalinist clique" was the Trotskyists' description), any militant activity had to be prefaced by denials that unemployed leaders were "exploiting the unemployed for the benefit of the Communist Party" and assurances that "all shades of opinion were included" in the struggle.[141]

As the scope of the united front gradually expanded across class lines - by the autumn of 1935 it already embraced small-businessmen - the CPC moderated the character of its daily practice and its immediate aims in order to attract "the petty bourgeoisie, the office employees, and the progressive intelligentsia."[142] In line with the work performed by the CLDL, which by mid-1935 was "adapting [its] activities to [its] objective of becoming a broad mass organization congenial to all, as well as open to all who stand for the

defense of democratic liberties and for the defense of arrested workers", and the Canadian League Against War and Fascism (formed in October 1934), the unemployed movement was rendered acceptable to non-proletarian elements.[143] Clerics gained increasing prominence in unemployed activity and communists openly solicited the support of local businessmen.[144] According to one critic of communist unemployed policy, what this new orientation meant was that when strikes actually occurred, communists shared with the CCF a "passive folded arms policy" and were "more concerned with maintaining their respectability" than with pursuing the more militant policies necessary to win the strike.[145]

That the source of this criticism was the Workers' Party, formerly the Left Opposition, does not vitiate the contention that the CPC's political aspirations for the unemployed movement had been transformed.[146] By the end of 1935 it had surrendered not only immediate revolutionary goals, but also the attempt to build a national organization capable of mobilizing the unemployed on a mass struggle basis. The party's response to the decision of the British Columbia relief camp strikers, in May 1935, to launch the On-to-Ottawa Trek provided on early indication of this tendency. The CPC might have been expected to grasp an apparently excellent opportunity to develop a national propaganda campaign. Instead, it opposed the Trek and urged the strikers to stay in Vancouver, arguing that "the Fight against the

Bennett government must be fought out in each locality." The party attempted - and even then half-heartedly - to initiate complementary treks from Winnipeg and Ottawa only after the strikers ignored its exhortation.[147] Although the November 1935 Central Committee plenum criticised the party's failure of vision, and added a brief note on the general weakness of work in the unemployed movement, there was no improvement in party activity in 1936.[148] In that year there was a decisive shift away from mass action, when the party decided to replace hunger marches with the sending of deputations, consisting of one delegate per municipality, to petition provincial governments.[149] In his keynote speech to the 8th National Convention in 1937, Sam Carr's brief comments on the unemployed movement had an appropriately valedictory tone; they amounted to little more than a ritual statement of support for unemployment insurance (even the prefix "non-contributory" had been dropped) and an assertion that through its outstanding contributions the party had won "for itself the respect and love" of the unemployed masses.[150] By then, with the party embroiled in the CIO upsurge, the unemployed struggle was no longer a priority.

In 1930 the CPC saw the unemployed movement as the cutting edge of class struggle: through action and experience the unemployed masses would come fairly quickly to a thorough awareness of their class interests; the party's role was to make interests and goals synonymous; when that happened,

economic struggle would become political struggle. Clearly, this prediction, rooted in Marx and Lenin, was excessively optimistic. Many workers were slow to recognize the nature of the crisis, and even when they did only a minority were willing to mount collective resistance. A further minority were drawn to the party's unemployed groups - and a still further minority accepted the general politics of communism. Many who were prepared to utilize communist organizing skills were convinced neither of the necessity nor desirability of carrying the struggle outside their immediate localities. Crucially, their "do-it-yourself" reformism often worked, with the local state yielding to direct action on countless occasions. Conversely, the demand for state non-contributory unemployment insurance failed to bridge the gap between local struggles and the struggle for state power. Indeed, it may even have fostered "reformist illusions", in so far as those who were convinced of its value to the working class may have reasoned that the likeliest means of obtaining it would be to remove R. B. Bennett from office. The CCF was always the likeliest beneficiary of class conscious electoralism.

To what extent can we talk of the party's achievements in the unemployed movement? Certainly, it never came close to fulfilling its revolutionary objectives. But within more humble limits, a solid case can be made for the party's contribution to a general strengthening of the working class movement. It e[redacted]lished unemployment as a quintessentially

class issue, potentially capable of breaking down the barriers of ethnicity, race and skill that operated against the emergence of militant class consciousness.[151] It demonstrated again and again that solidarity could be built between employed and unemployed: on an impressively large number of occasions the unemployed gave indispensable assistance to industrial workers. On the other hand, the employed rarely reciprocated. Here one might argue that communists would have done a more effective job of linking the needs of the employed and unemployed from within the union mainstream, for even in their most stable period the WUL unions were rarely in a position to give material assistance to the unemployed.[152] More positively, the CPC was responsible to a major extent for providing the movement with the arguments, organization and militancy that pressured the state to sustain existing levels of relief expenditure at least until the onset of economic recovery.

The most influential long-term consequence of the unemployed movement was to prepare Canadian workers for the industrial struggles of the late 1930s and 1940s. Although much more research from a rank and file perspective will be needed to explore fully the relationship between the two developments, one can argue with a reasonable degree of security that the connection was a close one. As we have seen, the CPC recruited from the unemployed ranks new cadres who became industrial organizers as soon as economic con-

dictions made the change possible. More important than that was the impact of the movement itself in bringing tens of thousands of workers together in collective activity. While, unfortunately for the CPC, it did not launch them into revolutionary action, it taught them the techniques of class struggle and convinced them of their capacity to make and win demands. It is inconveivable that the lessons absorbed in battling for a more dignified poverty failed to be filed away for use in other fights.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER NINE

1. Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Michael Fenwick Papers, Vol.2, interview with Michael Fenwick; University of British Columbia Archives, interview with Alex Fergusson.

2. Leslie Morris, "The Unemployment Crisis and Our Party", The Worker, 19 April 1930. For the international communist viewpoint, see Provincial Archives of Ontario (PAO), Communist Party of Canada Papers, 10C 1964 ff., Red International of Labour Unions Correspondence Course, Toronto, February 1930; Communist International, 6 (1 March 1930), 1074-79; (15 March 1930), 1221-24

3. Communist Party of Canada, Canada and the VII World Congress of the Communist International (Toronto, n.d. [1936]), 26

4. "Unemployment", Carpenters' Monthly Bulletin, November-December 1930

5. "Outlook in Canada - Improving Trade", The Times, 9 November 1931; "Darkness Ere Dawn", Monetary Times, 85 (28 November 1930), 7; B. C. Forbes, "Powerful Market Recovery Seen", Vancouver Sun, 9 January 1930; PAO, Department of Labour Records, VII-I, Vol.5, Marion Findlay to J. A. C. Kemp, 14 November 1930. For the CPC's view of capital's attempts to manufacture optimism, see Sam Carr, "Sharpening Struggles in Canada", Labour Monthly, 14 (February 1932), 105

6. PAO, Ontario Premiers' Papers, Box 149, G. S. Henry to John Bridge, 29 September 1931; Labor Statesman (LS), 19 June 1931

7. "A Canadian Plan for Employment", The Times, 3 November 1932 (Hamilton); "Report of the Department of Labour 1931", Ontario Sessional Papers, 10 (1932), 34-5 (Stratford); "Edmonton Employment Service Plan Successful", Industrial Canada, 34 (August 1933), 42; (November 1933), 42; "Women's Service Bureau Closes This Week", Winnipeg Evening Tribune, 30 June 1934 (Winnipeg); "Mayor Stewart Says Relief Not Perpetual", Toronto Daily Star (TDS), 10 February 1933 (Toronto)

8. John A. Garraty, "Unemployment During the Great Depression", Labor History, 17 (Spring 1976), 133-59; Garraty, Unemployment in History: Economic Thought and Public Policy (New York, 1978), 165-215

9. Harry A. Cassidy, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario 1929-1932 (Toronto and Vancouver, 1932), 253; Frank Pedley, "The Role of Private Charity in Meeting Distress Due to Unemployment", Canadian Political Science Association, Annual Meeting, Toronto, 23-24 May 1932, Papers and Proceedings, 57-63; Leonard Marsh, Health and Unemployment (Toronto, 1938), 92, 132-33

10. Cassidy, Unemployment and Relief, 257

11. Marsh, Health and Unemployment, 92; Lloyd G. Reynolds, The British Immigrant: His Social and Economic Adjustment in Canada, Toronto, 1935), 265-66; Harris McPhedran, "The Difficulties of the Profession: Complaints of the Public", Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ), 30(April 1934), 436-37

12. As late as 1939 2,000 relief workers were on strike in York and Scarboro' Townships. See Socialist Action, 1 May, 1 June 1939

13. Patricia V. Schulz, The East York Workers' Association: A Response to the Great Depression (Toronto, 1975), 14-20. On the presence of Independent Labour Party, One Big Union and Industrial Workers of the World veterans in the unemployed movement, see PAO, Ontario Premiers' Papers, Box 131, A. M. Barnetson to H. G. Fergusson, 14 August 1930; Guelph Daily Mercury, 27 August 1932 (my thanks to Doug Cruikshank for this reference); The Worker, 22 April 1933; "Town Dispenses With Money", New York Times, 23 September 1932; Unemployed Worker (UW: Vancouver), 23 April, 27 May, 3 September 1932

14. Even the CPC was not immune from deference to middle-class elements. In 1932 a Halifax organizer reported in the Worker that among new recruits to the NUWA one, William Hyland, had "the qualities of a real leader". It transpired that Hyland was a lawyer. In less than a year he was heading an independent, but allegedly Liberal-financed, unemployed organization, the Workmen's Political and Protective Association. See The Worker, 18 June, 2 July 1932; 25 March 1933

15. "Attempt to Tie 'Red Bogey' Attacked by Unemployed", TDS, 20 March 1935

16. PAO, Ontario Premiers' Papers, Box 149, J. McPhie to G. S. Henry, 14 July 1931

17. "Demand Increased Relief in Extremist Manifesto", TDS, 7 March 1933

18. Paul Arthur Phillips, "The British Columbia Labour Movement in the Inter-War Period: A Study of Its Social and Political Aspects", Ph.D. thesis, London School of Economics, 1967, 295

19. "Espionage Laid to Relief Office", Vancouver Sun, 16 January 1930; City of Vancouver Archives (CVA), Vancouver Police Commission Files, Vol.15, Chief Constable W. A. Bingham, report re "Unemployed Situation and Agitation 1930-1931", 21 January 1931. On Campbell's revolutionary background, see Harry McShane and Joan Smith, Harry McShane: No Mean Fighter (London, 1978),

142, 146; Stuart Macintyre, Little Moscows: Communism and Working Class Militancy in Inter-War Britain (London, 1980), 95-9

20. D. Chalmers, "On Some Shortcomings in Unemployed Organizing", The Worker, 6 December 1930; Dave Weiss, "Some Problems that Face the Party Plenum", The Worker, 17 January 1931; J. Carey, "Some Shortcomings in Unemployment Work and Trade Union Work", The Worker, 24 January 1931

21. Malcolm Bruce, "'Tailism' in the Work Among Unemployed", The Worker, 18 October 1930; various correspondence in the issues of 25 October, 1, 8 November, 6 December; PAO, Communist Party Papers; 1A 0709, Bruce to Tim Buck, 3 December 1930

22. PAO, Ontario Premiers' Papers, Box 149, Martha A. Dickinson to G. S. Henry, 18 June 1931. For general background on the Windsor unemployed movement, see Multi-Cultural History Society of Ontario (MCHSO), interviews with Harry Binder and William Kashtan; Francis Graham Stevens, "A History of Radical Political Movements in Essex County and Windsor, 1919-1945", M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1948, 81-133

23. The Worker, 24, 31 January, 21, 28 February 1931

24. George Andrews, "How to Organize Local Councils of the NUWA", Party Organizer, June 1931

25. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 2A 1110, mimeographed leaflet on "The Gas Question", 10 March 1931; 2A 1119, Andrews to Sam Carr, 16 March 1931; Stevens, "Radical Political Movements", 87-8

26. Department of National Defence, Directorate of History, File 161.009 (D63), W. Griesinger to D.O.C., Military District No. 1, 18 December 1931

27. A. Lozovsky, "The United Front of Employed and Unemployed", Communist International, VIII (1 March 1931), 122-25

28. O. Piatnitsky, Unemployment and the Tasks of the Communists (London, 1931), 40-45

29. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 10C 1749-53, WUL, Bulletin No. 3, 12 January 1931; "For a Bolshevik Organization", Party Organizer, April 1931

30. The Worker, 28 February 1931; Party Organizer, April 1931; PAO, Communist Party Papers, 10C 1757-58, WUL, Bulletin No. 7, 23 March 1931; Bulletin No. 8, 30 March 1931

31. University of Toronto, Robert Kenny Papers, Box 2, Hugh Guthrie to W. H. Price, 18 March 1931

32. PAO, Communist Party Papers, WUL, Bulletin No. 9, 28 April 1931; Sam Carr, "The Starvation Policy of the Canadian Government", International Press Correspondence, XI (7 May 1931), 440. As late as 1934 Bennett retained the view that the "dole" was a disincentive to sound economic habits. The unemployed, he contended, simply squandered relief payments on "movies, candy and beer". See "Canadian Provinces to Shoulder Relief", New York Times, 1 August 1934

33. RILU Letter, 28 May 1931, quoted in Agents of Revolution: A History of the Workers' Unity League, Setting Forth Its Origin and Aims (n.p., n.d. [Toronto, 1934]), 6

34. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 10C 1781, WUL Monthly Letter, June 1931

35. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 3A 1842, Charlie Marriott to Sam Carr, 20 April 1931

36. Unemployed Worker, 14 March, 9 May, 6 June 1931; Canadian Labour Defender, March, May, June 1931

37. Stewart had committed this crime in June during a strike of relief workers at Sooke Lake Camp: "the workers found that the place was not properly finished and was unfit for occupation; the food was putrid and they were generally disgusted." When the Militia at nearby Work Point Barracks were put on alert, Stewart wrote and distributed a leaflet calling on the soldiers not to shoot fellow workers and pointing out the power they would have in a Soviet regime. "The Workers' Alliance", Workers' Unity, 15 July 1931; PAO, Communist Party Papers, 4A 2466, Ron Stewart to Tom Ewan, 25 June 1931; 4A 2468, Ewan to Stewart, 30 June 1931; 4A 2490, James R. Berry to Ewan, 6 July 1931; Canadian Labour Defender, August, October, November 1931

38. New York Public Library (NYPL), Manuscripts Annexe, International Red Aid Papers, folder TD/1/n.c. 6, Agit-Prop Department, CLDL National Executive Committee to District Central Committees, Central Committees and Units, 2 July 1931

39. Unemployed Worker, 19 June 1931, copy in PAC, R. B. Bennett Papers, 477039-42

40. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 4A 2370, Tom Ewan to Tom Bradley, 25 March 1931

41. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 2A 1014, Saul Cohen to Tom Ewan, 23 June 1931; 2A 1028, James Litterick to W. Sydney, 29 June 1931

42. PAO, Communist Party Papers, 2A 1200-1201, Arthur Seal to Ewan, 6 June 1931; Ewan to Seal, 8 June 1931;

2A 1233, Ewan to Seal, 27 June 1931; Stevens, "Radical Political Movements", 89-90; MCHSO, interview with Harry Binder (Binder, local YCL leader, later described tactics which at the time he enthusiastically carried out as "absolutely crazy"); NYPL, International Red Aid Papers, folder TD 1/n.c. 6, CLDL Press Release, "'Labor' M.P. Proves Himself Social Fascist", 3 July 1931

43. J. M. Groshan, "In the Light of the Decisions of the 8th Plenum of the RILU", Workers' Unity, June 1932

44. "What Is A Neighbourhood Council?", Unemployed Worker (UW: Vancouver), 14 May 1932; "Some Organizational Problems In Our Unemployed Work", Workers' Unity, June 1932; J. Burns, "The United Front - Some Errors and Shortcomints", Workers' Unity, August-September 1932; Bill Purvis, "Recent Experiences on the Coast Unemployed Movement", The Worker, 2 September 1933

45. "Reds Demand Trucks and $1 a Day For Trek", Border Cities Star, 21 January 1932; Department of National Defence, Directorate of History, file 161.009 (D 63), Lt. Col. W. Griesinger to D.O.C., Military District No. 1, 25 January 1932

46. George Wilson, "How to Organize the Jobless", The Worker, 28 May 1932; UBC Archives, Vancouver & New Westminster District Trades and Labour Council, Minutes, 18 October 1932

47. UW, 4 February 1933

48. UW, 27 February 1932; Daily Province, 23 February 1932

49. Ronald Liversedge, Recollections of the On-to-Ottawa Trek (Toronto, 1973), 17-18

50. Marsh, Health and Unemployment, 177. Registrations at the Winnipeg General Hospital's out-door clinic jumped from 6,485 in 1927 to 24,582 in 1932. E. S. Moorehead, "Medical Service to Indigents in Winnipeg", CMAJ, XXIX (November 1933), 553-54. When the Winnipeg City Council attempted to close the clinic in July 1933, the CPC organized a mass demonstration in protest. See Winnipeg Free Press, 21 July 1933

51. J. H. MacDermot, "The Medical Treatment of the Indigent in British Columbia", CMAJ, 30 (January 1934), 77-79. The Vancouver General Hospital's Tuberculosis clinic was registering two new cases a day in 1934; the disease was claiming one victim every two days. See House of Commons, Debates, 28 June 1934, 4395

52. UW, 6 June, 28 November, 5 December 1931

53. UW, 3 September 1932

54. UW, 27 November, 3 December 1932

55. UW, 15 October 1932, 21 January 1933

56. UW, 14 February 1934; The Worker, 13 May 1933

57. Liversedge, Recollections, 33

58. UW, 13 June 1934

59. UW, 12 November 1932

60. UW, all issues in January 1932

61. UW, 14 February 1934

62. UW, 22 October 1932, 14 February 1934. The CLDL vigorously pushed sales of its pamphlet literature. See NYPL, International Red Aid Papers, folder TD 1/n.c. 5, A. S. Buller to District Central Councils and Local Delegate Councils, CLDL, 29 October 1932

63. Canadian Labor Defender, May 1934, March 1935

64. See above, chapter five.

65. The Vanguard, November 1934

66. Purvis, "Recent Experiences". The CPC did make an unusually serious intervention in the November 1933 B.C. provincial election. In the guise of the B.C. Workers and Farmers United Front it ran 14 candidates. See For Bread, Jobs, and Freedom: Manifesto and Program of Demands of the British Columbia Workers and Farmers United Front Election Committee (1933), copy in UT, Kenny Papers.

67. "Waterfront South Neighbourhood Council Initiates Campaign", UW, 28 February 1934

68. "For A New Year of Decisive Struggles Against Hunger", UW, 27 December 1933; Department of National Defence, Directorate of History, file 322.009 (D 743), Major J. G. Rycroft to Assistant Commissioner, 'E' Division, RCMP, 2 October 1934; RCMP, report re "B.C. Joint Committee on Unemployment", 7 December 1934; The Vanguard, November 1934

69. "Unemployed Organization Gains 200 per cent", UW, 13 June 1934

70. UBC Archives, interview with Alex Fergusson. Fergusson was active in both the unemployed movement and the CLDL, but joined the CCF, partly because the CPC expected too much consistent activity from its members.

71. While the unemployed hunger marchers portrayed themselves as heroic and downtrodden, the bourgeois press made hay of the fact that very little actual marching was done. Most delegations usually arrived in a convoy of trucks and private cars. See "Hunger Marchers Storm Control Board", TDS, 18 January 1933, and the use of inverted

commas around "hunger marchers" in the Ottawa Journal, 17 January 1933

72. The Worker, 6 August 1932; Ben Borsook, "The Workers Hold A Conference", Canadian Forum, XII (September 1932), 449-51; A. E. Smith, All My Life: An Autobiography (Toronto, 1977), 148-51

73. "Trades Council Urges Action on Unemployment", Labor Statesman, 5 June 1931; PAO, Premiers' Papers, Box 148, TLC memo re "Unemployment, Under-Employment and Unemployment Insurance", presented by the Ontario Executive TLC to Honorable G. S. Henry, 14 January 1931; League of Nations, International Labour Conference, Record of Proceedings, Eighteenth Session, 4-23 June 1934, 409 (speech by Tom Moore). See also Carl Cuneo, "State Mediation of Class Contradictions in Canadian Unemployment Insurance, 1930-1935", Studies in Political Economy, 3 (Spring 1980), 37-65

74. Ottawa Journal, 2 August 1932; Borsook, "The Workers Hold A Conference". It is worth noting that Borsook was a left wing University of Toronto student, later expelled from the CPC-controlled Student League of Canada for alleged Trotskyist sympathies. See Young Worker, 18 September 1933

75. Nova Scotia Miner, 25 March 1933. The Toronto Star had been campaigning for an end to the trade embargo for several months. See editorials, 6, 7 January 1933

76. Winnipeg Free Press, 18 October 1932

77. Ottawa Journal, 3 March, 2 August 1932

78. Winnipeg Free Press, 4 March 1932

79. TDS, 18 January 1933

80. Ottawa Journal, 4 March 1932

81. New York Times, 24, 30 July 1932; Communist Party of Canada, Canada's Party of Socialism: History of the Communist Party of Canada 1921-1976 (Toronto, 1982), 93. This source states that about 8,000 unemployed evaded Bennett's blockade. In fact, only about 600 were present as delegates. See Workers' Unity, August-September 1932

82. Ottawa Journal, 2 August 1932; Borsook, "The Workers Hold A Conference".

83. Winnipeg Free Press, 21, 21 December 1932; Anne B. Woywitka, "Recollections of a Union Man", Alberta History, 23 (Autumn 1975), 16-20; Ben Swankey, "Reflections of an Alberta Communist: The Hungry Thirties", Alberta History, 27 (Autumn 1979); Helen Potrebenko, No Streets of Gold (Vancouver, 1977), 206-12; Myrna Kostash, All of Baba's Children (Edmonton,

1977), 241-44; Anthony Mardiros, William Irvine: The Life of A Prairie Radical (Toronto, 1979), 190

84. Letter to the editor, Alberta Labor News, 24 December 1932

85. George Poole, "CCF 'Justice' to the Alberta Hunger Marchers", Canadian Labour Defender, January-February 1933; "The Careerists", Nova Scotia Miner, 25 February 1933; Winnipeg Free Press, 19 January 1933

86. Ottawa Journal, 17 January 1933

87. The Globe, TDS, Winnipeg Free Press, Ottawa Journal, 18 January 1933

88. TDS, 1, 2 August 1934

89. The Worker, 28 July, 4 August 1934

90. A. Brand, "Our Position, Tasks and Perspectives in the Unemployed Movement in the City of Toronto", The Builder, March 1933

91. J. Houston, letter to the editor, TDS, 1 August 1933; The Worker, 27 May 1933

92. J. Houston, "Tasks of the Unemployed Councils", The Worker, 10 June 1933

93. D.W., "The Toronto 'Star' and the CCF", The Worker, 10 June 1933

94. "'Anti-War' Followers Disturb CCF Meeting", The Globe, 26 July 1933; "Police and CCF Unite", The Worker, 29 July 1933; W. James and J. Houston, letters to the editor, TDS, 1 August 1933; "Police Are Jeered as CCF and 'Reds' Address Crowds", The Globe, 16 August 1933

95. The Globe, 27 July 1933; The Worker, 29 July 1933

96. The Globe, editorials, 28 July, 4 August 1933

97. Houston, letter to the editor, TDS, 1 August 1933

98. The Worker, 5 August 1933; The Globe, 10 August 1933

99. The Globe, 11 August 1933

100. The Globe, 16 August 1933; The Worker, 19 August 1933

101. See "Some Newspaper Opinions", TDS, 16 August 1933; "We Are Sorry for the Police", Saturday Night, 49 (12 August 1933), 23

102. TDS, 22 August 1933

103. "Police Tactics Abet the Agitators", TDS, 22 August 1933

104. October Youth, August-September 1933. For their part, communists still considered Trotskyists, and united action with them, beyond the pale.

105. TDS, 18 August 1933

106. Lita-Rose Betcherman, The Little Band: The Clashes between the Communists and the political and legal establishment in Canada, 1928-1932 (Ottawa, 1982), 214. It is symptomatic of Betcherman's bias that she fails to mention the Free Speech campaign. She does refer to on-going campaigns directed by the CLDL, but reserves most credit for the growth of anti-repression sentiment to the parliamentary "crusade" of J. S. Woodsworth.

107. Collins at Stratford; Houston at Hespeler and Flin Flon; and Beattie at Brampton (shoe workers).

108. M. James, "The East End Section and the Unemployed", The Builder, March 1933

109. National Council of Unemployed Councils, Building A Mass Unemployed Movement (Toronto, April 1933), 14

110. Charles Sims, "A Few Lessons to be Drawn from the Relief Strikes", The Worker, 1 July 1933

111. On Lawrie, see "Holds Workers' Body Is A Rudderless Ship", TDS, 3 March 1933; "Workers Organizing To Block Evictions", TDS, 17 February 1933

112. "Plan For United Activities", The Worker, 15 April 1933

113. John Weir, "After Calgary Strike", The Worker, 19 August 1933; PAC, Sound Archives, interview with Patrick Lenihan; The Worker, 25 March 1933

114. "Notes from the Townships", October Youth, April 1933; PAO, Premiers' Papers, Box 168, "Report of Motions Passed at York Township Workers' Conference", no date [11 March 1933]

115. TDS, 10 March 1933; The Worker, 11 March, 17 June, 1 July 1933; WUL Executive Board, "A Resolution on Murder of Zynchuk", Nova Scotia Miner, 8 April 1933; CLDL National Executive Committee, Workers' Solidarity Against Fascism: Stop Hitler's Horrors (Toronto, 1933); Pierre Lamarche, "La Crise Economique de 1930-1939 et La Lutte des Chomeurs Canadiens et Quebecois Contre Le Rejet du Fardeau de La Crise Sur Les Dos", unpublished paper, Université de Québec à Montreal, no date; Irving Abella, "Portrait of a Jewish Professional Revolutionary: The Recollections of Joshua Gershman", Labour/Le Travailleur, 2 (1977), 203

116. House of Commons, Debates, 29 March 1933, 3513-17

117. "A Focus of Fascism", Canadian Forum, XIII (June 1933), 323

118. The Worker, 22 July 1933. This article reprints correspondence between Woodsworth (and W. T. Burford of the ACCL) and the NCUC; UT, J. S. Woodsworth Papers,

Box 1, J. Houston to All Trade Unions, Mass Organizations, CCF Clubs and all Meetings of Workers, 11 August 1933

119. For a useful discussion of this book, see Norman Penner, The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis (Toronto, 1977), 149-55

120. Nova Scotia Miner, 15 September 1934

121. William Beeching and Phyllis Clarke eds., Yours in the Struggle: Reminiscences of Tim Buck (Toronto, 1977), 250-51

122. Penner, The Canadian Left, 154

123. Flin Flon Miner; 28 September, 9 November 1933. Stewart fought the Churchill, Manitoba, seat for the CCF in the 1935 federal election. During his campaign the question most frequently asked of him was whether he was really a communist. See "Woodsworth Asserts Communism Bitterly Opposed to CCF ", Flin Flon Miner, 21 September 1935. For another example of CPC-CCF debate - in Verdun, Quebec - see Unemployed Worker, 21 February 1934

124. "Evictions", New Commonwealth, 4 August 1934; UT, J. S. Woodsworth Papers, Box 1, CCF Ontario Provincial Council, Minutes, 26 January, 19 April, 4 May 1935; Walter Young, The Anatomy of a Party: The National CCF 1932-1961 (Toronto, 1971), 256. Note also the cooperation between CPC and CCF women in the Toronto Women's Council of Action. See "Unemployed Single Women Relate Pitiable Tales to Croll", TDS, 15 March 1935; Alice Loeb, "Women Jobless United by New Council", New Commonwealth, 6 April 1935

125. "Canadian Provinces to Shoulder Relief", New York Times, 1 August 1934; James Struthers, "Two Depressions: Bennett, Trudeau and the Unemployed", Journal of Canadian Studies, 14 (Spring 1979), 70-77; Struthers, "A Profession in Crisis: Charlotte Whitton and Canadian Social Work in the 1930s", Canadian Historical Review, 62 (June 1981), 169-85

126. Cassidy, Unemployment and Relief in Ontario, 256; Struthers, "A Profession in Crisis", 172; "Standards of Destitution", New York Times, 20 January 1932

127. "What They Get on Relief", TDS, 18 July 1935

128. Alberta also experienced major strikes. See Murdoch Clarke, "Calgary Relief Strikers Win Back Portion of Cut", The Worker, 12 December 1934; PAC, R. B. Bennett Papers, 491370, Joseph A. Clarke to Sir George Perley, 28 April 1935

129. TDS, 23 August 1934. Croll may well have deflected and personally absorbed criticism of the Hepburn administration. During a series of occupations of municipal buildings in

New Toronto in March 1935, Croll was burned in effigy. During the York Township relief strike the following year, it was suggested that while Hepburn was "human", Croll was a villain. TDS, 16 March 1935, 13 June 1936

130. Patricia Schulz provides a useful account of the East York strike in The East York Workers' Association, 26-31

131. PAC, Strikes and Lockouts Files, Vol. 357, file 125, N. A. Batchelder to Department of Labour, 31 October 1933. See also Unemployed Worker, 21 February 1934

132. The following account is based on Fern A. Sayles, Welland Workers Make History (Welland, 1963), 124-33; TDS, 4 April to 11 May 1935; Department of National Defence, Directorate of History, file 161.009 (D 63), RCMP Report re "Unemployment Conditions - Western Ontario District", 7 June 1935

133. TDS, 30 April 1935

134. TDS, 25, 26 April 1935

135. Sayles, Welland Workers Make History, 133

136. "Hepburn and Ministers to Accompany Jobless to See How They Live", TDS, 5 April 1935. Derry had already been immortalized in a children's pantomime by Dorothy Livesay. See "Joe Derry" in Richard Wright and Robin Endres eds., 'Eight Men Speak' and Other Plays from the Canadian Workers' Theatre (Toronto, 1976), 107-12

137. "Plan 'United Action' By Those on Relief", TDS, 7 December 1935

138. "Took Work To Stir Strike", TDS, 13 December 1935

139. "'Slashing of Relief' Forecast in Handbill", TDS, 12 September 1935

140. "Strikers Hear Suggestion for Two-Cent Meal Tax", TDS, 5 June 1936

141. TDS, 29 March, 3 April 1935; "Stalinist Clique Rules UWA", The Vanguard, April 1935

142. "Charges Liberal Policy Is Split CCF, Communists", TDS, 3 October 1935; CPC, Canada and the VII World Congress, 36

143. PAC, J. L. Cohen Papers, Vol. 3, file 2342, Canadian Labour Defense League, National Convention, 19-20 October 1935, Main Resolution, 4-5. On the Canadian League Against War and Fascism, see John Manley, "Women and the Left in the 1930s: The Case of the Toronto CCF Women's Joint Committee", Atlantis, 5 (Spring 1980), 107-10

144. On the role of ministers, see Daily Clarion, 2 May 1936 (unemployed meeting in Long Branch); TDS, 10, 12

June 1936 (York Township strike); "Asks Business Men To Aid Relief Strike", TDS, 6 June 1936

145. "Unemployed Strike in Toronto's Suburb", The Vanguard, July 1936. The Workers' Party undeniably had an axe to grind, since the CPC's concern for unity never embraced Trotskyism; a fact used by the CCF to accuse the CPC of hypocrisy. See Ivan Avakumovic, The Communist Party in Canada (Toronto, 1975), 101

146. For another critique of the CPC's reformist conception of the united front, see E. A. Beder, "Basis for a People's Party", New Frontier, 1 (April 1936), 6-7. The presence of critical comment on party policy in a party - albeit "popular frontist" - journal is to be explained by Beder's much sharper critique of the politically stagnant CCF; from which he had recently resigned. The Beder Papers, York University Library, contain important material on the League Against War and Fascism and the development of the Popular Front.

147. The Worker, 1, 4, 6 June 1935. Even after the party changed its mind on the Trek, it urged the relief camp strikers' charismatic leader, Arthur Evans, to stay behind. See Jean Evans Shiels and Ben Swankey, "Work and Wages": A Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans 1890-1944 (Vancouver, 1977), 106

148. Towards A Canadian People's Front, Reports and Speeches at the Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee, Communist Party of Canada, November 1935 (Toronto 1935), 127-28; Tim Buck, What We Propose (n.p.; 1936), 62

149. Department of National Defence, Directorate of History, file 161.009 (D 63), RCMP Report re "Unemployment Conditions - Western Ontario District", 6 May 1936

150. Sam Carr, speech to 8th National Convention, Communist Party of Canada, 8-13 October 1937, reprinted as Communists At Work (Toronto, 1937), 13-14

151. See in particular DND, Directorate of History, File 161.009 (D 63), Windsor City Police, reports re "Communist Meetings in Lanspeary Park", 1 May, 13 August 1932

152. Towards A Canadian People's Front, 128

CONCLUSIONS

This study has attempted a reassessment of the CPC's contribution to working class politics in the 1920s and early 1930s, especially in the area of the party's primary activity, trade union and industrial intervention. Here I will recapitulate (and perhaps clarify) my main arguments, drawing out the moments at which they challenge or support existing knowledge. They differ to some degree from the three main established positions: from the official 'line' in refusing to skate over embarrassing episodes that detract from a self-image of continuous integrity and tactical 'correctness'; from the social democratic approach which sees the communist tradition as essentially alien and harmful, and denies the validity of revolutionary politics in Canada; and from the orthodox Trotskyist position which neatly demarcates 'good' and 'bad' periods of party history at the dividing line of Stalin's assumption of control over the Russian party and the Comintern. I have tried always to keep in mind the objective possibilities open to the CPC, as determined by the interplay between the will and intelligence of its members and the structural peculiarities of the period; but to keep an overly judgmental attitude at arm's length is not always easy when dealing with an organization in which discussion of 'betrayal', 'errors' and 'turns' was the meat and drink of everyday life.

It is up to the reader to decide whether I have struck the right balance.

One consequence of the general historiographical consensus on the 'lunatic' character of the 'third period' (a view with which I broadly concur) has been a tendency to exaggerate the successes of the preceeding united front years: this is especially true of Ian Angus's Canadian Bolsheviks.[1] In reality the united front line adumbrated in Lenin's 'Left Wing' Communism: An Infantile Disorder and articulated by the Third and Fourth World Congresses of the Comintern contained an essential flaw that seriously limited its utility for the fledgling CPs outside the Soviet Union. As Antonio Gramsci ruefully noted in 1923: "the tactic of the united front, laid down with considerable precision by the Russian comrades ... has in no country found the party or the men capable of concretizing it."[2] Gramsci clearly felt that the fault lay entirely with the tactical failings of the non-Russian parties. If such an unusually independent communist could be mistaken, it is hardly surprising that the much more intellectually dependent CPC should exhibit similar deference.

The united front was openly admitted to be a manoeuvre, a holding action until such time - never thought to be more than a few years - as the revolutionary tide shifted back in favour of the working class and communists could abandon their temporarily useful social democratic/labourist allies. Lenin's

call to British communists to support the Labour Party "in the same way as the rope supports the hanged man" makes the point.[3] This exhortation was not only open to a sectarian reading, it reflected Lenin's personal miscalculation of the balance of political loyalties within most western labour movements. In Canada (and certainly in Britain) it fed a native strain of sectarian contempt for 'labour fakerdom' and a communist self-image rather obviously at variance with the CPC's actual status within the working class, which in turn made the communists' offer of tactical alliances transparently cynical. Any political kudos that the CPC might have expected to gain from the Trades and Labour Congress's rejection of its handshake, was certainly dispelled by popular awareness that behind the handshake lurked hostile intentions.

Burdened by this ambiguous perspective, the CPC at no time identified the allies with whom it hoped to fight; it offered contradictory images of its united front agency, the Trade Union Educational League, which it then scarcely attempted to place on an operational footing; and instead of building a mass base for its programme of trade union 'renovation' by patient work in union locals and in workplaces, it presented its slogans of Amalgamation, Industrial Unionism and Trade Union Autonomy as abstract propaganda of manifestly party origin. Although some of the more thoughtful party members did from time to time suggest adopting a more modest posture, both in terms of initiating activity and in

relating to the trade union leadership, the party largely forgot the Russians' insistence on rooting communist politics in the small 'economistic' struggles on which workers were willing to fight. Until the orientation on national trade unionism, it almost seemed as if the leadership was content to build towards a decreasingly effective intervention at the annual TLC convention. In designating that event the "annual humiliation and betrayal" of labour, the party revealed its own surrender to fatalism.

This is not to say that the CPC was incapable of independent thought. Its support for Canadian Trade Union Autonomy was a genuine initiative rooted in an indigenous left wing nationalist tradition - although of course the party did not pose it in that way. Moreover, the CPC did try to take a flexible stand between the TLC and ACCL, using the latter to attempt what the TLC had shown no inclination of doing - organization of the unorganized - while holding out the ultimate prospect of reconciliation. Given the degree of animosity between national and international union leaders, this tactic would always have been difficult to handle, but until 1929 and the emergence of the Comintern's "new line" there seemed to be no alternative.

No matter how imperfectly the CPC had implemented the recommendations of '<u>Left Wing' Communism</u>, it was fearful of entirely dispensing with them. Although disenchanted with the

TLC and not fully convinced about the ACCL's viability, the party was politically unprepared for a total break. Until Moscow intervened through the Lenin School graduates, this had simply not been considered. Even then, it seemed to carry an obvious danger of isolating the party from the organized working class and was embraced with something less than relish. Foot-dragging, however, was all the resistance the party leadership was prepared to mount. The supple choreography displayed by both Tim Buck and Jack MacDonald (and even, briefly, Maurice Spector) in shuffling into line with Comintern wishes was indicative of the power realities of the moment.

The immediate consequences of the "class against class" line were clearly negative. Leading a revolutionary or "pre-revolutionary" struggle for state power (the Comintern was typically obscure on this point) in a period of sharp economic downturn, with widespread working class defensiveness and demoralization, would have been a hazardous venture for a party securely rooted in the national movement. For a still marginal party like the CPC it was an almost incredible task, and was seen as such by the party rank and file. Scarcely consulted, and unwilling to accept the personal risks demanded, they voted with their feet, joining the general exodus from the Communist movement at this time.[4]

Yet before writing off the 1929-34 period as a ruinous

aberration, we have to ask whether the long-term consequences for Canada were irredeemably negative. Did the new line fatally isolate the CPC from the working class? Did it weaken the latter's capacity for resistance? Could the party itself have made heavier political gains from continuing with the united front approach? A case can be made for answering "no" to all three questions. Had the party continued its orientation on the TLC and ACCL, it could possibly have stiffened their resolve in face of the depression and might have won recruits from among those disenchanted with the trade union bureaucracy's fatalism. Equally arguably, however, the party might have been pulled down by the general mood of demoralization that swept over the labour movement in the early 1930s. Similarly, the sectarianism inherent in the new line cut against the principles of working class unity and solidarity and probably alienated the party from a layer of possible supporters. On the other hand, the very "hardness" of the new line guaranteed that those who accepted it would not be intimidated by any of the difficulties it involved. The attachment of revolutionary goals to trade union organization also guaranteed that the latter task would be taken up with great seriousness of purpose. It is hard to envisage CPC members taking the same degree of commitment into the more constrained circumstances of work within the reformist bodies.

In the early years confused and often inexperienced organizers inevitably made mistakes and breached the principles of revolutionary unionism. They called for foolhardy action and lost patience with workers who were slow to respond; they were often incapable of listening to and learning from the people they presumed to lead; and rank and file self-activity became an unaffordable luxury rather than a staple of practice. But while there were many more defeats than victories, this was not the full story. On many occasions organizers showed adaptability, tactical flair and a willingness to dispense with useless revolutionary formalities, such as sectarian point-scoring against "social fascists". These attributes brought few out-and-out victories, but over time the Workers' Unity League gained experience, built credibility and restored at least a small degree of confidence to a chastened working class movement.

Regardless of the WUL's presence, the economic upturn that began in the latter part of 1933 would have been reflected in an increased level of industrial militancy. The fact remains, however, that whenever the working class were spontaneously on the move, communists were invariably the first to respond with aid and direction - if they had not already been active in laying the groundworks of organization. Communist achievements may have been limited, inasmuch as they never firmly established a lasting industrial union in any of

the basic industries. However, if that were the sole criterion of success, one would have to call the CIO between 1935-40 (a comparable lifespan to that of the WUL) a failure. Success cannot simply be appraised as a question of visible profit and loss, but even on that basis it is erroneous - not to say ungenerous - to argue that the "familiar outcome" of WUL organizing was "violence, martyrdom and misery."[5] WUL organizers, even if inclined to resort too readily to the rationalization that no strike was ever "completely" lost, were not conspicuously guilty of adventurism. Their particular tactics - exploiting rank and file militancy, encouraging class solidarity (most notably between employed and unemployed), sharpening the political edge of class consciousness - were to a great extent influenced by the exuberance of the newly organized; they were also designed for victory, not heroic defeat. Desmond Morton and Terry Copp argue that the WUL's politics provided the state with an exceptional pretext for meeting strikes with repression. In fact, as the CIO and Catholic Syndicates discovered in the later 1930s, <u>any</u> trade union using militant organizing methods encountered similar opposition.[6] No-one criticised the WUL's tactical failures more harshly than the party itself, the Estevan miners' strike being a classic example.[7] But although changes were made, the WUL discovered that greater patience, "professionalism" and willingness to compromise could only be supplementary to militant action.

That some workers held negative views of the WUL is not in question. Such views, however, were as likely to have stemmed from established feelings as from dissatisfaction with the WUL's actual performance. The Stratford patriots who forced Izzy Minster to kneel down and kiss the Union Jack before throwing him out of town, were exhibiting the nativist component of anti-communism that was coming increasingly to the fore in the depression years.[8] The small, Jewish Minster was an easier target (in every sense) than the burly Celt, Fred Collins. The repudiation of this action by Stratford's best respected labour leaders was a measure of the WUL's success in helping to build not just a base of militant unionism, but a class conscious community. Even in defeat workers derived sustenance from their relationship with the WUL. The Flin Flon woman who discovered lasting comradeship and sisterhood in the course of the unsuccessful 1934 struggle - surely not an isolated case - points up the fatuity of rating the WUL according to dues-paying membership and contracts signed.[9]

Finally, there is the question of the WUL's distinctiveness. Here I agree with Norman Penner that the term "revolutionary unionism" was politically and practically irrelevant.[10] As Comintern analysts in 1928-29 frequently stated, Leninist revolutionary unions could only conceivably be built in a period of generalized revolutionary crisis. But in such instances, as James Hinton and Richard Hyman usefully remind us, "trade unionism which becomes revolutionary thereby

negates and transcends trade unionism."[11] There was no revolutionary situation in Canada in the early 1930s. Mass unemployment, instead of rousing the masses, left them uncertain, defensive and in many instances demoralized. Communist activity among the unemployed stimulated assertive action on a substantial scale, but not to the point of exhausting the grudging responsiveness of the state. And while solidarity from the unemployed often boosted the confidence of strikers, most workers chose to keep their heads down and wait for conditions to change. The general level of confidence structured the possibilities open to the WUL, forcing it at the moment of its great influence to adopt practices less and less distinguishable from those of its reformist rivals. The WUL was different in its resilience, intransigence and anti-capitalist commitment, all inspiring qualities that contributed to the growth of the party - and the left generally - in the mid-1930s. If the WUL experience proved anything, however, it was that inspiration was not enough. There were no short-cuts to socialism.

FOOTNOTES: CONCLUSION

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2. Quintin Hoare, ed., Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Political Writings, 1921-1926 (London, 1978), 155
3. V. I. Lenin, Selected Works (Moscow, 1977), 564
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5. Desmond Morton with Terry Copp, Working People: An Illustrated History of Canadian Labour (Ottawa, 1980), 144
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7. Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks, 284
8. See, for example, Howard Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta (Toronto, 1982), 132-39
9. Meg Luxton, More Than A Labour of Love: Three Generations of Women's Work in the Home (Toronto, 1980), 217-18
10. Norman Penner, The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis (Scarborough, Ont., 1977), 137
11. James Hinton and Richard Hyman, Trade Unions and Revolution: The Industrial Politics of the Early British Communist Party (London, 1975), 59

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