COMMUNITY AND CONFLICT: A STUDY OF THE WORKING CLASS AND ITS RELATIONSHIPS AT THE CANADIAN LAKEHEAD, 1903-1913

BY

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ABSTRACT

Labour history is frequently equated with the internal workings of trade unions and radical parties in isolation from the society on which they are based. This paper treats these institutions as important, though not the sole expressions of working class activity. It discusses reactions to labour unrest and industrial conflict from within the working class and from without, and the effect of these reactions on community relationships.

The paper demonstrates how the relationship of the working class with the middle class changed from one of amity in 1903 to one of hostility in 1913, and that this came about in two ways: (1) through the changing relationships of the principal sub-groupings within the working class, organized labour, the immigrant communities, and the radical parties; and (2) through changes in middle class attitudes brought about by reactions to this first development and by changes in the local economy. The primary catalyst for change was violence which occurred in four labour disputes during the period. In examining the source of violence and the means of its suppression, the paper will argue that while cultural conditioning influenced the actions and attitudes of those involved, the nature of their class relationships was the decisive factor.

Although this is a study in local history, it will show the influence on local developments of such forces outside the community as the railway and telephone monopolies, current social movements and ideologies, and the federal government as represented by the Department of Labour and the Department of National Defence. In so doing, the writer hopes to show that, if treated in terms of class relationships, local labour history becomes part of the broader context of Canadian history and central to an understanding of the community in which it unfolded.

PREFACE

In selecting the field of local labour history as the basis for this undertaking, the writer had as her original objective a history of the labour movement at the Canadian Lakehead from 1903 to 1923, centred around the activities of the radical Finns. The inability to read Finnish proved too great an obstacle for such a project, and is the only reason the Finns play a small part in this paper.

The writer then turned to the beginnings of the trade union movement at the Lakehead, and discovered the great loss of primary source material. This had taken place for many reasons: lack of appreciation of its historic value, destruction in times of political oppression, and fires. With the local daily press then becoming an important source, and since many violent strikes took place outside the trade unions, the topic changed, after a reading of E. P. Thompson, to the working class and its relationships to other classes.

This project would not have been possible without the help of countless people who, by sharing their knowledge, finding material, and giving suggestions, have made this a rewarding personal experience. Although some acknowledgements have been made in the text, it has not been possible

to name them all. Special mention, however, should be given to Mr. Norman Richards, president of the Thunder Bay Labour Council, and to Mr. Einar Nordstrom.

Among the many librarians and archivists who assisted, the writer is especially indebted to Mr. Harold Naugler at the Public Archives of Canada, Miss Marjorie Robertson of the Department of Labour Library, Ottawa, and Miss Vivian Nyssonen of the Lakehead University Library. Thanks also go to Mrs. Shirley Brougham for her efficient typing, and to Mr. Stanley Hearnden for his map-making.

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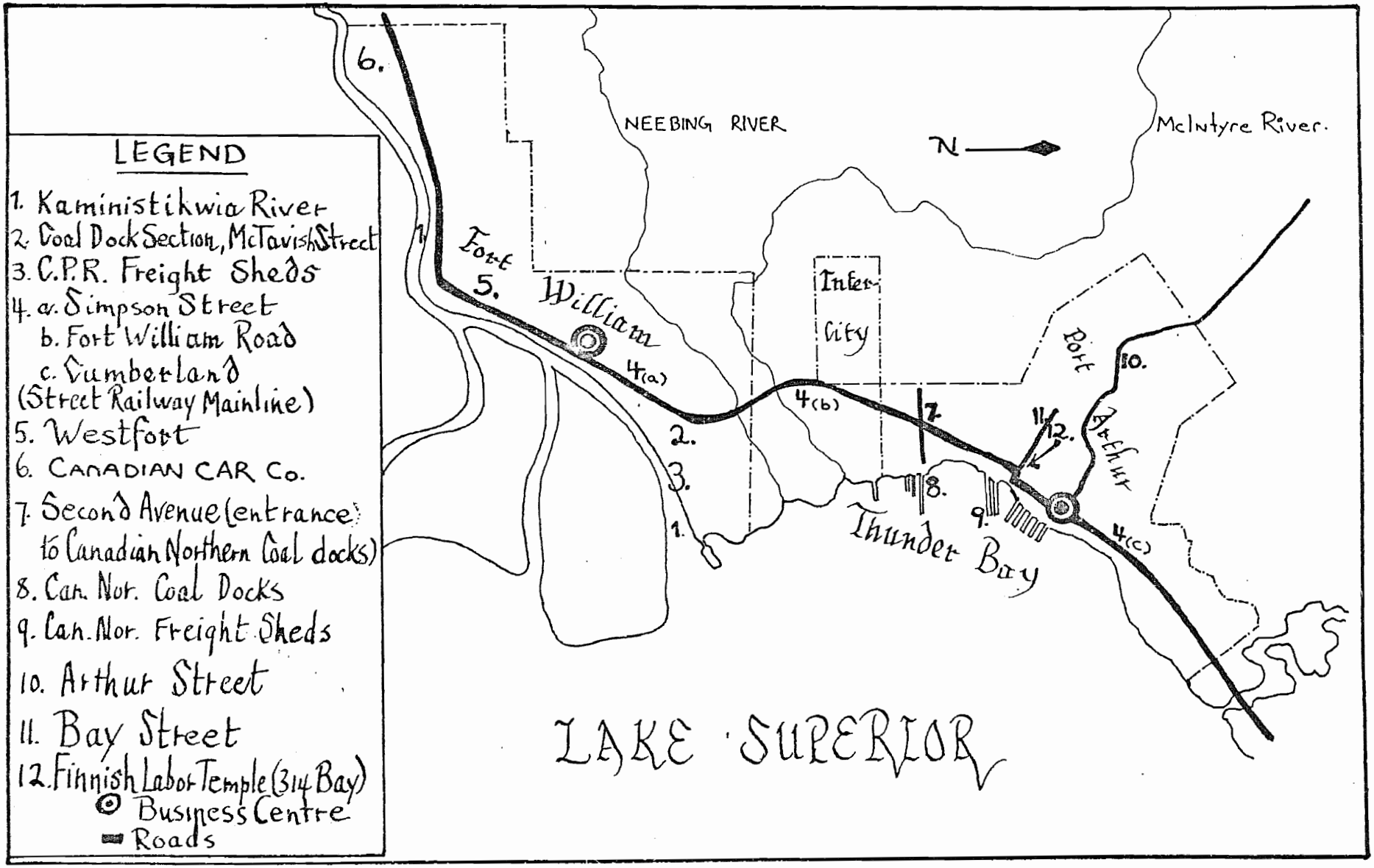
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Plate I

I

INTRODUCTION

1. The Theme: "Class is a Relationship"

This is a study of the working class in the Canadian Lakehead[1] before World War I and of its relationship to the social milieu in which it existed. In his monumental studies on the English working class, E. P. Thompson has defined his subject in the following way:

> Class is a social and cultural formation (often finding institutional expression) which cannot be defined abstractly, or in isolation, but only in terms of relationship with other classes; and ultimately, the definition can only be made in the medium of time--that is, action and reaction, change and conflict.[2]

By this definition the working class exists, not in a vacuum, but through interaction with other social groupings in the larger community to which it belongs. This paper, then,

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[1]Since the two communities of Fort William and Port Arthur together were known as "the Lakehead" until they were amalgamated under the name of "Thunder Bay" in 1970, they will be referred to in that way throughout the paper. Thunder Bay is also the name of the inlet on Lake Superior on which they were situated, as well as of the District surrounding them.

[2]E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (Penguin Books [1970]), p. 939. Thompson here is citing his article, "Peculiarities of the English", The Socialist Register, 1965, eds. Ralph Miliband and John Savelle (New York: Monthly Review Press [1965]).

will treat the working class of Fort William and Port Arthur not as an entity in itself, but rather through its changing relationship with other classes, specifically with the local middle class, but also with the outside corporations which dominated the economy.

In Thompson's analysis of working class development, the cultural heritage of workingmen is held to influence their responses to industrialization as much as class interactions. The decade under discussion was one of tremendous economic growth at the Lakehead during which the patterns of working class development were laid down through the influx of workers from many cultures and traditions. The local working class thus was neither a homogeneous or static mass, but rather represented a multiplicity of sub-groupings sometimes parallelling, sometimes overlapping one another. The skilled and the unskilled, the native-born and the immigrant, the English and the non-English-speaking, the organized and the unorganized, the religious and the non-religious, together with socialists of various hues and supporters of old-line parties, all these made up the working class. Just as these groups reacted separately or in unison with other classes, they also interacted one with the other.

These relationships will be examined in the light of the historical process, or to use Thompson's words, "in the medium of time, that is, action and reaction, change and conflict." Part of that process included the organization

and activities of various institutional expressions of the working class of which the trade union movement was the most important, for through it workers related as a separate class with the community. Then there were workers parties which sought to translate consciousness of class into either the reformation or the transformation of society. But trade unions and radical parties were not the sole expressions of working class activity, for large numbers of workers who belonged to neither also reacted in unique ways to the industrial process. Both within and without labour unions and radical parties, a variety of cultures and traditions influenced the way workers responded to their class experiences. This may be seen in the formation of separate ethnic districts and organizations, in distinctive styles of working class leadership, and in differing ways of conducting labour strikes.

Through action and reaction during the decade under discussion, the relationship of the working class with the middle class in the Lakehead underwent a change from one of concord to one of discord. In 1903, a liaison between organized labour and the local business community came into being based largely on faith in conciliation as a means of resolving industrial conflict and on distrust of monopoly as shown in support for municipal ownership. In 1913, this liaison dissolved through the failure of conciliation to prevent a strike against a municipally-owned enterprise.

The intervening decade was one of intense class conflict. Its manifestations included not only union-led strikes and socialist-led political action, but violent confrontations between the railway corporations and their immigrant workers. The community could contain and even attempt to mediate increasing social tensions as long as violence figured only in strikes against outside corporations, and as long as socialist influence with trade unions and immigrants remained negligible. But when anti-union policies of a municipally-owned enterprise brought on the strike of 1913 in which violence flared and in which trade unions, the immigrants and the socialists united, the result was the division of the community by class strife.

2. The Physical Setting: Fort William and Port Arthur

The Lakehead communities of Fort William and Port Arthur came into existence as places of trans-shipment for the staple products of the west in exchange for the manufacturing goods of the metropolitan centres. That two separate municipalities developed at the head of the Lakes owes its origin to both history and geography.[3] Located on the Kaministikwia River close by Lake Superior's Thunder Bay, the original Fort William had been the inland capital and

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[3]The historical background for this section is taken mainly from the Annual Reports of the Thunder Bay Historical Society, 1909-1928. An interesting interpretation of the early history of the Lakehead is given in Elizabeth Arthur, "The Landing and the Plot", Lakehead University Review, I (1968), 1-17.

rendezvous point for the North West Company's fur trading empire. Following the triumph of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821, the fort gradually declined in importance as a trading centre. The inaccessibility of the shallow Kam for most Great Lakes shipping prompted S. J. Dawson to choose the "Landing" on Thunder Bay as the starting point for the land and water route he charted on behalf of the Province of Canada to the Red River. In so doing, he created the conditions which gave birth to Port Arthur and the intense rivalry between the now two links between east and west.

But railways became the means by which Canada was ensured dominion to the western sea. In 1875, the Canadian Pacific Railway chose a point known as the Town Plot (and later as Westfort) farther up the Kam from the Hudson's Bay Plot (Old Fort William) as the starting point for its line to the west. Not to be outdone, the Landing's merchants built their own railroad to link up with the C.P.R., an enterprise which became obsolete with the completion of the C.P.R.'s through line from the east. With the dredging of the Kam, both communities were able to share in the rail and shipping business engendered by the railway.

In 1888, the C.P.R. deserted Westfort by making its newly acquired Hudson's Bay properties at the mouth of the Kam the base for its operations. The following year, the railway abandoned its Port Arthur shops in retaliation for that municipality's seizure of a C.P.R. train for default

in payment of taxes. William Van Horne's legendary threat to "make the grass grow on the streets of Port Arthur" came close to realization, but in 1901 the Canadian Northern Railway breathed new life into the town by choosing it for its terminus on Lake Superior. Fort William was thus able to benefit immediately from the wheat boom which began in the mid-1890's, leaving Port Arthur almost ten years behind in its economic development.

After the turn of the century, the wheat boom made possible enormous economic growth, which but for minor setbacks continued at an accelerating pace until 1913. During this period of "national economic expansion and integration . . . surpassing all expectations,"[4] the strategic link between east and west was the Lakehead. The terminal elevators of Fort William and Port Arthur received trainloads of western grain, then cleaned it and loaded it into the holds of waiting vessels for the national and world market. Many ships had brought coal which was discharged at coal docks and processing plants all along the waterfront. By 1903, the C.P.R.'s coal handling operations at Fort William were said to be the largest in North America.[5] Cargo ships brought freight and supplies for the west and for the construction

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[4] Report of the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, Book 1, Canada: 1867-1939, [Ottawa, 1940], p. 66.

[5] See Fort William Daily Times-Journal, April 4, 1903, and December 17, 1904 for articles on Fort William's transportation, elevator and freight and coal operations.

locally of such transportation and grain handling facilities as docks, round houses, elevators, freight sheds and railroad lines. "Port Arthur and Fort William have been built up by the system of freight-handling which obtains today at the head of the lakes," noted the Port Arthur Daily News on October 13, 1908. These activities stimulated the growth of such local businesses as lumbering, purveying, and contracting. To the perennially optimistic business community, it looked at last as if the Lakehead could become the Chicago of the north, not only as a trans-shipment point but as a warehousing and manufacturing centre. Some such industries induced by bonuses and geographical considerations did locate there, but Winnipeg became the commercial and industrial centre of Western Canada.

3. The Social Groupings: Middle Class, Artisans and Immigrants

The Social Survey of Port Arthur which was compiled in 1913 for the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches of Canada made the following delineation of the city's social composition:

> Like Fort William, the population readily falls into three classes: The wealthy class of early settlers who have grown up with the City, and the business and professional men; the Artisans or skilled labor class; the non-English-speaking immigrant population, among whom the Finns con-

> stitute the aristocracy, and are the link connecting the immigrant with the Artisan class.[6]

In the first group were merchants, real estate speculators, contractors, promotors of railways, mines, shipping and lumbering, and entrepreneurs who managed to combine several such enterprises. The views of this class, who dominated the political life of the community through its control of municipal administrations and the old-line parties, were expressed in the lively press of the day.

Despite its dependence on the commerce and construction engendered by the railways, the business community used its political and economic position to develop as advantageous a position as possible in relationship to these big corporations. One preoccupation of local business was the enticement of industries to the Lakehead. Important concerns like the Ogilvie Flour Mills, the Copp Stove Company and the Canada Car and Foundry were attracted to Fort William, and the Atikokan Blast Furnaces and Coke Ovens as well as the Western Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company to Port Arthur. Another

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[6]Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Archives, The Department of Temperance and Moral Reform of the Methodist Church and the Board of Social Service and Evangelism of the Presbyterian Church, Report of a Preliminary and General Social Survey of Port Arthur (n.p., 1913). This and a similar Social Survey of Fort William were compiled by Bryce M. Stewart who became Deputy Minister of Labor in the 1920's. These surveys, which contain a wealth of material on the social, economic and political conditions of the two communities, were commissioned along with similar reports on Vancouver, Regina, London, Hamilton and Sydney. See Richard Allen, "The Social Gospel in Canada, 1890-1928", Canadian Historical Review, XLIX (December 1968) p. 387 for a discussion of these surveys and their genesis. The writer is grateful to Mr. Keith Denis for bringing her attention to these documents.

means by which local business gained a measure of independence from the outside corporations was through the municipal ownership of public utilities. Both Port Arthur and Fort William became early pioneers in the municipal ownership of such utilities as the electric street railway, hydro, and the telephone system. In this achievement, they were aided by the anti-trust, anti-monopoly populist sentiment of the period.

The second social grouping defined by Stewart in the Social Survey of Port Arthur consisted of artisans and tradesmen, the foundation of the trade union movement. Most tradesmen coming into the area undoubtedly had prior trade union experience in eastern Canada, Great Britain or the United States, for they readily joined unions when the opportunity arrived in 1903. Prior to that date, the aristocrats of labour had already been organized at Fort William. These were the railway employees in the Big Four of the running trades: the Locomotive Engineers and Locomotive Firemen in 1884, the Railroad Trainmen in 1889, and the Railway Conductors in 1891.[7]

Outside the running trades, C.P.R. workers experienced more difficulty in becoming unionized. In 1899, the International Association of Machinists conducted a strike for union recognition and against wage reductions which it won

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[7] Report of Bureau of Labor (Ontario) 1903 (Toronto: 1905), p. 66. Scattered through these reports may be found the dates on which particular unions were organized.

without ". . . that unpleasant feeling so often an objectionable feature of other great encounters between the strength of labor and the strength of wealth."[8] Yet the following year the C.P.R. had to be refrained by arbitration from breaking the unions of machinists, mechanics and boilermakers.[9] The organization of the railway trades had been undertaken by Daniel Stamper, an American Federation of Labor organizer based in Moose Jaw.[10] The Times-Journal considered that the main obstacle to organization was the "special prejudice" of the C.P.R. against active union men which it made known by dismissing them.[11] There are many illustrations that this special prejudice would remain an obstacle to those trying to organize employees of the C.P.R. in the future.

As the affairs of the railway unions were conducted on a district basis, decisions regarding strikes and negotiations were made outside the Lakehead. For this reason the bitter national railway strikes of the pre-war period had little effect on local labour-community relationships except to confirm anti-monopoly attitudes. On the other hand, the social status attained by the men from the railway brotherhoods, especially the Big Four, gave the unions and their

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[8] Daily Times-Journal, October 14, 1899.

[9] Ibid., November 25, 1900.

[10] See the American Federationist, July, September, 1900.

[11] Daily Times-Journal, August 4, 1900.

leaders an immense influence in community affairs. This is shown in the way many railwaymen or former railwaymen won public office as spokesmen for the interests of labour on the basis of support from railway and non-railway workers.

Leaders in unions of the non-railway crafts and trades also became active in public life. While the essential function of unions was the winning of bargaining power with the employing class, they also served a social or socializing role for their members. Besides fostering a consciousness of labour as a separate class, they helped acquire for their members a measure of social status in the community as trade unionists. Unions attracted a high calibre of men to their leading positions; as the Daily News (December 15, 1909) noted concerning the candidacy of labour men in the 1910 municipal elections, "as a rule the officers of a labor organization are among the best read people in the community."

Such status was conducive to the upward social mobility of leading trade unionists. L. L. Peltier of the Order of Railway Conductors who served two terms as mayor of Fort William kept his labour connections after becoming a well-to-do property owner. His successor was a former railwayman, Colonel S. C. Young, who identified with the business establishment and the militia, although helped to office by railwaymen's votes. The first president of Fort William's carpenters union in 1903 was William Palling who

became police magistrate in 1906. The carpenters' first financial secretary, W. T. Rankin, was a government inspector, town councillor and Liberal who maintained a liaison with labour. These men would each play a distinct role in the freight handlers strike of 1909. As these examples show, the upper strata of the trade union movement became the link between the working class and the rest of the community.

While most artisans were English-speaking, not all English-speaking workers were artisans. Neither did all become union members. Immigrants from the British Isles often found jobs first at unskilled occupations as longshoremen or as construction workers. The elevators, said to have been a preserve solely of the Scots, did not become permanently organized until the 1930's. Literacy and language, however, gave the British an advantage over the foreigners (the term then applied both to the European-born and their Canadian-born offspring), enabling them to acquire higher status positions as supervisors or clerks. Whether born in Britain, Canada, or the United States the English-speaking workers would thus have automatic superiority over the bottom half of the working class and their advantage would be increased by their affiliation with fraternal societies, churches, political parties and unions.

By 1913, the English-speaking population of the two cities was about equally divided between the Canadian-born and immigrants, principally from Britain, but also from the

United States. The remaining one-third were foreigners.[12]

Within the foreign-born community were two distinct groups, the northern Europeans, predominately Finns, and those from southern and central Europe. Along with the Scandinavians, the Finns held the highest rank among the foreigners as their physical characteristics, the similarity of their homeland to New Ontario, and their Protestant traditions facilitated their adaptability and their toleration by the English-speaking community. For many historic and sociological reasons, radical politics gained the sanction of many Finnish immigrants either before or after their arrival in North America.[13] What has been called their "associative spirit" and their belief in education and enlightenment made these landless rural emigrants to the mines, forests and

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[12]The Social Survey of Port Arthur (1913) gives that city's population as 15,654 of whom 10,651 were English-speaking. The Social Survey of Fort William gives 22,807 as the population of whom 8,568 were listed as Canadians, 5,169 British, and 368 American.

[13]William A. Hŏglund, Finnish Immigrants in America, 1880-1920. (University of Wisconsin, 1960), pp. 14-57. Unfortunately, Hŏgland makes few references to Finns in Canada; however, since the involvement of Finns in left-wing movements may be taken to parallel that in the United States, his observations are applicable to the Canadian scene. Canadan Suomalainen Järjestŏ 25 vuotta (Sudbury: Vapaus Publishing Company Limited, 1936) published on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Finnish Organization of Canada gives a historical background of early socialist activities in Canada. The writer is grateful to Miss Vivian Nyssonen for translating sections of it for her. Much of the same material was covered in a two-part article written by Mr. Nick Viita for Industrialisti (Duluth, Minnesota) October 9 and 13, 1970 and translated for the writer by Mr. A. Tolvanen. The writer is indebted as well to Mr. A. T. Hill for sharing his personal knowledge of the Finnish Canadian left-wing movement with her.

construction sites of North America receptive to the socialist analysis of the class struggle with which they gained first-hand experience.

The pattern of left-wing organization amongst the Finns in North America can be traced from the Lutheran Church to temperance societies and then radical workers organizations like the Imatra League through which the Finns developed links on both sides of the Canadian-American border. The influx of Social Democratic exiles (the intellectual "gentlemen from Helsinki") from Czarist domination, which began in 1900 and reached its climax after the abortive 1905 revolution, strengthened socialist influence in Finnish societies. At the Lakehead, as elsewhere in Canada and the United States, this resulted in the merging of the temperance society with the Imatra League into a socialist organization. Lutheranism, however, retained the loyalty of many Finns and thus the Finnish community became divided along "church" and "non-church" lines, the latter group predominating and becoming renowned for its radical politics.[14] While the Finns settled in considerable numbers in Fort William and in the outlying areas, they concentrated most heavily in the Bay Street area of Port Arthur, which as a result became the centre of radical political and union activity in Northwest Ontario.

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[14]Höglund, p. 43 estimates that two out of three Finnish immigrants remained outside the churches.

At the lowest level of society were all the other foreigners. They were part of that vast reservoir of cheap labour brought to Canada during the wheat boom era by transportation companies or immigration agencies for work on the hardest, heaviest and most precarious jobs. Without the heavy labour provided by the surplus masses of Europe, industrial expansion would have been limited. Yet the appearance, customs, religions and poverty of the Italians, Greeks and Slavs aroused the intolerance of the Anglo-Saxon then confident in his natural superiority to other "races". The dichotomy posed by the influx of foreigners into Canada was recognized at the time:

> Whatever we may think of him as a neighbour, he is an economic necessity . . . Many occupations have practically been deserted by our Anglo-Saxons, and the field is left to the "Stranger Within Our Gates". Perhaps, if we only knew the facts, the foreigner is a racial necessity.[15]

Such immigrants came to the Lakehead from Italy and Greece, and from the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires. The labels, Russian, Ruthenian, or Galician were indiscriminately tagged on the Slavs, though most were Ukrainian,[16] while the terms Hungarian and Austrian usually referred to

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[15]Rev. S. W. Dean, Superintendent of the Toronto City and Fred Victor Mission, as cited in J. S. Woodsworth, My Neighbour (Toronto: The Missionary Society of the Methodist Church [1911]), p. 312.

[16]See Western Clarion, November 10, 1907 for letter by Myr Stechisin explaining misnomers given Ukrainians.

the place of origin but not necessarily the nationality. Although the Italians dominated the foreign-born community in the early 1900's, by 1913 the Slavs predominated when the Social Surveys of the two cities were conducted.

This foreign labour which began arriving at the Lakehead during the 1890's increased rapidly after 1900 to meet the demands of endless railway building and its accompanying flow of commerce. As the Social Survey of Port Arthur reported, "Immigrants are encouraged to come, but little thought is taken for their housing and living conditions." The social conditions of the new foreign districts thus were like those in other industrial centres of the country "where heavy manual work in vast quantity is to be seen." In Fort William, these immigrants settled in the coal docks district (the site of the old Hudson's Bay Plot and Old Fort William) where the C.P.R. concentrated its operations, and in Westfort which developed into an industrial section. In Port Arthur, they also settled in an area known as the coal docks and in "Little Italy" closer to the centre of town and the Canadian Northern's freight sheds. The unique location of Fort William's coal docks section, sandwiched as it was between the C.P.R. tracks and the sheds, docks and railway yards lining the Kaministikwia River, contributed to its development as a distinctive and cohesive community.[17] Organized around three churches and Old

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[17]"Evolution of the Coal Docks Section", Daily Times-Journal, May 21, 1904.

World ethnic societies, its history contrasts sharply from that of the radical Finnish district of Port Arthur, yet it was in this location that the most serious violence in labour disputes occurred.

These then were the three main classes: the middle class made up of merchants, professionals and local businessmen; the English-speaking working class ranging from the aristocrats of labour in the trades and railway brotherhoods down to the unskilled; and finally the non-English-speaking immigrants or foreigners. Dominating the economy and controlling the labour market were the big outside corporations, chief of which were the railways. The big corporations would provide the ground on which the working class would define itself through action and reaction, change and conflict.

4. The Age and Its Ideas: Class Harmony or Class Struggle

The picture English-speaking Canadians have held of society before World War I has traditionally been painted in vivid hues expressive of expansion, affluence and optimism. The colours chosen were those of the Union Jack, the emblem of both the Canadian nation and the British Empire, generally believed to be analogous. But cracks and fissures criss-crossing the otherwise sunny landscape detract from the

sentimental image of the "Good Old Days",[18] depicting class conflict, labour unrest and social disorder. With the growth of giant corporations came the creation of giant proletariats, resulting in industrial and community tensions which became particularly acute when that proletariat was foreign. One result of the danger posed to industrial peace and social harmony was the build-up of the permanent army and local militias for purposes not entirely related to national or imperial defence.[19]

Besides militarism there merged many other responses to the social upheavals of the period. Among the movements and theories prescribing remedies for class conflict and social disharmony were various versions of socialism and the Social Gospel, schemes for the promotion of harmony between

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[18]Stuart M. Jamieson, Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-1966. The Task Force on Labour Relations Study No. 22. (Ottawa: Privy Council Office, 1968), pp. 62-150. Under the title "The Good Old Days", Jamieson shatters illusions about the peaceful nature of Canadian society before World War I by demonstrating the widespread extent of class conflict and labour violence.

[19]See Kenneth McNaught, "Violence in Canadian History", in John S. Moir, ed., Character and Circumstance. Essays in Honour of Donald Grant Creighton (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1970) p. 80 n. 15: "It is interesting to note that the creation of a permanent force, as opposed to the militia, to replace British regular troops in Canada was more in response to concern about domestic law and order than to worry about external attack." See also Desmond Morton, "Aid to the Civil Power: The Canadian Militia in Support of Social Order, 1867-1914", Canadian Historical Review, LI (December 1970), 407-425. Morton shows that domestic peace was also the concern of the militia.

capital and labour, and platforms originating with the trade union movement. Despite their distance from the great urban centres of Europe and North America, the movement of peoples and ideas facilitated by modern means of communication and transportation ensured that Fort William and Port Arthur were not isolated from prevailing political and social movements. Besides the continual flow of settlers of various nationalities and ideologies into the area, transcontinental trains and Great Lakes passenger ships brought leading spokesmen of current causes to the Lakehead on their cross-country speaking tours, while the mails brought a variety of labour, socialist and ethnic publications. In these ways, current social ideas found expression in the two communities and influenced the interactions between the social classes.

Trade unions are the means by which workers traditionally responded to industrialization by banding together for the maintenance and improvement of their working conditions. Although their original purpose concerned such economic concerns as wages, hours and job security, a later interest lay in the political sphere. In both areas, trade unions infused the social thought of the period with a consciousness of exploitation in the workshop and poverty in the home. Both the idealism and the purposes of trade unions defined by P. M. Draper, the Secretary-Treasurer of the Trades and Labour Congress in 1910 were applicable throughout the period:

> The wage-earners' hope for the protection of their rights and interests now, or their progress, liberty and freedom in the future, lies in their organizations, in the trade union movements, as understood, expressed and advocated by the best general organizations which labor has ever had--the International Trade Unions, for trade purposes, and the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, for legislative purposes.[20]

With some exceptions, the organizational ties of Canadian unions for economic or trade purposes became firmly continental by 1902 when national organizations with similar jurisdictions to those of international unions were barred from the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada. But in practice, local labour councils and unions developed considerable autonomy (with the exception of the railway unions which deferred to district headquarters) in the organization of new unions, and in bargaining and the conduct of strikes. The national question in unionism had few advocates locally for nationalism was equated with jingoism and internationalism with class solidarity. Neither did revolutionary unionism make any impact in the area for socialists worked within established organizations.[21]

Trade unions pursued their legislative role by lobbying politicians and parties in power for legislation favourable to its interests or in the general interests of society.

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[20]Trades and Labor Congress, Souvenir of Port Arthur and Fort William, 1910. Emphases are in the text.

[21]The Industrial Workers of the World became an important factor in Northwest Ontario for the first time in World War I with Finnish bushworkers.

Beyond this lay the path of independent political action. As shall be seen this concept at first referred to independence from the old-line parties through support of a "straight labour candidate", and later meant the organization of parties independent of the trade unions. At the local level, labour politics evolved in its own independent way.

Nationally and locally, labour politics and socialism were rarely held to be synonymous. Sometimes socialists participated in labour politics, but not all supporters of "independent labour politics" regard themselves as socialists. The interaction between these two approaches influenced both working class politics and the development of the trade union movement.

Socialism came to Canada from three sources: Great Britain, Europe and the United States. British socialism which combined Fabianism with Keir Hardie's Independent Labourism emphasized the gradual transformation of society through reforms. European Marxism introduced by immigrants from counter-revolutionary societies preached the overthrow of capitalism through the conduct of the class struggle. The American brand which contained within itself Marxism, Populism, Christian Socialism and militant unionism[22] had

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[22]James Weinstein, The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925 (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1967), p. 12.

become "acclimatized"[23] to the New World by 1901 with the founding of the American Socialist Party. Through adaptation to the Canadian environment and through interaction one with the other, these versions of socialism became Canadianized in the course of time. For a brief period they became united locally in the Socialist Party of Canada which unlike the American Socialist Party, however, was unable to tolerate within itself divergent views about the conduct of the class struggle. Born in 1904 with the blessing of Eugene Debs, the Socialist Party of Canada had gained considerable prestige for socialism through its electoral successes in British Columbia and Alberta and through its converts in the Trades and Labor Congress until dogmatism brought about its decline though not demise.

One way labour and socialist movements became known at the Lakehead was through journals and newspapers. With the endorsation of the Winnipeg Labor Council the Voice, which represented the views of independent labour politics and militant trade unions, carried a wealth of socialist and muckraking material from British and American sources. Another independent labour journal, the Industrial Banner of London, Ontario was read to a lesser extent, partly

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[23]John R. Commons and others, History of Labour in the United States (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918), II, 533. This assessment is vindicated by Weinstein who sets out to revive "popular knowledge of what was once a broadly based, deeply rooted, self-conscious movement for socialism in the United States." (p. viii)

because of the Lakehead's closer ties with Western Canada than with southern Ontario, and partly because the local Wage Earner (1911-1914) carried similar material. The Western Clarion brought lessons in Marxist theory and its application to the Canadian scene according to the orthodoxy of the Socialist Party of Canada. Published in Cowansville, P.Q., Cotton's Weekly evolved from an independent small-town paper into a temperance and then socialist journal and, although eventually controlled by the Social Democratic Party, was as sympathetic to Jesus Christ as to Karl Marx. Its original inspiration had been another paper read at the Lakehead, the Appeal to Reason, the independent socialist journal from Kansas whose circulation was among the largest of any English language paper in the world.

Some socialists identified with the Social Gospel, a loose-knit movement of Christians who sought to redirect the church's mission from the personal salvation of its own members to the building of the Kingdom of God on earth for all mankind. Its immediate concerns were the elimination of moral degredation spawned by city slums, the Canadianization of immigrants, and the promotion of a liaison between the churches and organized labour. This movement was supported by socially-conscious clergy and laity, including many in the leadership of the trade union movement.

In the Social Survey of Port Arthur, its compiler Bryce M. Stewart expressed the Social Gospel philosophy perhaps more strongly than most of that movement's sympathizers; nevertheless, its insertion in the Survey is indicative of the thinking of a small, though significant, segment within the Canadian middle class. After observing that socialism in Port Arthur had "been held back because a great number of Socialists are free thinkers," Stewart added:

> This is the history of Socialism everywhere. Christians seem prejudiced against a political party for this reason, although by a strange obliquity of vision they do not see that the proportion of free thinkers in the other political parties may be as great, while it is beyond a question that in purity of purpose and method, and scientific reasoning the Socialist position is far beyond any other political organization, and should appeal especially to the Christian as it would give him an environment wherein it would be more possible for men, women and little children to "serve the Lord with gladness."

Another solution to social conflict was held to lie in the achievement of industrial harmony through mediation and conciliation between labour and capital. The most prominent Canadian advocate of this idea was William Lyon Mackenzie King whose horror of "the possibilities of civil conflicts begotten of class hatreds"[24] led to the enactment of the Industrial Disputes Investigation (or Lemieux) Act in 1907. Regarded by King as "an effort by the community to

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[24]W. L. Mackenzie King, Industry and Humanity (Toronto: Thomas Allen [1918]), pp. 19-20.

protect itself against the anti-social consequences of open warfare,"[25] the Act made mandatory the investigation of labour disputes prior to a strike or lock-out in such essential industries as railways, coal mining and public utilities. Prior to its passage, and where this legislation was inapplicable, local business and the trade unions endorsed the principle that labour disputes should be conciliated through the good offices of civic leaders like mayors, councillors, clergymen and of the labour councils themselves.

But beyond that, there seems to have been a genuine fascination with the new social forces which were changing the complexion of the community and the industrial world outside. The public meeting became the forum where citizens of all classes joined in the discussion of local issues and broader social movements. The following are but a random sampling. In 1903, "the largest number of people under one roof ever" in Fort William's history met at the Methodist Church to hear Mark Guy Pearse discuss Christian Socialism in West London.[26] In 1906, a Mr. P. Plant of the Labour Gazette spoke to trade unionists and civic officials, including Port Arthur's Mayor George Clavet in order to promote both the "amicable settlement of labor disputes", the affiliation of local unions to the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada and the "advisability of a separate portfolio for the

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[25] Ibid., p. 495.

[26] Daily Times-Journal, November 30, 1903.

minister of labor."[27] In 1907, another large public meeting in Fort William under the chairmanship of Mayor James Murphy supported the "telephone girls" during their strike over the Water and Light Commission's choice of supervisory personnel and demanded arbitration of the dispute.[28] In 1909, under the heading "Tells About the Class Struggle", the Daily News described how "prominent business men, professional men, members of the city council and working men listened with rapt attention" to William D. (Big Bill) Haywood, the American Socialist and I.W.W. leader, as he explained "the worldwide struggle between the working class and the exploiting class which produces none but has all."[29]

As the classes and social groupings interacted one with the other, fascination and recognition were not always mixed with tolerance. Indifference, however, was rare when the class struggle was waged at home.

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[27]Ibid., October 13, 1906; Daily News, October 15, 1906.

[28]Daily Times-Journal, August 30, 1907.

[29]Daily News, October 11, 1909.

II

THE ADVENT OF ORGANIZED LABOUR: COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS AND INDEPENDENT POLITICS

Parallelling the economic expansion at the turn of the century, organized labour experienced an incredible growth in North America resulting in "the recognition by the public of the existence of a labour question as a phenomenon of normal and everyday life."[1] In 1903, the Canadian trade union movement reached its highest level yet with the organization of two hundred and seventy-five new units.[2] Included in this upsurge was the organization of the first labour unions at the Lakehead outside those of the railway employees. For that reason, 1903 has been chosen as the starting point for this study of the working class and its relationships, for along with its organizational expansion came the recognition of labour as a significant force in the life of the community. This achievement was, in large part, the work of Harry A. Bryan who is still remembered as the founder of the local labour movement.[3] Although a former organizer with the

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[1]Commons and others, II, 522, 527.

[2]R. H. Coats, "The Labour Movement in Canada", Canada and Its Provinces (Toronto: 1914), IX, 317.

[3]The biographical data about Bryan has been obtained from interview taped on November 6, 1969 with his daughter, Mrs. Ethel Fehr, b. 1889 at Cleveland; from

American Federation of Labor in the United States, Bryan did not adhere to the tradition of pure and simple trade unionism as expounded by Samuel Gompers. In his background were an amalgam of many British, Canadian and American influences which held a more radical view of the role of the worker in altering his material conditions than that of business unionism.

Born in England of Methodist parents, Bryan emigrated with them to St. Thomas, Ontario where as a youth he is said to have joined the Knights of Labor. In 1885, he migrated to Cleveland. As a street railwayman, he became president of

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conversations with his granddaughter, Mrs. Hazel Wohni, and from taped Reminiscences on Bryan by Einar Nordstrom and others, dated March 27, 1960. The taped interviews are included in the Thunder Bay Labour History Interview Project located at Confederation College. It has been impossible to document Bryan's association with Debs as given in the Fehr recording; however, it is apparent he came to the Lakehead well versed in socialist theory. The Knights of Labor reference is given in the Nordstrom recording which also states that Bryan was sent to the Lakehead by Gompers. Mrs. Fehr and a letter from Gompers to Bryan (Library of Congress, Gompers Letterbooks (microfilm), February 5, 1903) indicate that Bryan applied for his commission after moving to Fort William. Bryan is listed as an organizer with a Cleveland address in the American Federationist, August, 1901. Issues dated June, 1903 and January, 1904 include reports by Bryan from Fort William. A.F.L. organizers in that period could be salaried or volunteer. "The Volunteer Organizer worked on what could be called a commission basis, i.e. he was paid a fee for each union he organized . . . Of course, as you have suggested the Volunteer organizer had other sources of income." (Letter from Administrative Assistant Records Administrator, American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, November 23, 1971.) It has to be assumed that Bryan was a volunteer organizer in both Cleveland and Fort William since he left both places as a result of being black-listed from his "other sources of income".

the union and later an organizer with the A.F.L. Involvement in the socialist movement, which was not rare for A.F.L. trade unionists,[4] led to his friendship with Eugene V. Debs, the founder of the American Socialist Party, whom he accompanied on many organizational tours. After being black-listed in 1901 for strike activity, he moved to Fort William where he eventually found construction work at the Canadian Pacific Railway Company's Elevator "D".

Along with considerable oratorical and organizational skills, Bryan brought with him the Debsian brand of socialism, a non-dogmatic blend of Marxism, populism and Christian Socialism. As his actions suggest, he believed along with many socialist labour men in the United States and Canada that the established union was the proper economic organization for workers, as opposed to dual unionism, and that within the political sphere lay the source of their ultimate emancipation from capitalism. Bryan's brand of socialism was similar to that of the Canadian Socialist League which he joined on arriving in Canada. Although he had shed his family's Methodism as his knowledge of Marxism developed, he seems to have respected the League's assumption

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[4]See Commons, II, 532-3, and Weinstein, 29-33 for discussions on the role of socialists within the American Federation of Labor.

that socialism was "applied Christianity" to be achieved through the electoral process.[5]

This may be seen in his response to a Times-Journal article entitled "Are Socialists also Atheists" which had reported the affirmative views of an American priest to this question.[6] Every national officer of the Canadian Socialist League but one was an active church worker, Bryan countered, listing as well many famous socialist churchmen in Canada, the United States and Britain. After quoting the Reverend Emil Richter of Patterson, N.Y. on the way "limitless competition" in the United States produced "despair-driven men and women", "hunger-tortured girls", and "emaciated children", Bryan warned of similar social distress in Canada resulting from "concentration . . . taking place on our Canadian soil with marvellous rapidity." Only through the use of their "God-given franchise and blood-bought privileges, 'the ballot'", could Canadians prevent such an eventuality.

Although Bryan's ideas did not at first find organizational expression in the political sense, they were reflected in his approach to trade unionism which he regarded as the means for furthering class identity and class relationships as much as for furthering economic gain. His approach

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[5]See Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour 1880-1930 (Kingston, 1968), pp. 34-40 for discussion of the Canadian Socialist League.

[6]Daily Times-Journal, June 30, 1903.

is reflected in his advice given to the workers of Fort William soon after he launched his organizational campaign:

> The object of labor unions is to promote peace and harmony, and not to create strife and discord. First, get thoroughly organized, get acquainted with one another, cultivate a spirit of brotherly love, attend your meetings, and after thorough discussion make your demands with a spirit of fairness and justice. Get the sympathy of the public, and the backing of your union, and you will win your point without a struggle.[7]

Bryan's views on the possibility and desirability of "peace and harmony" typify what has been described as the "honeymoon period of capital and labour" when the A.F.L. more or less successfully "constitutionalized" labour relations through the trade agreement.[8] Essential to the winning of the trade agreement were two inter-related conditions, with the sympathy of the public becoming equally as important as the solidarity of the workers. Only when the workers' appeal to the "spirit of fairness and justice" failed did struggle through the medium of the strike become necessary. As Bryan's conduct of strikes shows victory depended as much on good community relations as on union strength.

When Bryan came to the Lakehead, he seems to have stepped into an organizational vacuum. Apart from union successes and failures among railway employees, no concerted effort had been initiated from either Canadian or

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[7] "This Week in Labor Circles", Daily Times-Journal, March 28, 1903.

[8] Commons, II, 524-5.

American sources to organize the growing numbers of tradesmen and labourers coming into the area. Bryan responded to the need and demand for unionization by again becoming an organizer.[9] Even before he applied for and received the renewal of his commission from Gompers, he had organized his fellow workers on Elevator "D" into Local 53, International Bridge and Structural Iron Workers, and then set out to organize workers in other industries.[10]

Bryan's style of leadership became apparent from the outset. In keeping with his policy of cementing good community relations, he announced to the press his accomplishment in organizing the Iron Workers, and his intention to organize the other trades in town. At the same time he promised to hold an open meeting where the principles of unionism would be explained to the general public. In his approach to organizing, Bryan not only selected the trades, but the semi-skilled and unskilled, as seen in the organization in both Fort William and Port Arthur of Federal Labor Unions, locals of unskilled labourers affiliated directly to the Federation.[11] This form of industrial unionism may also be seen in the Iron Workers, which he explained was not a craft union "in the fact

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[9]Mrs. Ethel (Bryan) Fehr interview.

[10]Library of Congress, Gompers Letterbooks (microfilm), Gompers to Bryan, February 5, 1903; Daily Times-Journal, January 20, 1903.

[11]Daily Times-Journal, June 9, 1903; Gompers Letterbooks, Gompers to Bryan, November 30, 1903.

that no apprenticeship is required in order to become a member, as the labor on structural work is such that any intelligent man can do."[12] Another feature of Bryan's organizing was his indifference to the jurisdictional claims of the A.F.L. as seen in Gompers' letter of February 5: "The Order of Railway Clerks of America is not in affiliation with the A. F. of L., but we have several local unions of these workers directly affiliated. I would also state that the Bridge and Structural Iron Workers are not affiliated with the American Federation of Labor."

Bryan nevertheless extended the organization of the Iron Workers Union to include the construction workers on the C.P.R.'s new steel house, Elevator "D" into the same local. In line with A.F.L. practice, he presented the workers demands to the contractor, Macdonald Engineering Company, in the form of a trade agreement.[13] Its rejection led to a strike which soon encompassed five contractors on C.P.R. elevator projects and two hundred and fifty men.

The main issue in the strike was piece work which Bryan argued ". . . has always been the whip in the hands of the capitalist, used to exploit labor, always taking advantage of the maximum day's work to establish the minimum

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[12] Daily Times-Journal, January 20, 1903.

[13] Ibid., February 23, 1903.

day wage."[14] Under this system the pay for five hundred rivets, considered an average ten-hour day's work, was $2.50; the men complained that structural differences in the elevators and other factors made for great variations in the daily rate, from under one dollar to over three dollars. The union demanded an hourly wage rate ranging from forty cents to twenty-five cents an hour, the nine-hour day, and union recognition.

The sign on the strike headquarters door shows Bryan's skilled strike tactics:

> Strike committee 8 a.m., captains' report 9 a.m., reporters and citizens, 10 a.m., officers' conference 11 a.m., secret service committee any hour.[15]

Such tactics not only elicited the admiration of the Times-Journal for the "master-mind behind the scenes" but soon induced the contractors to sign a nine-month agreement acceding to all the union's demands but one on which a compromise was reached.[16]

An important contribution to the Iron Workers victory had been the winning of public sympathy. Prior to the strike, Bryan had already established cordial relationships with the Daily Times-Journal which responded by instituting a regular Saturday column entitled "This Week in Labor Circles"

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[14] Daily Times-Journal, February 28, 1903.

[15] Ibid., February 26, 1903.

[16] Ibid., March 3, 1903: Labour Gazette, III, 804.

and by giving good coverage of labour activities. During the strike, the Times-Journal advised Bryan to take the case to the "reasonable men" of the Board of Trade.[17] The deep interest of the citizens, the editorial said, resulted from their dependence ". . . on the work done by one great corporation, and a contraction of the construction at this point means a stagnation in the town."

Public conern became evident when Mayor Joshua Dyke intervened in the strike. But, although Bryan expressed his gratitude for the Mayor's "disinterested efforts", he publicly disputed Dyke's suggestion that the union make concessions, as seen in his February 28 letter to the Times-Journal:

> We cannot see any great concession in the recognition of the union. Because capital has the right to be recognized, labor, which produces capital, must also have the right . . . we will have living wages or other slaves may do the work. The contractor must have his profits, though the workers' families starve.

Dyke's mediation, however, eventually favoured the union and presaged the labour disputes of the next few years when resort to the good offices of civic leaders would become accepted practice.

Another circumstance favouring the Iron Workers was also repeated in many future strikes. Men imported to act as strikebreakers refused to do so when first learning of

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[17] Daily Times-Journal, February 28, 1903.

the strike's existence after their arrival.[18] When both the company and the town declined aid to these now penniless and jobless men, the strikers themselves undertook responsibility for their care. This pattern of behaviour exhibited by men destined as strikebreakers reveals an instinctive class feeling amongst unskilled, migratory workers then being shunted around the country to impede unionization.

The successful conclusion of the first large-scale industrial strike at the Lakehead facilitated future organization. On March 30, Bryan installed the charter officers of Local 1498, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners whose membership reflected the social mobility of the upper level of the artisan class.[19] On June 3, the union began a strike on a question unrelated to pay, for it had already come to agreement on wages ranging from 32½¢ to 25¢ an hour, on the ten-hour day, and on non-participation in sympathy strikes.[20] Negotiations failed, however, on the issue of the union shop. While the masters insisted on "the liberty to hire men union or non-union, according to merit," the union demanded that "non-union men be not employed if union men are to be got." The union presented its case to the public through the press stating its willingness to "leave

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[18] Daily Times-Journal, March 2, 1903.

[19] Ibid., March 31, 1903. See also above, pp. 11-12.

[20] See Daily Times-Journal for contract proposals submitted by each side.

our case in the hands of all fair-minded and non-prejudiced citizens knowing, that outside of a few, they will be willing to give a verdict in our favor."[21] This time a town councillor, L. L. Peltier of the Railway Conductors, mediated the dispute, and again imported men refused to act as strike-breakers. On June 21, all contractors agreed that non-union men would have one month in which to join the union.[22]

The objective of the trade union movement as set forth by Bryan had been peace and harmony. The iron workers and the carpenters strikes, however, had shown that when companies resisted the wage demands and unionization of their employees, strife and discord followed. The middle class which regarded such strikes as detrimental to the economic well-being of the community used mediation to restore peace and harmony. In many cases, such intervention by civic officials became decisive for labour's victory.

It was not only on the economic front that organized labour made its impact on Fort William. The unions became educational and social centres where workers, as Bryan had put it, "cultivated a spirit of brotherly love", with the "smoker" becoming the forum for addresses on the political role of workers as a separate class. One smoker sponsored by the Iron Workers Union, for example, heard Bryan explain,

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[21] Daily Times-Journal, June 9, 1903.

[22] Ibid., June 22, 1903: Labour Gazette, IV, 86.

"It is not alone for better wages that organizations exist, but for the purpose of making better citizens and more intelligent voters."[23] To further labour's role in public life, a Central Labor Union was organized with Bryan as business agent.[24] Like a trades and labour council except for its direct affiliation to the American Federation of Labor instead of the Trades and Labor Congress, the C.L.U. undertook to "finally pass on all questions affecting labor, and to take a general supervision of affairs both in town and in the legislative halls of the acts of those who control the business of the country." Through labour's intervention in civic affairs, and through the organization of more trades and the conduct of more strikes, wage-earners and businessmen alike became conscious of organized labour as a separate and not necessarily antagonistic force in the community.

The community's reaction to the activities of this new phenomenon in its midst may be judged by its response to the first Labour Day celebrated in Fort William on September 7, 1903. If the Times-Journal's account of the parade is correct, that response was nothing less than exuberant:

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[23] Daily Times-Journal, October 8, 1903.

[24] Ibid., October 12, 1903.

> All day Sunday and early Monday morning, clerks, proprietors, carpenters and delivery men were busy decorating store fronts for Labor day, for it was to be the day of days for organized labor in Fort William . . . and on every corner crowds of people cheered the men and congratulated them on their first organized attempt to celebrate Labor day.[25]

In return, L. L. Peltier as honorary chairman thanked the citizens on behalf of the trade unions for their warm support and inspiring encouragement. In 1903 that confidence seemed to be universal. In his Labour Day address, printed in full by the Times-Journal, Samuel Gompers rejoiced in the peaceful advance of the labor movement, "the most intelligent, progressive and comprehensive force that has ever united the common people in their own interests, and necessarily such unity is in the interests of all."

Fort William's exhilaration on Labour Day stemmed from more than the celebration by its citizens of the new-found strength of organized labour. In 1903, the town was undergoing the heady experience of playing David to two Goliaths. The town council, the Board of Trade and organized labour were united against the attempt by the Bell Telephone Company and the Canadian Pacific Railway to crush the infant municipal telephone system.

Fort William and Port Arthur were Canadian pioneers in the municipal control of such public utilities as water, electric lighting and the electric street railway. The first

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[25] Ibid., September 8, 1903.

battle over telephones took place in 1884 between the Bell Telephone Company and a privately owned local firm, the Port Arthur Telephone Company.[26] The Bell won this round and at the end of the nineteenth century had undisputed control of local telephone service. But in 1901, each town council decided to establish its own municipally-owned telephone system. Prior to the vote on the telephone by-law in May, 1902 the attempt by the Bell to defeat any civic venture into its domain only aroused the already strong anti-monopoly sentiment in the Lakehead. This may be seen during the provincial election campaign which coincided with the campaign for the telephone by-law. In his appeal to the electors, the Conservative candidate, Dr. T. S. T. Smellie (who then held the controlling interest in the Times-Journal[27]) pledged to "advocate the protection of the rights and interests of the people and the province from attack by greedy and rapacious corporations."[28]

Along with Mayor Joshua Dyke, one of Fort William's most articulate spokesmen for the municipality's cause un-

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[26]See "Battle Between Bell and Conmee Firms for Exclusive Rights in Town in 1884", News-Chronicle,(Port Arthur), June 23, 1934, p. 7, for detailed history of the telephone system in Port Arthur, and J. J. Wells, "History of Fort William", Thunder Bay Historical Society Papers, 1912-13, pp. 20-21 for background on Fort William's telephone system.

[27]George B. Macgillivray, "A History of Fort William and Port Arthur Newspapers from 1875 (Fort William, 1968)", pp. 19-20.

[28]Daily Times-Journal, April 24, 1902.

doubtedly was town councillor L. L. Peltier who enjoyed immeasurable prestige as Chairman of the Order of Railway Conductors for the C.P.R.'s entire Canadian system. Peltier's influence lay mainly with the small property owner. In answering the charge that this class would not benefit from municipal phones, especially those who were not users, Peltier insisted that small and big property owners alike would be joint owners of the system at no cost, but at a profit to themselves. Reminding the citizens that "the price we must pay for the advantages of Municipal Ownership, as of Liberty, is eternal vigilance, continual watchfulness," Peltier warned that those unfriendly to municipal ownership would be "marked men".[29] When the voting was over, the marked men were few in numbers. "The Fight is Over, the People Won" announced the Times-Journal headline on May 15, 1902 giving the result: Fort William, 279-7; Port Arthur, 177-14.

The Bell Telephone Company disregarded this overwhelming decision in favour of municipal ownership, with the result that two telephone systems operated side by side in each town, with separate switchboards, sets of poles and lines and other paraphernalia. Favouring the Bell was the C.P.R. which not only used Bell services exclusively, but which evidently exerted considerable pressure on its employees to do the same.

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[29]Ibid., May 12, 1902.

It is not surprising, then, that organized labour should take a leading part in the campaign against what was described as "the Bell Co.'s occupation of the town".[30] In February, 1903, the nine railway unions undertook the initiative under the leadership of John Whitehurst of the Locomotive Engineers and of L. L. Peltier. Re-affirming their "loyalty to the principles of organized labor everywhere, viz. co-operation, whether it be for the general good, whether it be in maintaining living rates of wages for the members and indirectly for all workers, or the ownership by the people of all businesses which are in their nature monopolies," the railway unions resolved to use only municipal phones and to permit only the municipal phone in their homes and offices. The railway unions expressed the desire that the merchants would join them in pressuring the C.P.R. to give equal rights to the municipal system with the Bell in its offices, and also urged "the merchants, business and public men of the town of Fort William to reciprocate our efforts on behalf of the municipal telephone, by taking an early, united and determined stand."

The following evening, a mass meeting of citizens, including the mayor, councillors, business and labour leaders met and resolved to use municipal phones exclusively.[31] Among

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[30] Ibid., February 13, 1903.

[31] Ibid., February 14, 1903.

the speakers were L. L. Peltier and H. A. Bryan. The meeting also resolved to send "strong resolutions showing the spirit and action of this meeting" to the C.P.R., the Canadian Northern Railway and the Dominion and provincial governments.

The Bell's refusal to yield continued to agitate both the organized labour movement and the entire community. During the summer, for example, the Carpenters Union pledged "moral and material support to only our own municipal concerns, and only to such men at the polls who are pledged to municipal ownership."[32] Such support, however, was to be granted only conditionally. Municipal ownership must be "consistent with good management"; in other words, the commissioners must not "spend moneys without the consent of the people."

This resolution reflected the rumours then current that the management of the public utilities was not open with the public about finances. On December 15, 1903 a Times-Journal editorial commented on the intended entry into municipal politics of organized labour for the purpose of investigating civic expenditures about which, it alleged, the town council was too secretive. While doubting the wisdom of labour's participation in local politics as an organized body, the editorial conceded that the town's ratepayers were dissatisfied with "methods of municipal government that require secrecy." A few days later, the editor called attention to

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[32] Ibid., August 4, 1903.

a petition asking for an audit of the town's finances by the provincial government.[33] The petition, which had been circulated by A.F.L. organizer, H.A. Bryan, and taken to Toronto by a Captain Holmes, raised some questions in the editor's mind. Who was behind it? Was its purpose to discredit the town? At a public meeting held December 21, where Bryan was "On Trial Before the People", the answers became known.[34] The Bell Telephone Company was behind the petition whose purpose, indeed, was to discredit the town.

The meeting chaired by L. L. Peltier heard Bryan's story: how he had long felt an audit was necessary, how Captain Holmes and William Scott, the local agent of the Bell Telephone Company, had befriended him, how he suspected them, how he decided "to play the scheme to the end" to discover their motives, and how they had "brought up from Toronto the figures and the petition for the government audit." As he explained.

> . . . you do not know the temptations that I have had to endure, temptations as subtle as the serpent poured into the ears of Eve. Their plan was to wreck the credit of the town through these accounts, and then they would have had a bombshell to explode. As for myself, had I been their tool, all they would have said would have been: "There is another labor leader gone to pieces."

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[33] Ibid., December 18, 1903. The petition and other data on this case are in the Public Archives of Ontario (OA), RG 19, Municipal Returns Files, Box 133.

[34] Daily Times-Journal, December 22, 1903.

Satisfied that "sleight-of-hand" had been justified in order to expose the Bell, Mayor Dyke and most of those present applauded Bryan's stand, as did the Times-Journal. But the petition and Bryan's part in it had ramifications beyond the town of Fort William. On December 30, 1903 an in-depth article appeared in the Ottawa Free Press describing the "disastrous experiences" of Port Arthur and Fort William in the field of municipal ownership.[35] Although few union men had any connection with the petition, the article lauded the pro-audit views of organized labour "perhaps the strongest element in the local situation", and called for an investigation by the government of public services at Port Arthur and Fort William "for the benefit of the province at large."

In a pamphlet entitled "Municipal Ownership at Fort William",[36] newly elected mayor C. H. Jackson charged that the article had been written with the aid of the Bell Telephone Company's agent for use in the municipal election campaign at Ottawa where public ownership was also a major issue. Jackson linked the attack by the Free Press to the alarm felt by the Bell and other monopolies at the "growing inclination" of the people for municipal ownership. With reference to the alleged support of Fort William's labour organizations for an audit,

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[35] OA, RG 19, Box 133, Clipping. According to the pamphlet cited below, the article was re-printed in the Toronto Mail and Empire, January 8, 1904.

[36] OA, Ibid.

the pamphlet reiterated how the petition had been circulated by "a man prominent in labor circles" in order to expose the Bell Telephone Company's methods thereby revealing "to what extent an unscrupulous corporation will go to gain its ends."

The battle between the Bell Telephone Company and the two municipal telephone companies continued until the mayoralities of L. L. Peltier in Fort William and I. L. Matthews of Port Arthur in 1909, when the Bell finally relinquished its rights. The credit later given to the leadership of Mayor Dyke and the "loyalty" of the citizens for laying the foundation for this eventual victory of municipal ownership also belongs to organized labour as represented by the actions of Peltier, Bryan and the unions.[37]

During 1904, organized labour attempted to perpetuate its alliance with the business community through its entry into the federal election campaign. On the call of the Central Labor Union delegates from every union but four in the huge constituency of Thunder Bay and Rainy River unanimously chose L. L. Peltier as independent labour candidate at a nominating convention held on January 5 in Fort William.[38] Although the district's links with the Trades and Labor Congress were then negligible, it is likely that the placing of

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[37]J. J. Wells, op. cit. p. 21. According to its 1971 Telephone Directory, the City of Thunder Bay operates the second largest municipally owned telephone system in Canada.

[38]Daily Times-Journal, January 6, 1904.

a labour candidate arose from the 1903 Congress resolution to nominate and elect "labor candidates for parliament, along the lines of independent politics, apart from either of the existing parties."[39] Another inspiration for independent labour politics probably came from the Winnipeg Voice, for its editor and publisher, A. W. Puttee, the labour M.P. elected to the Commons in 1900 gave the key-note address following Peltier's nomination.

In the chair was Harry Bryan who set the theme by introducing Puttee as "a man who stood for the rights of the whole people against class legislation."[40] Puttee too stressed that "the platform of the labor candidate should be wide enough to embrace the whole people," as did Peltier in his later pledge to represent all workers organized and unorganized, "whether clerks, merchants or professional men, all who were productive workers, not parasites."[41] One issue around which the labour party expected such wide-spread support was municipal ownership as seen in Puttee's expression of pride in addressing "a Fort William audience, as the town had a great name in Canada for the stand it had taken."[42] An indication that such support might be forthcoming was the presence at

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[39] Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, Proceedings, 1903, p. 59.

[40] Daily Times-Journal, January 6, 1904.

[41] Ibid., January 20, 1904.

[42] Ibid., January 6, 1904.

the nominating rally of Mayor Dyke who spoke on municipal ownership.

Peltier's prestige in community and labour circles made him an apt choice. Born in Vermont of French Canadian parents, Peltier had begun his railway career with the Grand Trunk Railway as a freight brakeman in 1870.[43] One of the early leaders of organization among railway employees in North America, Peltier had become general chairman in 1901 of the Order of Railway Conductors for the entire C.P.R. system with which he had been employed since 1889. Describing his appointment as "an honor to Fort William, as well as to Mr. Peltier," the Times-Journal of June 24, 1901 praised him as "heart and soul in the work of bettering the condition of the laboring men."A property-owner of note, Peltier had held office on the public and high school boards as well as on town council. Under the spell of Reverend Hiram Hull's "firery oratory", he had been converted to a strong social gospel Methodism.

With a reputation for outspoken views, Peltier had become known nationally through negotiations and joint commissions. One example is given in the Winnipeg Voice account of his appearance before the Commons committee considering the Lougheed Bill whose intent was the destruction of inter-

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[43] Daily Times-Journal, October 28, 1904. The biographical data given in the Independent Labor Party Manifesto has been supplemented by press reports and by his grandson, Louis Peltier.

national unionism in Canada.[44] Here he had not only vouched for the respectability and responsibility of his Order, "a credit to the country and to the Anglo-Saxon race", but answered the charge of the possible detrimental effect of U.S. control of Canadian unions thus: "If our own Senate robs us of our liberties, why should we complain if aliens rob us of our money." Another qualification emphasized in Peltier's publicity was his "most friendly" relationship with leading politicians like Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Sir Clifford Sifton,[45] and his past contacts with eminent railroad men including Lord Shaughnessy and James Stephenson.[46] As the Times-Journal commented on his nomination, "Mr. Peltier has come from the ranks of the workingmen, and is in close touch with all classes."

The I.L.P. conducted its campaign through an "Independent Labor Column" appearing frequently in the Times-Journal. In it, labour reiterated its belief in a community of interests between itself and society. "No action that tends to ameliorate the conditions under which the working classes labor, can fail to produce a far-reaching effect for good throughout the whole community,"[47] typified this approach. Labour politics had become necessary because "capitalists had

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[44]Cited in Daily Times-Journal, June 15, 1903.

[45]Ibid., October 28, 1904.

[46]Ibid., November 2, 1904.

[47]Ibid., October 28, 1904.

changed the arena of the contest with labor from the workshops to the legislature," as seen in Senate votes on the Lougheed Bill.[48] "Protection and Preservation of the right of Workers to Organize" thus headed the I.L.P. ten-point platform.[49] But "Public Ownership of Public Utilities", although a traditional labour plank, was one meant to appeal to the general public. With this platform, the I.L.P. argued, Peltier would "promote the best interests of all classes of the community more effectively than one who is fettered to either one of the old-line parties."

Peltier's supporters hoped to capitalize on the labour-business alliance formed around the telephone controversy by appointing an election committee which included both factions.[50] But this alliance failed to materialize around Peltier's election campaign. As for the trade unions of the riding, the list of signatories to the I.L.P. Manifesto issued just prior to the election signify that, while his support from that quarter was considerable, it was not universal.[51] Of the nineteen unions represented, all were

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[48] Ibid., January 20, 1904.

[49] Ibid., October 28, 1904.

[50] Ibid., October 6, 1904.

[51] Ibid., October 28, 1904. Among those signing were Harry Mills of the Locomotive Firemen, later Minister of Mines in the U.F.O.-I.L.P. government of Ontario elected in 1919, and S. C. Young of the Railway Trainmen, who then was also vice-president of the Board of Trade and later became Mayor of Fort William in 1911-12 and 1914-15.

from the railways with the exception of the Fort William Central Labor Union, the Teamsters, the Bartenders, and the Iron Workers, which suggests that many trade unionists followed the leader of the Carpenters' W. T. Rankin by remaining loyal to the Liberal Party. As will be seen later, the absence of Harry Bryan's name may reflect another political division which had arisen within the labour movement.

One difficulty faced by Peltier had been his own association with the Liberal Party. At the nominating meeting of the Fort William Liberal Association held one week prior to the labour nominations, Peltier had seconded, as a member in good standing, a motion offering unconditional support for whomever Fort William named as its choice as Liberal candidate.[52] Nominated himself, Peltier declined "unless and upon the conditions that he should act absolutely independent in all matters and legislation affecting labor interests." Unacceptable to the Liberal Party, these conditions became the basis for the independent labour politics of 1904, inviting Liberal attacks on Peltier for his "consistency with a vengeance." "Independence" to Peltier meant freedom of action regarding labour legislation, "while at the same time giving the government fair and impartial support in its

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[52]See Daily Times-Journal, April 2, 1904 for detailed letter from the Central Labor Union concerning the Liberal meeting, and October 28, 1904 for the Independent Labor Party's position on the matter.

general policy."[53] If elected to represent the I.L.P., then, Peltier would have been a Liberal Member of Parliament in all but labour matters.

The Liberal Party was not the only one to challenge Peltier's concept of working class politics. As seen at his nomination, socialists like Bryan had supported his candidature, but socialism itself had not noticeably intruded into the campaign. Well before the election, one William Jordan of Port Arthur had addressed the Central Labor Union along with Peltier and Bryan, in which he urged that "the worker must capture political power."[54] Such socialist ideas (so termed by the Times-Journal) remained dormant during the I.L.P. campaign directed at "the whole people". But around this time, the Ontario Socialist Party, the successor to the Canadian Socialist League, expressed opposition to working class alliances with reform or other political parties.[55] By the end of the campaign, local socialists followed this lead through the publication of their own paper, the Standard.[56]

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[53] Ibid., October 8, 1904.

[54] Ibid., June 9, 1904.

[55] Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, p. 35.

[56] The Voice, November 18, 1904 announces receipt of the first issue of the Standard. The Social Survey of Port Arthur (1913) reports: "Ten years ago there existed a small band of men who were enthusiastically socialistic. A paper was started to advocate their views but lived only a few weeks." This undoubtedly refers to the Standard, no copies of which are known to have survived.

Edited by Jordan, the Standard enunciated the following guide for working class political action: "No compromise, no political trading and no attempted reconciliation of interests opposed to and living on the values created by labor. No alliance with political parties and no concessions." The Standard was short-lived; its principles, however, would influence the course of working class politics in the future.

In the election of 1904, criticisms of Peltier from neither Liberals nor socialists had much bearing on its outcome. As seen in the following excerpt from the Industrial Banner reprinted in the "Independent Labor Column", the I.L.P. had foreseen how the labour vote might be swayed:

> The Grand Trunk Pacific is to be largely built by the money of the Canadian workers, but when it comes to do the work they must give way to the scum labor of Europe because it comes cheap. . . . When the Grand Trunk Pacific is finally built there will be a few more millionaires in Canada. It is a grand scheme for grafters, and old Barnum was right when he said the people liked to be fooled.[57]

As predicted, pro-labour and anti-monopoly programmes could not compete with the slogans of the successful Liberal candidate: "Vote for Conmee and you vote for the Grand Trunk Pacific. Railroad men! Vote for the government that will develop the railway systems of the Greater Canada."[58] James

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[57] Daily Times-Journal, November 2, 1904.

[58] Ibid.

Conmee of Port Arthur placed first even in Fort William, Peltier's stronghold.[59] Labour support for Peltier, reportedly "solid" until just before the election, had been "swept into the vortex of the partisan fight."[60] Railroad building and old-party loyalties notwithstanding, the riding's first labour candidate in the federal field had won fourteen percent of the vote.[61]

By the end of 1904, the patterns of working class activity had become either established or at least discernible. Unions in railways and trades, the semi-skilled and unskilled had organized and conducted strikes, and had partaken in civic affairs and independent labour politics. Labour had established good relationships with the middle class on the basis of a mutual understanding that both peaceful industrial relations and municipal ownership benefited society as a whole. Two concepts of working class politics had been expressed, that of the early I.L.P. which fostered class and party alliances, and that of the yet insignificant socialists who held the opposite view. Through these activities, two labour leaders had emerged who towered above

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[59] Ibid., November 2, 1904.

[60] The Voice, November 11, 1904.

[61] The results were: Conmee, 2,162; Thomas Marks, 1,734; Peltier, 638.

all others. As the well-off labour aristocrat and reformer, Peltier bridged the middle and working classes socially and politically. As the always hard-up labour organizer and socialist, Bryan remained within the working class dedicated to its development as a separate class through political and economic action.

At the beginning of his organizing career in Fort William, Harry Bryan had defined labour's goal as one of peace and harmony. In the strife and discord encountered in strikes against big construction firms and in the struggle against monopoly, labour had found the middle class to be its ally. If independent labour politics could shake this alliance, so, too, could unionism when directed at local business interests, whether privately or publicly owned. One of the unions Bryan had organized had been an amalgamated one of the employees of the municipal street railway, telephone and electric light systems.[62] As noted earlier civic leaders did not easily countenance the organization of civic employees.[63] This may be the reason Bryan was forced by financial straits to abandon the role of organizer around the end of 1904. Although he received a small stipend as business agent of the local unions he had organized, he needed the additional employment to sustain his growing family. Personal harrassment and

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[62] Daily Times-Journal, November 27, 1903.

[63] See p. 26.

and blacklisting from local employment led him to leave Fort William; after much hardship he eventually found work through a friendly foreman on the construction of the Kakabeka Falls power project.[64] From there, and after 1909 from Dorion, Bryan continued to influence the labour movement of the district through such organizations as the Socialist Party of Canada and the Social Democratic Party. (The omission of his name from the list of Peltier's sponsors may be due either to this development or to his agreement with the political line of the Standard.)

The 1904 Labour Day parade had indicated other developments yet to come.[65] Unions from Port Arthur paraded for the first time, showing the beginnings of organization incidental to the town's economic recovery following the coming of the Canadian Northern Railway. Also marching was "a big concourse of Finlanders, marked by a distinguishing badge of red ribbon." That fewer merchants were "out in their rigs" than in 1903 reflected perhaps what

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[64]Mrs. Ethel Bryan Fehr interview and Nordstrom Reminiscences about Bryan. See Daily Times-Journal, January 11 and 14, 1904 for one example of harrassment. Charged with trespassing, Bryan told the packed courtroom how "he had had threatening letters since being in town." In pronouncing Bryan "honorably acquitted", Magistrate McDougall spoke highly of the way the accused and Mrs. Bryan gave evidence, in contrast to the behaviour of the principal witnesses for the crown. After World War I, Bryan became active in the Lumber Workers Industrial Union of the One Big Union, and later the Lumber Workers Industrial Union of Canada and the Communist Party.

[65]Daily Times-Journal, September 6, 1904.

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[65]Daily Times-Journal, September 6, 1904.

the future would show: the business-labour alliance could not withstand any threat by labour to the interests of the business community, which in 1904 came from independent labour politics. Following the election, however, all appeared as before, for civic leaders continued to mediate labour disputes and partake in labour activities. In 1905, the enthusiastic response to the Labour Day parade held in Port Arthur showed "that unionism had won a warm spot within the hearts of the citizens of Thunder Bay district."[66] Among those giving "stirring" addresses were the Conservative M.P.P., Dr. T.S.T. Smellie, the editor of the Liberal Chronicle, F. A. Allen, and the minister of Wesley Methodist Church, the Reverend J. C. Walker, all representative of various influences upon the labour movement. Not represented at any activity of organized labour to date was a growing section of the working class which had already experienced considerable labour strife, the unskilled immigrants from southern Europe.

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[66] Ibid., September 4, 1905.

III

IMMIGRANT LABOUR AND THE RAILWAY COMPANIES: SOCIAL TENSION AND CLASS STRIFE

In 1903, the year of organized labour's entry into the community life of Fort William, a strike by unorganized foreign-born labourers occurred at Port Arthur which resulted in the reading of the Riot Act.[1] The strikers were freight handlers in the employ of the Canadian Northern Railway, immigrants in the main from Italy, whose demand was steady employment. Little more is known of the event, except that it entailed the arrest of the "ringleader", the firing of those involved, and the "dispersal of a crowd of Italians". These events typified the recurring freight handlers strikes against the Canadian Northern and Canadian Pacific Railways before World War I. By examining the strikes, their background and their results, something can be discovered of the relationship between the immigrants and the railway companies who dominated the economy of the communities. Such an exam-

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[1] Daily Times-Journal, May 20 and May 21, 1903. No further documentation of this action has been discovered in federal, provincial or local sources. The customary calling out of the Militia after the reading of the Riot Act did not occur as no militia unit then existed in the area. According to Lt. Col. J.E.V. Murrell in "The Lake Superior Scottish Regiment", Port Arthur Centennial Souvenir Programme (1957) the Ninety-Sixth Lake Superior Regiment was organized in 1905.

ination will also show the response by both the trade union movement and the larger community to the non-English-speaking population, in particular to the Southern Europeans, whom the railways had introduced into their midst.

Most freight handlers came from the third social grouping in the community, the non-English-speaking population. While the majority were Italian, Greek or Slav, they sometimes included immigrants from Finland, and even from England and Scotland, their composition changing with circumstances.[2] As their work consisted in transferring goods from ships to the freight sheds, and thence to freight trains, they were also variously referred to as dockers, porters, truckers, or longshoremen. Other categories of longshoremen included grain trimmers, rail handlers and coal handlers. Grain trimming, involving the skill of keeping ships adjusted as they are being loaded, attracted Scots, Irish and English. The rail handlers were almost exclusively Finn, while the coal handlers were of the same nationalities as the freight handlers. The most numerous of the longshoremen were the freight handlers, their numbers ranging from several hundred to close to a thousand employed by each railway. Most affected by labour unrest leading often to violence, they

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[2]Information about the longshoremen and their origins has been derived from the numerous press reports concerning their labour disputes, cited below; from a conversation with Mr. Harry Coffey, President of Local 479, International Longshoremen's Association (grain trimmers); and from the Social Surveys of Port Arthur and of Fort William.

also proved the most difficult to organize permanently into trade unions.

The freight and coal handlers settled for the most part in what were known as the "coal docks sections" of Fort William and Port Arthur, each situated on low, swampy land, completely lacking in adequate drainage or sewage. Despite occasional protests by press and clergy about civic failure to provide minimal municipal services, and despite individual efforts of immigrants to overcome their unwholesome surroundings, the coal docks areas deteriorated with accelerating population growth and accompanying land speculation.[3] The result was congestion, with a disproportionate number of single males "crowding into shacks and unfit tenements" . . . or herded "like cattle into bunk houses."[4] During the 1906 typhoid epidemic, Reverend M. C. Flatt of Wesley Methodist

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[3]"Evolution of the Coal Docks Section", Daily Times-Journal, May 21, 1904 describes efforts by residents of Fort William's "Little Italy" to make its swamp lands "habitable". "Social Problem Which Demands Attention," Port Arthur Daily News, September 8, 1909, giving extracts from a sermon by Rev. Dr. S. C. Murray of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, refers to land speculation in the slum areas inhabited by the "foreign-born". Helen E. Carthy, "Port Arthur, Ontario: Its Industrial Development", Thunder Bay Historical Society Papers of 1924-25, 1925-26, p. 40 in describing the area known as "Intercity" . . . "peopled entirely by foreigners", claims "its low-lying acres are almost wholly under the control of an English company of real estate speculators." "Crime of Omission in Coal Dock Section", Daily Times-Journal, June 26, 1908 beseeched Fort William's City Council to ". . . stop this everlastingly getting taken in by promotors and do something for the people."

[4]"Social Problem . . .", Daily News, September 8, 1909.

Church castigated the Fort William town council for allowing a "Niche of Disgrace" with a "dozen or more men, women and children living in an unsanitary, poorly ventilated and badly lighted shack of one or two rooms."[5] On January 23, 1909 the Times-Journal found the coal docks section of Fort William to be a place "Where Humanity is Literally 'Bunched'" with some two hundred "Galicians" sharing five small dwellings. Similar findings were made in the Social Surveys of Port Arthur and Fort William compiled in 1913 for the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. What the Times-Journal called a "Crime of Omission" on June 26, 1908 was still being committed by the municipalities after World War I, according to its editorial of December 8, 1920 describing the coal docks sections of both Fort William and Port Arthur as not "fit for human habitation."

Besides the overcrowded, unsanitary living conditions were other sources of social tension.[6] There was the Black Hand operated in the local Italian community by extracting its due from the employed and protection money from those who found themselves on the wrong side of the law follow-

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[5] Ibid., March 19, 1906.

[6] Information about Fort William's coal docks section has been supplemented by taped interviews, dated November 1, 1971 with Mrs. Julia Marchiori, native of the area, and with her uncle Mr. Labate, b. 1877 Italy; d. 1973 Thunder Bay, a former C.P.R. freight handler; and by Mrs. Amy Lenton, who arranged conversations with participants and eye-witnesses of the area's early history.

ing labour and other disputes.[7] The tradition of owning weapons for self-protection added to the atmosphere of violence, and in turn led to frequent confrontations with the police. From this followed an attitude of distrust of the legal process amongst the immigrants whose ignorance of English left them often at the mercy of court interpreters or the courts themselves.[8] Then, despite the tendency of the various ethnic groups to live and work separately, there was the inevitable mixing of the various nationalities "who do not always live in peace and harmony."[9] These disturbed conditions help explain the clinging to old world institutions as a means of preserving the immigrants' sole source of dignity, their cultural identity. Resistance to "Canadianization", deplored by well-meaning Social Gospellers, gave a cohesiveness to the ethnic communities, with both positive and negative results in labour disputes.[10]

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[7]The Labate interview confirmed the Black Hand's methods in labour matters. "Black Hand Has Appeared . . .", Daily Times-Journal, January 16, 1909 indicates its tactics in the Italian business community.

[8]Daily Times-Journal, June 8, 1909.

[9]Ibid., May 21, 1904.

[10]Social Survey of Fort William, p. 8. The moderation with which Stewart described the "little contact with Canadian life" by the immigrant communities was untypical of Protestant opinion nationally. See J. W. Sparling in his Introduction to J. S. Woodsworth, Strangers Within Our Gates (Toronto: The Missionary Society of the Methodist Church [1909]), p. 4: "For there is a danger and it is national! Either we must educate and elevate the incoming multitudes or they will drag us and our children down to a lower level." (Italics in text.)

The origins of this social environment lay with the necessity to employ vast quantities of manual labour for the conduct of the railways' commercial operations. The nature of freight handling thus shaped the immigrant communities; in itself, it became, as well, the principal source of social tension and labour unrest among immigrant workers.

The specific sources of discontent concerned wages and hours.[11] For years, the hourly rate was 17½¢ an hour, the lowest in the area for unskilled manual labour. (As a comparison, the lowest rates in the agreements won in 1903 by the iron workers and the carpenters unions were 22½¢ and 25¢ an hour respectively for "rough" labour.) Hours were irregular, dependent on the arrival of ships. With "five hours work one day, no work the next, and eighteen hours the next", freight handlers would take as much overtime as they could physically stand to compensate for lost time and low pay. The hiring system itself contributed to uncertainty of employment. Every time a ship came in, more men than were needed fought each other "in an awful crush" to grab the check giving permission to work. Survival of the strongest was the rule. Then there was the bonus system, under which a small amount over the regular hourly wage was paid at the close of navigation to those who had remained on the job for the entire season. By requiring the men to be always available for work,

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[11]The Daily News, August 16, 1909 and the Winnipeg Tribune, August 14, 1909 give in-depth social reportage of working conditions at the freight sheds.

whether or not there was any, or sacrifice the bonus earned, the system ensured a stable labour force for the railways by limiting the freight handlers' freedom to seek other employment.

A cursory examination of the little evidence available concerning the earliest freight handlers strikes conveys an impression of their spontaneity. Further investigation, however, often indicates some direct or indirect association with the activities of organized labour. In 1899, when the C.P.R. machinists strike created "a great bond of sympathy"[12] amongst labouring men, the C.P.R. freight handlers threatened a strike in conjunction with one in Owen Sound. Causing nothing more than "alarm", the attempt failed because of lack of organization, the press suggested, by the "agitators".[13] Until 1906, however, most overt labour unrest centred at the new freight handling operations of the Canadian Northern Railway where the first known strike of freight handlers at the Lakehead occurred in July, 1902.

This event appears to have been associated with the organizing activities of the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees amongst employees of the Canadian Northern Railway. An industrial union, the U.B.R.E. gained wide-spread support from the lower echelons of railway workers in Western Canada, ending in long and bitter strikes against the Canadian

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[12] Daily Times-Journal, October 13, 1899.

[13] Ibid., October 24, 1899.

Northern Railway in 1902 and the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1903, both of which were defeated.[14] In June, 1902 U.B.R.E. organizer A. E. McDonald had arrived at the Lakehead from Winnipeg for the purpose of unionizing the freight shed and elevator employees of both railways.[15] A general strike of clerks, freight handlers, switchmen, carmen and others which began in Winnipeg on June 30 after the Canadian Northern had refused to negotiate with the union, spread east by July 5 to embrace the trackmen at Stanley, near Fort William.[16] Two days later, the Canadian Northern freight handlers struck for an increase over their daily rate of $1.50.[17] Through application of the traditional method used by railways to handle labour disputes, the strike was broken, ending the organizational activities of the U.B.R.E. at the Lakehead. First, the railway imported a gang of Italian strikebreakers; when the strikers prevented them from unloading a ship, ten special constables arrived who put the strikebreakers to work, thereby ending the strike. The availability of surplus Italian labour for strikebreaking purposes and the use of railway police to facilitate strikebreaking operations became

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[14]The Winnipeg Voice, 1902-3 carries detailed information on the U.B.R.E.'s activities during this period as does the Report of the Royal Commission on Industrial Disputes in the Province of British Columbia (Ottawa, 1903).

[15]Daily Times-Journal, June 24, 1902.

[16]Ibid., July 5, 1902.

[17]Ibid., July 7, 8, 1902.

common features of railway strikes. In a biting indictment of the Canadian Pacific Railway's use of Italian labour to defeat the U.B.R.E. in 1903, the Winnipeg Voice made this commentary:

> In his native country the Italian is proving himself the most advanced and determined enemy of capitalistic exploitation. As soon as he has acquired a knowledge of our language and a conception of the conditions of labor in Canada it will be no surprise to find him in the van of the labor movement nor will his fiery spirit brook the arrogance of capital with the patience of the lumbering Canadian.[18]

As will be seen, the fiery spirit of those immigrants brought to Canada to supply cheap labour and to break strikes did not lie dormant. In the words of a Scottish stone-mason of the period, the Italians "were quick to learn. They didn't stay under control very long."[19]

The 1903 strike of Canadian Northern freight handlers discussed at the beginning of this chapter occurred during Harry Bryan's tenure as A.F.L. organizer at the Lakehead. Although it has been impossible to determine his direct connection with the strike itself, the evidence indicates his interest in unionizing this class of worker. It is known that Bryan was concerned about the unskilled in general,

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[18]The Voice, March 20, 1903. This article, "A Means Taken by Corporations to Defeat Labor Unions" is headed by a cartoon depicting a locked cattle-car crammed with workers. The train which is being pushed from Montreal to Winnipeg and Vancouver by a figure representing the C.P.R. has emblazoned on it the sign, "Perishable Freight=RUSH ME".

[19]Thunder Bay Labour History Interview Project, Kenneth McKenzie (b. 1880) Interview.

through his organization of federal labour unions in both Fort William and Port Arthur, and about the foreign-born in particular, through his plea to the A.F.L. (which appears to have gone unheeded) for Italian and Hungarian speakers, "as the population is mostly of these nationalities."[20] The organization of the British-born grain trimmers into Local 479, International Longshoremen's Association on April 10, 1903[21] was undoubtedly Bryan's doing. It is likely the freight handlers he had in mind, though, when he asked Gompers to use his "influence with the Longshoremen's International to organize Depot Harbor, Midland and Owen Sound as these are the vital points affecting Port Arthur and Fort William."[22] Whether the 1903 strike was spontaneous or organized is not known. Its suppression by the reading of the Riot Act ended for three years any further effort to organize the Canadian Northern and the Canadian Pacific freight handlers.

Coincident with Bryan's withdrawal from the A.F.L., the condition of organized labour at the Lakehead became somewhat static, as it did on a continental basis in 1905.[23]

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[20] American Federationist, January, 1904.

[21] The date on the original charter still held by the local.

[22] Library of Congress, Gompers Letterbooks, Gompers to President of International Longshoremen's union, April 13, 1903.

[23] Daily Times-Journal and the Labour Gazette yield little in the way of labour news for 1905. Commons, II, 522 points to a general decline in union membership that year.

Beginning in 1906, an upsurge in economic development at both Fort William and Port Arthur witnessed the revitalization of the labour movement, with many new unions being organized especially in Port Arthur. Several strikes for wage increases and union recognition, particularly in the construction trades, occurred in the spring of 1906. At the same time, the endemic unrest at the Canadian Northern freight sheds, which had been aggravated by the firing of a foreman friendly to labour,[24] expressed itself in a petition campaign for higher wages.[25]

Initiated by British immigrants working at the C.N.R. sheds, the petition contained a strike threat unless its demands were met. These included 25¢ and 30¢ an hour for days and nights respectively over the current 17½¢ and 20¢. Although undoubtedly associated with wage-earners now engaging in trade union activities, in particular with recent British immigrants like themselves, the spokesmen of the freight handlers had no affiliation with any labour body. Their methods of seeking redress for their grievances were based on British tradition, and included the formation of a representative committee (four British, one Italian, and one Russian), the circulation of the petition amongst their peers, and its presentation to the local management. The overwhelming response from the freight handlers (not one asked had

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[24] Daily Times-Journal and Daily News, April 30, 1906.

[25] Daily News, May 5, 1906.

refused to sign) brought a swift reaction from the company. As became the practice in labour disputes involving freight handlers, leading railway officials arrived from Winnipeg, in this case Superintendent Cameron and a Mr. A. E. Macdonald, described as "the chief of the secret service department of the railway."[26] Macdonald's threat to use the railways' means of responding to the workers' grievances, specifically to introduce the sixty-five strikebreakers accompanying him, and one thousand more if necessary, convinced the freight handlers to continue working at the old rate.[27] Although the company did make one important concession concerning the bonus of 2½¢ an hour, which now could be collected on ten days' notice instead of at the close of navigation, it had effectively blocked the efforts of the freight handlers to obtain wage increases by the peaceful means of petitioning.

On September 29, 1906 a strike began at the Canadian Pacific freight sheds in Fort William without prior notice to the company.[28] The demands of the C.P.R. men, who till then had not participated in earlier industrial disputes, included

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[26]There is a fascinating possibility that the similarity of Macdonald's name to that of the U.B.R.E. organizer who came to the Lakehead in 1902 is not a mere coincidence. The Daily Times-Journal June 24, 1902 spelt the organizer's name as McDonald while the Daily News October 1 and 2, 1906 gave the same spelling for the secret service agent's name. See pp. 65 and 74.

[27]Ibid., May 8, 1906.

[28]Daily News and Daily Times-Journal, October 1, 1906.

the same wage scale presented in the petition to the C.N.R. the previous May as well as complete abolition of the bonus. Conveying an impression of spontaneity, their method of striking without warning contrasts with the legalistic approach used by the petitioners of the Canadian Northern Railway. Without the generations of industrialization behind them which had "made" the British working class, the Italians who started the strike, and the Greeks and Hungarians who joined them were following the pattern of workers with little or no experience with legal labour organizations. The initial reaction of Greek workers to "abuses and misfortunes" in their homeland typified the response by immigrants from Southern Europe to similar conditions in Canada, as described as follows:

> It was neither class tradition nor organization, but simply the natural tendency of the Greek worker to oppose all kinds of oppression, coupled with the growing realization now of his importance in the industrial revolution, that sought expression in action: his first impulse to strike without organized leadership was not only a manifestion of national character but also a demonstration of strength.[29]

Such was the character exhibited by the C.P.R. freight handlers in 1906, and again in 1909, when the Greeks especially would be singled out for acting on impulse. The 1906 strike not only lacked "organized leadership", but took place in violation of the terms of employment (17½¢ and 20¢

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[29]Christos Jecchinis, Trade Unionism in Greece Chicago: [Labor Education Division, Roosevelt University], p. 18.

an hour, plus the 2½¢ bonus) agreed to at the beginning of the season. Two factors seem to have precipitated it: the granting of wage increases to the C.P.R. machinists, elevator men and gang men on construction,[30] and rumours that both railways intended doing away with Italian labour.[31] But the conduct of the strike itself reflects what must have been an underlying sense of anger and frustration amongst the freight handlers which their working and social conditions had generated. Given the primitive state of the railway's industrial relations policies, the outcome of that frustration is not surprising.

In Port Arthur, the Canadian Northern freight handlers struck in sympathy with the C.P.R. men, as did labourers on sewer projects in Fort William. In the two towns, one thousand men were on strike, all foreigners with the exception of the English-speaking group at Port Arthur.[32] Attempting to fill the leadership void, the British formed a strike committee representative of the Canadian Northern freight handlers with two Italians and three of their own group, then organized joint meetings with the Canadian Pacific strikers where they admonished against violence.[33] Their advice was disregarded.

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[30]Daily Times-Journal, October 1, 1906.

[31]Daily News, October 2, 1906.

[32]Daily Times-Journal, October 2, 1906.

[33]Daily News, October 1 and October 2, 1906.

"Strike Breakers Precipitate Violence" is how the Times-Journal headline on October 2 described the origin of the gun-battle between C.P.R. strikers and company police in which over one hundred and fifty shots were fired. The scene was the intersection leading to the freight sheds, then thronging with desperate and excited freight handlers, into which a train from Winnipeg brought strikebreakers, accompanied by C.P.R. officials and company police. As previously noted, it was customary for the immigrants to keep weapons for their self-defence. The strikers immediately ran for their guns, then hidden behind the counter in a nearby store;[34] and when General Manager G. Bury attempted to put the men brought with him to work, the strikers opened fire. Following the ensuing battle in which one constable and three strikers were wounded, an armed truce prevailed. Armed strikers patrolled the streets of the coal docks section, watching for strikebreakers and preventing any inhabitants going to work elsewhere in the town, while armed engine crews worked inside the railway yards defended by company and civic police and a few armed volunteers.

The inaction of Fort William's civic officials in the face of the strikers' open defiance of the railway may perhaps be understood by recalling the town's general pro-

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[34]The Labate Interview is the source for this detail.

labour sentiment.[35] Criticizing the failure of the town to maintain the peace, the railway warned that it would "take it into its own hands to protect its interests and the lives of its employees."[36] But Mayor E. S. Rutledge decided against calling for more volunteer policemen as he felt that not enough men would be willing to "appear as officers against men who are asking an increase in pay." His refusal to read the Riot Act and to call out the Militia may also be related to this assessment of local opinion. Instead, the Mayor and Councillor E. A. Morton used their good offices to mediate a settlement with the company.[38] Influenced by Bosco Dominico, a young translator and spokesman for the freight handlers, the strikers accepted the proposed compromise, under which the bonus was abolished and incorporated into a new rate of 22½¢ and 25¢ an hour, making an overall increase of 2½¢ an hour. Despite the shooting melee, it was possible for C.P.R. officials to express "their pleasure in the manner in which the strike was conducted," and for the Times-Journal to comment that there never had been any apprehension of a riot.

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[35]See E. S. Rutledge, "Lustrous Line of Big Men . . .", Times-Journal, February 23, 1937, p. 6 for discussion of general relationship between C.P.R. and Fort William in the period under discussion. The strike is not mentioned in the article.

[36]Daily News, October 2, 1906.

[37]Daily Times-Journal, October 2, 1906.

[38]Ibid., October 3, 1906.

Due in part to the non-violent policy of the strike committee, and in part to the logistics at the Canadian Northern freight sheds, the strike had run a different course in Port Arthur where a train from Winnipeg had also arrived carrying strikebreakers.[39] Here, the Italian strikers were able to meet the incoming labourers, who were also Italian. Hearing for the first time of the strike's existence, the newcomers decided not to work, but marched up town to the cheers of the freight handlers into the care of the Italian community. Another set-back for the C.N.R. was the lack of any noticeable effect among the strikers of secret service agent McDonald's argument that by returning to work for the C.P.R.'s rival, they would aid the cause of the Fort William men. Whether derived from class or ethnic loyalties, these examples of solidarity contributed to the Canadian Northern's failure to break the strike. The serious disruption to shipping near the close of navigation when experienced men were scarce[40] also facilitated the compromise settlement whose terms were the same as those already accepted by the C.P.R. and its freight handlers.[41]

In Port Arthur as in Fort William, the freight handlers had been aided by conciliatory intervention by civic officials, such as Mayor George Clavet's order to town

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[39] Daily News, October 1 and 2, 1906.

[40] Labour Gazette, VII, 443.

[41] Daily News, October 2, 1906.

employees not to act as strikebreakers by working in the sheds after hours.[42] Yet antagonisms had been aroused amongst the public, not by the strike itself, but by "mob" actions associated with it. The existence of large numbers of discontented labourers in its midst had evoked a sense of disquietude in the Anglo-Saxon community which was based more on the strikers being foreign than on their being proletarian. These feelings had been expressed in a Daily News editorial even prior to the shooting episode in Fort William. The mobbing of two C.P.R. policemen in Fort William's coal docks section by singing and marching strikers, described by the News as a "regular reign of terror", and a mild skirmish involving Canadian Northern strikers and a C.P.R. policeman in Port Arthur had provoked its editor to proclaim on October 1:

> . . . for a community of British citizens to have to submit to the obloquy of insult and armed defiance from a disorganized horde of ignorant and low-down swashbucklers and peanut vendors is making a demand upon national pride which has no excuse.[43]

The stand of the News was somewhat softened by its repetition of a commentary from the Winnipeg Tribune that Italian labourers "do the hard work no one else will perform."[44] But the question was in the open. Could Italians, Greeks, and Hungarians adjust to the "British way of life", or should the "brawny

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[42] Ibid., October 4, 1906.

[43] Ibid., October 1, 1906.

[44] Ibid., October 6, 1906.

English-speaking youth and men" now emigrating to Canada be induced to take their place?[45] Even foreigners like the "Finns, Swedes, Scandinavians and others of like sturdy races, all of whom are regarded as permanent and order-loving settlers," it was argued (in a prominently displayed story featuring the views of an anonymous "old-timer"), would be preferable to Italians and Southern Europeans as citizens and as railway employees.

At the beginning of the 1907 shipping season, the C.P.R. dealt decisively with the nationality problem by excluding all Greeks and Italians from its freight sheds. Railway officials claimed that this action was taken not because of their participation in the 1906 strike but because of their insolent attitude following it.[46] The seven hundred or so new employees were mainly Polish, Hungarian, English and Scot. Both railways reneged on the wage and bonus agreements made on the previous October, by paying only 19¢ and 21½¢ an hour, and by re-introducing the bonus, now 1¢ an hour, making the total pay the same as before the October strike.[47]

At the Canadian Northern sheds, the British workers responded to this quashing of the previous year's achievements by organizing their fellow workers into an A.F.L. union,

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[45] Ibid., October 2, 1906.

[46] Daily Times-Journal, April 29, 1907.

[47] Ibid., May 4, 1907.

Local No. 5, International Freight Handlers and Warehousemen's Union.[48] Its President, who had headed the freight handlers' petition campaign in 1906, was Lauchlan Torrie, a twenty-year-old Scottish immigrant with a good education, but no prior trade union experience.[49] Because of conditions at the sheds which, "if you've read The Jungle, you'll know what it was like,"[50] and at their lodgings where they were "ill clothed, ill fed, and lived not unlike cattle,"[51] the British believed themselves to be "victims who had been enticed into this country under false representations".[52] The following report of an address by one of their number to C.P.R. freight handlers typified this attitude:

> He was always led to expect, he said, that men were all free wherever the Union Jack flew, but he did not think this was the case with the men employed by the C.P.R.[53]

Demanding "fair wages" and their "legal rights", the British then sought redress through unionization.[54] The freight handlers responded to organization, but their overwhelming enthusiasm for the union's programme (25¢ and 30¢ an hour and

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[48]Ibid., June 10, 1907; Daily News, June 10, 1907.

[49]Information about Torrie has been obtained in conversations with his brothers, Arthur (b. 1893) and Donald (b. 1900). The Torrie family emigrated to Port Arthur in 1904.

[50]Donald Torrie, recalling his brother's observations.

[51]Daily News, June 8, 1907.

[52]Ibid., June 10, 1907.

[53]Daily Times-Journal, June 12, 1907.

[54]Daily News, June 8, 1907.

double time for Sunday) interrupted Torrie's plan to commence negotiations with the company once the organizing had been completed. Without union sanction, but "by their own free and sensible will", the men decided on June 8 to refuse to unload a ship arriving the following day, a Sunday, at the regular rate.[55] The railway responded by firing Torrie. All four hundred and fifty freight handlers then struck, demanding the union wage scale and the re-instatement of their president.[56] The new executive thus found itself in charge of a strike for which it was ill-prepared, organizationally or financially.

Moreover, the Industrial Disputes Investigation (or Lemieux) Act had recently been passed making it illegal for railway employees to strike without first submitting their case to a board of investigation and conciliation. Uncertain as to the legalities of the situation, Torrie urged the men to return to work, but they refused to do so.[57] Accordingly, the executive assumed leadership of the strike, but without acting "as a union", cautioning the men not to break the law but "to be gentlemen and to make every act one that would reflect credit on themselves."[58]

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[55] Ibid., June 10, 1907.

[56] Ibid., June 8, 1907.

[57] Ibid., June 18, 1907.

[58] Daily Times-Journal, June 11, 1907.

As a result of meetings held between the Canadian Northern strikers and the new British employees at the Canadian Pacific sheds, the C.P.R. freight handlers joined the strike on June 10.[59] But united action by an unseasoned group of seven hundred workers from different nationalities proved an impossible achievement for the British union leaders. As many of the freight handlers were "foreigners", in Torrie's words, "they did not properly know what the trouble was and they quit work and went back several times before the strike was settled."[60] While the strikers vacillated, the C.P.R. replaced them with a readily available labour force and broke the strike.[61] The strikebreakers were none other than those Italians and Greeks who had initiated the 1906 strike and whom the C.P.R. had refused to re-hire just a few weeks earlier. Attempts to convince the Italians and Greeks to join the strike failed. "The Englishmen," they pointed out, "had no scruples about going to work when they were shut out, and they certainly do not intend to turn around and help them when they are shut out."

In Port Arthur, the Canadian Northern defeated the strike in the usual way by importing foreign labourers without informing them of the strike.[62] This time, the newcomers

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[59] Ibid., June 10, 1907.

[60] Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Department of Labour Records, RG 27, File 2927, Torrie to the Department, June 23, 1907.

[61] Daily Times-Journal, June 12, 1907.

[62] Daily News, June 12, 1907.

were rushed directly to the sheds by company police to prevent contact with the strikers. Although the phenomenom of penniless labourers refusing to act as strikebreakers repeated itself when over one hundred quit work as "cheer after cheer [was] sent up from the striking porters",[63] enough additional men from Winnipeg and increasing numbers of demoralized and destitute freight handlers soon manned the sheds to convince the union to call off the strike.[64]

The defeat of the union followed the defeat of the strike. When the Canadian Northern Railway disciplined the union leaders and many of its members by refusing to re-hire them, it destroyed the base of union support by virtually excluding the British group from the freight sheds. Five years of sporadic strikes and attempts to unionize the freight handlers had failed to overcome the problems inherent in organizing the diffuse immigrant labour force in the employ of the railways.

The division of the freight handlers by language and tradition was only one obstacle to their organization; another

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[63]PAC, RG 27, File 2927. This quotation is taken from the clipping, "Men Are Working . . .", Port Arthur Chronicle, undated, which gives estimate that 160 out of 250 strikebreakers refused to work. The Chronicle began publication in 1903. Its complete file was destroyed when the Daily News bought it out in 1916. See A History of Fort William and Port Arthur Newspapers, p. 79.

[64]Daily News, June 15, 1907.

was their mobility occasioned by the seasonal nature of their employment. Yet these strikes show the willingness of the foreign-born to join in union-led actions, as well as their prediliction for leaderless "demonstrations of strength". Neither approach to the conduct of labour disputes was capable of being sustained on a permanent basis.

Another factor in the failure to organize the freight handlers lay within the state of the trade union movement. Both the American Federation of Labor and the Trades and Labour Congress have been accused of indifference to unskilled, foreign-born labour.[65] Certainly their animosity to the U.B.R.E. had not helped the latter maintain and extend its considerable influence with this class of worker in Western Canada.[66] Neither did the breakdown of labour into crafts perpetuated by both the A.F.L. and the independent brotherhoods benefit the freight handlers. During strikes, the trains continued to operate with union labour; in fact, they carried strikebreakers.

The activities of Bryan and later the Freight Handlers Union nevertheless show the willingness of the A.F.L. Federation to include this group in its ranks. Besides the geographical isolation of the Lakehead, lack of outside support for the freight handlers can be attributed to a number of factors:

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[65]See, for example, Jamieson, Times of Trouble, p. 68.

[66]See the Labour Gazette, IV, 322 for views of John Flett, President of Trades and Labour Congress, and organizer for the American Federation of Labor in this regard.

A.F.L. preference for the skilled and semi-skilled; the magnitude of organizing this class on a continental basis; and the mounting opposition from shipping and railway companies to the unionization of unskilled workers and to the claims of their organized employees.[67]

It is also clear that the Canadian labour movement was hostile to the importation of unskilled labour. A reading of the Proceedings of the Trades and Labor Congress conventions shows immigration, especially bonussed immigration, to have been an on-going concern in this period. The same attitude frequently appeared in the labour columns of the local press:

> That the money spent on immigration schemes by that executive committee of the Canadian employers, the Dominion government, has been wisely and prudently expended is attested by the beneficient results the wholesale flooding of the Canadian labor market has had upon the price of labor-power. To such good purpose has this policy been pursued that whereas the energies of husky working plugs which formerly brought from $2.25 to $3 a day and none too plentiful at that, can now be obtained in almost unlimited quantities for $2 and as low as $1.50.[68]

At the Lakehead, violations of the Alien Labour Act occupied the constant attention of the trade unions. In 1906, the Central Labor Union heard Port Arthur councillor

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[67]See Jamieson, pp. 75-85, and Commons, II, 526 for a discussion of these problems.

[68]Daily Times-Journal, April 18, 1908. The opinions are those of "Proletary" writing in the weekly column, "In the World of Labor".

Robert Ferguson condemn the Act as "a farce in its enforcement."[69] The injunction against the Iron Workers Union in 1906 from picketing "men from the United States to compete with local men who are property owners and natives in the town" also provoked hostility against the Act.[70] The large-scale inflow of European immigrants by way of Duluth caused community-wide concern. Throughout this period, American immigration authorities would round up indigent Europeans by the shipload and literally dump them at Port Arthur.[71] Under these circumstances, unions came to regard themselves as defensive organizations against the influx of foreign labour. In urging workers to "build up a great and solid organization, one that will command the respect of the employers," the Daily News labour columnist of April 20, 1907 gave this advice: "They should look over the fence to see how many immigrants and unemployed are waiting outside the gate." When the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union began its organizing drive, for example, it addressed itself to "all cooks, or waitresses wishing to protect themselves against foreign labor, etc."[72] Undergoing many strikes itself, organized labour undertook to strengthen itself, not

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[69]Daily Times-Journal, July 23, 1906.

[70]Ibid., July 18, 1906.

[71]Daily News, May 9, 1908: See its editorial for the same date which notes the disadvantage to labour and business alike caused by the influx of penniless aliens.

[72]Ibid., October 1, 1908.

only against the employer, but against its competitors "waiting outside the gate."

But the major obstacle to the organization of the freight handlers came from the railways. Through their ability to hire and fire, the railways had the power to play one nationality off against the other and to rid themselves of agitators. With their own private police forces and the facilities to transport large bodies of strike-breakers from one part of the country to another, they wielded unlimited power against their employees. Compared to the felicitous (though short-lived) gains following the violence of 1906, the defeats of 1907 showed the inefficacy of freight handlers behaving like "gentlemen" when combatting the railways.

Within the community, violence in 1906 had created sentiment in favour of replacing the foreigners at the freight sheds with British citizens. But in 1907, the British had proved themselves less desirable than the Greeks and Italians, to the railways at any rate. Community reaction to this unexpected twist had not been determined. In taking care not to alienate the citizens during the strike, the union had permitted the unloading of freight consigned to local merchants,[73] and had conducted the strike in "an orderly manner."[74]

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[73] Ibid., June 10, 1907.

[74] Ibid., June 18, 1907.

In Port Arthur, civic officials involved themselves only to the extent of disputing with the Canadian Northern whose responsibility it was to provide for the destitute Winnipeg men who had refused to be strikebreakers.[75] Mayor Clavet had argued that since the railway had imported the men under false pretences, it should provide for them; the railway denied any obligation, however, on the ground that although the men had not been told of the strike, they had not asked if there was one. In the view of the Daily News of June 12, community indifference would vanish "if the labor market is to be glutted, partly at public expense."

The early years of the twentieth century had witnessed the organization of unions among the English-speaking working class. Immigrant workers were also responding to their role in the industrial process, and in turn, stirring reactions among the middle and working classes. In 1906, violence had aroused latent anti-foreign attitudes in the community; civic officials, nevertheless, successfully restored industrial peace through conciliation. In 1907, the railways defeated the constitutional methods of British trade unionists; in so doing, they re-created the conditions which had produced violence. Before it recurred, new voices would be heard posing solutions to the social disorders and industrial strife made manifest by the freight handlers strikes.

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[75] Ibid., June 12, 1907.

IV

SOCIALISM, THE SOCIAL GOSPEL AND THE ELECTION CAMPAIGNS OF 1908

After observing over one thousand men from Fort William and Port Arthur march in the 1906 Labour Day parade, the Daily News compared labour to "the sleeping giant, the restless twitching of whose powerful but still dormant shoulders occasionally threatens to disarrange the best laid plans of capitalist and politician."[1] Unions and strikes, the flood of immigration and the creation of slums, and above all else, industrial violence had created a consciousness of labour's importance in the community and of the underlying danger of class conflict. In response to the social relations and conditions making for unrest and violence, there had arisen in the industrial world many schools of thought on ways to hurry, harness or hamper the awakening of labour.

Many social theories which came out of conditions in Europe, Britain and North America found a haven at the Lakehead. The prevailing ideas surrounding the labour movement at first had been those associated with independent labour politics, the conciliation of class differences, and anti-

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[1] Daily News, September 4, 1906.

monopoly populism. Two other social movements introduced into the community early in the century became more influential only with the passing of time. The social gospel at first was more a pervasive idea than an organized reality, while socialism became known only through individuals like Bryan and Jordan or the radical Finns. By 1908, both these responses to industrial strife had become closely associated with organized labour, with rather interesting, and at times unexpected, effects on working class relationships.

Weekly labour columns appearing from time to time in the press reflected not only the co-operation between classes, but also the political and social ideas current in the labour movement. The populist sentiment of the early 1900's, for example, was expressed in the Daily News "Labor" column of November 16, 1907:

> Labor is radical but not in the sense inferred by its critics. It is radical in its belief in the ideas of free men, free government, and free institutions. It is radical in its belief that a share in the duties of citizens and a participation in the conduct of government are essentially part of a day's work.

This concept of radicalism and of labour's role in civic life was held by the Fort William Trades and Labor Council which was founded in 1907 to succeed the old Central Labor Union.[2] In the field of labour relations, it adopted the Congress platform calling for "the voluntary arbitration

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[2]Daily Times-Journal, May 30, 1907. Alf Inman, the temporary president of the new Council had been president of the C.L.U.

of all labor disputes" and considered among its primary functions the expediting of such arbitration. Its six-point platform presented for the 1908 municipal elections reflected the Council's priorities.[3] "No Bonusing of any kind" referred to municipal tax concessions granted to attract industry. "Public ownership of all public utilities under efficient management" showed labour's perennial support for public ownership as well as its frequent criticism of the management of local municipally-owned enterprises.

That the Fort William Trades and Labor Council rarely ventured beyond advocacy of measures promoting either honest government or labour's immediate interests such as the fair wage clause or the union label may explain the lapse into a "state of desuetude" of many Fort William locals in 1908. This complaint appeared in the Times-Journal weekly column "In the World of Labor" when it first appeared on March 14, 1908. Its author "Proletary" expressed a philosophy more radical than that of the Daily News "Labor" columnist or of the Fort William Trades and Labor Council. The column exhorted workers to "Speed the Day" whereby "Labor may retain possession of the wealth it alone creates;"[4] it denounced British imperialism;[5] and it included articles by Canadian socialists like Will R. Shier which described the social

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[3] Ibid., December 12, 1907.

[4] Ibid., March 28, 1908.

[5] Ibid., April 11, 1908.

order of the period as "a blight on the face of the earth."[6] Such views may be the explanation for the column's brief life, for after two months the Times-Journal confined its regular labour coverage to reports of Trades and Labor Council meetings, whose business rarely offended anyone.

Although ideas like Proletary's had been introduced to the area by individuals like Bryan, they did not begin to spread until after 1906 with the organization of the first English-speaking branch of the Socialist Party of Canada.[7] S.P.C. policy revolved arounds its doctrine of the class struggle set forth in its platform appearing in every issue of the Western Clarion:

> The irrepressive conflict of interests between the capitalist and the worker is rapidly culminating in a struggle for possession of the power of government--the capitalist to hold, the worker to secure it by political action. This is the class struggle.

The essence of S.P.C. policy was the denial of a community of interests between labour and capital. The party held no brief for either trade unionism or reformism, for each was considered a device to reform capitalism not to overthrow it. This uncompromising policy notwithstanding, in various parts of the country, the S.P.C. exercised at times considerable influence in labour circles and in ethnic societies.

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[6]Ibid., May 2, 1908.

[7]Daily News, April 30, 1906.

The affiliation of the Port Arthur Finnish socialists with the S.P.C. in 1907 provided a strong base for socialist activity at the Lakehead.[8] The local Finnish socialists developed strong links with their American counterparts through the press and through the movement of workers and leaders across Lake Superior, as well as with Finnish socialists elsewhere in Canada. Through these connections and their affiliation with the S.P.C., they thus became deeply involved in the ongoing ideological debates of Canadian and American socialist movements. Port Arthur itself became a centre for socialist propaganda amongst North American Finns through the publication there of Työkansa (Working People), first as a weekly in 1907, and later as a daily. From its publishing house, there also emanated Väkäleuka, a satirical paper and a vast outpouring of other socialist literature in the Finnish language.[9] The Finnish labour hall became a centre for political, cultural, athletic and literary activity, through which large numbers of Finnish and Scandinavian workers first became acquainted with

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[8]See p. 13 for sources on local Finnish history. The Western Clarion November 30, 1907 notes the chartering of the Finnish local at Port Arthur with 160 dues paying members.

[9]The Finnish Collection at the Lakehead University includes some pamphlets printed by the Finnish Publishing Company besides manuscript material in the form of minute books from early local Finnish societies. Also included is a microfilm of some issues of Finnish socialist newspapers made available by the University of Helsinki where they were located by Dr. Donald Wilson.

socialism. It also became the centre for activities of the English-speaking socialists.[10]

By the end of 1907, the Finnish socialists considered themselves well enough established to put into practice the S.P.C. policy of conducting the class struggle through political action. They, therefore, decided to contest every post in the Port Arthur municipal elections.[11] In contrasting the Finns favourably with English-speaking "wage-slaves", the Western Clarion praised the Finnish immigrants for using their new-found political rights to defend "themselves and their class against the vampire class which sucks their blood."[12] The low vote for the Finnish socialists, however, probably led to their future lack of enthusiasm for political action, which in turn led to their later withdrawal from the S.P.C.[13]

In Port Arthur, the English-speaking community became sufficiently alarmed at the possibility of socialists on city council that it considered presenting a "ticket" to keep the Finns out of office.[14] Within the non-socialist

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[10]Western Clarion, October 5, 1908.

[11]Daily News, December 20, 1907. The first nominee for mayor, Alex Langila, was later replaced by M. Ulvila.

[12]"The Right Sort of Stuff", January 4, 1908.

[13]Daily News, January 7, 1908. The results for mayor: J. J. Carrick, 824; G. Hourigan, 587; M. Ulvila, 43.

[14]Ibid., December 31, 1907.

Finnish community, there also developed apprehensions about the Finnish socialists. In a front-page letter headed "Is Port Arthur Threatened with Fire Brand Socialism?" a John Paananen alleged that the local socialists "despise all law and order, make fun of religion, trample down decency and oppress otherwise thinking laborers who love decency and freedom."[15] The calmness of the Daily News reply that the "extremity in the teaching of the Finnish socialists will more than anything else work their undoing,"[16] suggests that, except for its incursions into local politics, Finnish radicalism caused more discomfiture at first to non-socialist Finns than to the English-speaking middle class. When English-speaking socialists preached the doctrine of the class struggle, however, the response was somewhat different. Even then, the Daily News found its manifestations on Labour Day, 1906 were more annoying than alarming. "The attempts of a few agitators, some pessimists and the ultra-socialists to do radical things unintelligently and unthinkingly" (it reported on September 4) "did not succeed."

As noted earlier, 1906 was the year an English-speaking branch of the Socialist Party of Canada had been organized at Port Arthur. Some fifty attended the meeting called by S.P.C. organizer Leo. T. English for the "propagation of working

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[15] Ibid., August 22, 1908.

[16] Ibid., August 24, 1908.

class politics" and heard another speaker, John McKiernan tell them that "their position under the present wage system was even less than that of chattel slaves."[17] Interest in the new movement later was shown in the large public meeting sponsored by the Central Labor Union for the expression of views on "the welfare and betterment of the conditions of the working man in general.[18] Most of those present advocated political action as the means to redress such "evils befalling the wage-earner," as infractions of the Alien Labour Act. But greatest attention, the press reported, centred on the guest speaker, Leo T. English who advised that the greatest problem facing "the laboring classes in general" was the wage system. His answer was education through which workers would "grasp the situation and collect the tools of production."

There are other signs that socialism was making an impression in the community, both favourable and unfavourable. The Appeal to Reason, the independent socialist weekly from Kansas, seems to have had a considerable local readership. For a young Swedish Social Democrat who arrived in Port Arthur in 1907, the Appeal became his first contact

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[17] Ibid., April 28 and 30, 1906. Although a large number were said to have signed its charter, this first local may have lapsed; the Western Clarion, September 26, 1908 reports that a charter for the Port Arthur English-speaking local was issued.

[18] Daily Times-Journal, July 23, 1906.

with North American English-language socialist press when a bundle of the paper was left at his workplace.[19] "I took a copy just in time," he later recalled, "for a moment later the foreman caught sight of the bundle and resolutely tore the papers into pieces." The Daily News found both the Appeal and its influence quite objectionable:

> The revolutionary "Appeal" is now being distributed wholesale throughout Canada, a large number coming to Port Arthur as each issue comes out. You can see them frequently kicked upon the floor of the Port Arthur post office, rejected by the men to whom they were addressed, no doubt, as sample copies.

Some time early in 1908, the Appeal was banned temporarily from the Canadian mails,[20] as was the Finnish satirical paper, Vääkäleuka.[21] Among those instrumental in having the Appeal's mailing privileges restored had been F. B. Allen, editor of the Liberal Port Arthur Chronicle, who took a lively interest in labour and social questions. As a result of Allen's actions, the Daily News and its backer, J. J. Carrick, the Conservative mayor of Port Arthur, would often brandish Allen of the Chronicle for being as "socialistic" or as "anarchistic" as the Appeal. When some money by-

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[19]Henry Bergston, Skandinaver pa vansterflygeln i USA (Stockholm, Kooporativa Forbundets Bokforlaget, 1955), 12-16. The early sections of this memoir by an American Scandinavian radical told of his experiences in and around Port Arthur from 1907 to 1909. Mr. Michael Brooks of the Minnesota Historical Society kindly sent the writer his "rough" translation of the relevant chapters.

[20]Daily News, April 24, 1908.

[21]"A Bit of History", Western Clarion, August 21, 1909.

laws failed to carry, for example, the Mayor levelled these charges at the Chronicle:

> There is a newspaper in this town which is doing more to keep the place back than anything else . . . So long as a man of the socialistic and anarchistic principles of the man who runs that paper is allowed to wield any influence this town will not get along . . . Did you ever hear of a paper called Appeal to Reason? Well, that is run on the same kind of principles.[22]

At the same time socialist ideas were being spread, so too were ideas associated with the social gospel. On the occasion of Labour Day, 1907 an example of social gospel philosophy was expressed by Reverend J. D. Walker of Port Arthur's Trinity Methodist Church.[23] Without "mincing words", as he put it, Walker denounced the "greed and desire for dividends" of great corporations like the C.P.R. But although he argued that the aim of capital was "to crush the life out of unions" and that unions had made possible "everything the worker enjoys today as a privilege," he nevertheless condemned the insistence of unions for a closed shop as "unCanadian, unChristian and incompatible with the genius of a free democracy." Walker's solution to the threat to society posed by class conflict lay in the practice of the "Golden Rule" or the compulsory arbitration of labour disputes by both capital and labour.

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[22]Daily News, October 20, 1908.

[23]Ibid., September 7, 1907. The text of the sermon, "The Labor Problem" is given in full.

Largely through the inspiration of two men, the centre for social gospel activity in this period, however, was St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Port Arthur. These were the Reverend Doctor S. C. Murray, its minister from 1893 to 1911, who found the social conditions associated with a lake port "a challenge for the minister, and moral reformer,"[24] and Frederick Urry whom Dr. Murray described as follows:

> Mr. Urry was a fine type of Christian--one of the most literary men in the Congregation--and a well advanced Socialist. He was an outstanding leader in the labor movement.[25]

Through the Brotherhood movement, St. Paul's sought to arouse the social conscience of the laity around the concept of "My Brother's Keeper" and to stimulate public awareness of social problems in the community. Its activities included public debates on such issues as socialism and the labour movement,[26] and weekly Brotherhood columns edited by Urry in the two Port Arthur papers.[27] In June, 1908 St. Paul's Brotherhood initiated the organization of a Moral and Social Reform League of Port Arthur with Reverend Dr. Murray

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[24]MS. Memoir of Dr. S. C. Murray, p. 134. Original in possession of Mrs. M. W. Malyon of Calgary, Dr. Murray's daughter. The writer would like to thank Mrs. Robert Pattison for bringing this memoir to her attention, and Mrs. Malyon for her permission to quote from it.

[25]Ibid., pp. 145-6.

[26]See, for example, "Socialism Lost in Smart Debate", Daily News, November 6, 1908.

[27]Daily News, July 7, 1908.

as its president and Frederick Urry as secretary-treasurer.[28] That July, the Presbyterian Church of Canada appointed Urry to represent Canadian labour on its Board of Moral and Social Reform.[29] As explained by the Reverend J. G. Shearer who headed the Board, its purpose was to serve "the cause of Labor's struggle for justice in improved conditions, shorter hours and more adequate support."[30] Urry had been chosen, he said, "so that the church might have the advantage of the advice and inspiration of a recognized leader in the Labor movement." Another member of the Board was William Lyon Mackenzie King.

Urry was one of the most remarkable men of the period, devoting his wide-ranging talents to the labour movement, the church, and to municipal affairs. An architect by profession, he had come to Port Arthur in 1906 from Birmingham, England where he had been a member of the Independent Labor Party and where his wife had engaged in agitations to reform the working conditions of shop-girls.[31] In Britain, he had

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[28] Ibid., June 11, 1908.

[29] Ibid., July 18, 1908.

[30] Western Clarion, August 15, 1908. In reply to Shearer's letter explaining "the importance to the cause of Labor of having the sympathy and support . . . of the great Christian forces of Canada" and his own work in the Lord's Day Alliance, the editor expressed the wish that the Lord's Day Alliance would be so successful "that there will be nothing doing on the Lord's Day, even for Parsons."

[31] Urry's daughter, Mrs. Enid Cowan of Montreal has kindly supplied the writer with background information about her father through correspondence and a taped interview.

probably been a Unitarian, but in Port Arthur he joined St. Paul's because of Dr. Murray's sympathy with his Fabian socialist views. Although a professional man, he also joined the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners from which he set out to enliven the labour movement which he found in a lamentable state. Besides his trade union and church activity, he soon became the regular labour columnist for the Port Arthur Chronicle, and by 1909 had become amongst other things a member of the Port Arthur School Board, and local correspondent for the Labour Gazette.

In 1907, Urry attended the Trades and Labor Congress Convention as a delegate from the Carpenters Union.[32] Here, along with the majority, he revealed his disagreement with the Socialist Party of Canada's concept of working class politics by voting against a resolution presented by the vice-president of the Congress from British Columbia, R. P. Pettipiece.[33] Calling for "absolute political action on the part of the working class, with the collective ownership of the means of life as its ultimate aim," Pettipiece intended to overturn Congress policy established in 1906 favouring "the election of straight Labor Party" candidates.[34] Ironically, Urry would later find himself caught in the middle

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[32]Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, Proceedings, 1907, p. 6.

[33]Ibid., pp. 77-8.

[34]Western Clarion, November 3, 1906.

between the socialist and labour approaches to politics revealed in this debate on the Pettipiece resolution.

On April 9, 1908 the Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council was founded with Urry as its pro-tem secretary.[35] The public meeting on April 23 in honour of this event brought together all the trends which had been developing in and around the labour movement, from socialism to the social gospel, from the proponents of class harmony to those of the class struggle.[36] Its locale was St. Paul's Presbyterian Church whose minister, Dr. Murray, welcomed the trade unionists. From Toronto came one of the guest speakers, Rev. J. G. Shearer of the Moral and Social Reform Council. The second guest speaker was F. B. Allen, editor of the Chronicle. In the chair was Mayor J. J. Carrick. The fact that Allen was the prospective Liberal nominee in the forthcoming provincial election, while Carrick had already received the Conservative nomination would not go unnoticed.

Into this cordial atmosphere suddenly was interjected the socialist tenet of the class struggle. The disruption came from S.P.C. organizer Leo T. English, delegated to the meeting from the Fort William Trades and Labor Council as a member of the International Typographical Union. English's unsolicited "Fire Brand Talk" created a sensation. Protesting that he had come to hear "a workingman's story", but

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[35] Daily News, April 10, 1908.

[36] Ibid., April 24, 1908.

"instead had heard a couple of politicians and a couple of ministers," English had particularly uncompromising words for the Reverend Mr. Shearer who had exhorted labour to practice the "golden rule", to "avoid graft" and to stand for "law and order". All the wealth of the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada was graft, "based on the robbery of labor", English told his shocked listeners, while warning them against politicians who promised to be their friends while "standing by the old system". In the opinion of the Daily News, "the most radical of all his firebrand statements" was this: "Human advancement is not made by making laws. It is generally made by breaking laws." In this dramatic way, labour politics and socialism now became intertwined, as we shall see.

The repercussions of the English affair were now felt in the on-going competition between the Liberals and Conservatives for the labour vote. Accusing English of belonging to "the anarchistic school being propagated in Canada by 'the Appeal to Reason' which does all but openly advocate murder," the Daily News the next day implicated Allen, the would-be Liberal candidate in the same charge because of his advocacy of the restoration of the Appeal's mailing privileges. In an attempt to break the seemingly close relationships between organized labour and the Liberals (made apparent in the presidency of the new labour council held pro-tem by Robert Ferguson, a Liberal, by Urry's column in the Chronicle,

and by Allen's pro-labour pronouncements), the Daily News asked:

> Can the members of the Trades and Labor Council who last night hissed the statements of Leo T. English consistently pledge their support to Mr. Allen in view of his attitude toward anarchy as advocated in the "Appeal to Reason"?

Under the signatures of Ferguson and Urry, the Labor Council denied that it was a "party to flirtation" by Mr. Allen, agreed that English's "anarchistic" tactics discredited the labour movement, but supported the circulation in Canada of the Appeal to Reason because "its aims are in the direction of the co-operative commonwealth." Most likely to show its freedom from the taint of socialism, the Chronicle refused to print a letter from English commending Dr. Murray's conduct at the meeting, which the Daily News then "cheerfully" published on its front page.[37] In the meantime, over in Fort William, the Daily Times-Journal had nothing but praise for "the person who challenged the 'nicely laid plans' of the politicians."[38]

On April 24, the Daily News had denounced English as "an open advocate of the vicious principles and devilish doctrine taught in the 'Appeal to Reason'." One month later on May 22, it acclaimed him as "a man who stands for interests that are genuine and a party that is genuine." This amazing reversal had come about in the campaign for the provincial

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[37]Daily News, April 27, 1908.

[38]Daily Times-Journal, April 25, 1908.

election of June 8, during which some rather unusual alliances were created involving the Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council, the Liberals, the Conservatives, and the English and Finnish socialists.

The old-line parties must have considered the labour vote of special significance that year for they both adopted extraordinary tactics to harness it. The Liberals decided not to run under their own banner, but instead organized a nominating convention for an "independent" candidate.[39] With Robert Ferguson as its chairman and F. B. Allen (who had dropped out of the running) as its principal speaker, the meeting chose George Mooring, not as an "independent", however, but as an "independent labor" candidate.[40] A self-made and self-educated timber contractor with a reputation for oratorical finesse, Mooring spoke on his conversion to the cause of labour when he had addressed the 1907 Labour Day celebration as the representative of the Board of Trade. No opposition to his candidature came until one John F. Leheney arose to address the gathering. The vice-president of the Trades and Labor Congress for Alberta, Leheney was also prominent in the Socialist Party of Canada. The following dialogue then took place:

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[39] Daily News, May 12, 1908.

[40] Ibid., May 14, 1908.

"What is your program?" asked Mr. Leheney.

"My kind Christian friend," replied Mr. Mooring, "I have no program."

Mr. Leheney: "I thought not."

Leheney then "denounced the frame-up, and rebuked those who undertook, without authority, to speak for organized labor on such an occasion and promised that a genuine labor candidate would be forthcoming before nomination day."[41]

After the labour council met the following day to elect its permanent officers, including James Brooker as president and Frederick Urry as secretary, it considered its policy towards Mooring.[42] With three dissensions, the Council resolved that Mooring was "not a fit and proper person to represent the interests of the working class and that the word 'labor' should not be used in connection with his candidature." The mover of the resolution was Leo T. English, there as a member of the I.T.U.

With Leheney and John T. Mortimer (former vice-president of the Trades and Labor Congress for Manitoba) as speakers, the English-speaking branch of the Socialist Party of Canada held its nominating convention the following

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[41]"A Bit of History", Western Clarion, August 21, 1909. This article by "Rambler", written to give the background of the split developing between the S.P.C. and the Finnish socialists, also gives detailed information on the Port Arthur provincial election campaign.

[42]Daily News, May 20, 1908.

day and chose English as its candidate.[43] Lending his support, though not a socialist, was James Booker, newly elected president of the Trades and Labor Council. Not present were the Finnish socialists who, it was announced, would endorse English later. Because of the intervention of Leheney, a tentative labour-socialist alliance was now being created moving the trade union movement away from collaboration with the Liberal Party.

The Daily News now exerted its energies to encouraging this development by attempting to divert the labour vote from Mooring, not to Carrick, but to English. Throughout the campaign, the Daily News donated unlimited space to the S.P.C. by featuring voluminous correspondence from English on the working class "antagonism to the present system of property and its consequences,"[44] and mammoth-sized S.P.C. advertisements, including the complete party platform.[45] The Daily News attempted to demolish Mooring as a labour candidate by such pithy editorial quips as, "What union does Mr. Mooring belong to?"[46] and "Mr. Mooring, on the admission of the Chronicle, has been outwitted by the socialists!"[47] Its

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[43]Ibid., May 21, 1908.

[44]Ibid., May 22 and 27; June 3 and 4, 1908.

[45]Ibid., May 27; June 5, 1908.

[46]Ibid., May 15, 1908.

[47]Ibid., May 23, 1908

treatment was particularly devastating of Robert Ferguson, a C.P.R. employee who evidently had tried to persuade the striking freight handlers of 1907 to return to work:

> Mr. Ferguson is not the labor man's friend, nor is he a laboring man. . . . On the other hand, he is the employee of the C.P.R., a corporation that has a record for being the most persistent fighter of Labor and labor men in the Dominion of Canada . . .[48]

With the Chronicle crying collusion between the socialists and the conservatives, English acknowledged the S.P.C.'s willingness to take aid from any source to educate and agitate the working class about the class struggle.[49]

Although the socialists refused to fight the campaign on the personality issue, a task left to the Daily News, a golden opportunity came to squash Mooring as a "friend of labor" when nine workmen from his Silver Mountain camp successfully sued him for non-payment of wages.[50] While the News made capital out of the exposé and English made a general condemnation of conditions in the district's bush camps, the Mooring-Chronicle side made a counter-attack in the story entitled "Finnish Socialists Repudiate L. T. English".[51] On the Daily News front page, the Finns denied the allegation, saying that they had merely "withheld formal endorsation for

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[48] Ibid., May 14, 1908.

[49] Daily News, May 23, 1908.

[50] Ibid., May 27; June 2 and 3, 1908.

[51] As reported in the Western Clarion, August 21, 1909.

the time being."[52] Yet official support for English did not come until E. T. Kingsley, editor of the Western Clarion and dominion organizer for the S.P.C. arrived at Port Arthur on a speaking tour and set the Finns "straight".[53] The Finnish socialists, "Rambler" charged in the Western Clarion of August 21, 1909, had withheld endorsation because of their indebtedness to the Liberal Member of Parliament, James Conmee, for having arranged the lifting of the postal ban on its satirical paper, Väkäleuka. Moreover, "the then editor of Työkansa had been closeted with Mr. Mooring and the Chronicle editor for the greater part of a forenoon, and had furnished them a copy of the motion of repudiation."

In the provincial election of 1908, then, Port Arthur was treated to the spectacle of the Conservative Daily News, the Socialist party candidate, the English-speaking socialists and the Trades and Labor Council president lined up against the Liberal Chronicle, the "independent labour" candidate, the Finnish socialists and the Trades and Labor Council former pro-tem president. Whether or not a Conservative victory required such unorthodox methods by the Daily News is unlikely, for Carrick won by a clear majority over his

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[52]Daily News, May 27, 1908.

[53]Western Clarion, August 21, 1909. In the Daily News June 1, 1908 is an advertisement for a "Monster Socialist Meeting" to be addressed by Kingsley on "The Labor Movement and its Politics".

two opponents.[54] The socialists who had expected two hundred votes instead of their 123,[55] had not been helped by internal party divisions, nor by the antipathy English brought upon himself by refusing to stand for the national anthem.[56] With 690 votes, Mooring had obviously not alienated everyone in the Liberal or the labour camp, but among the 928 votes won by Carrick "the proud supporter of his party's great principle of provincial and municipal ownership"[57] must have been many working class votes.

Instead of discouraging the socialists or the trade unionists from future political action, the provincial election had acted as a stimulant. That September, R. P. Pettipiece arrived on his way to the Trades and Labor Congress Convention in Halifax and urged upon both labour councils that Congress policy, namely Independent Political Action "should be adopted and acted upon in this locality."[58] But the western organizer of the Congress had done more than this

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[54]Daily News, June 8, 1908.

[55]Ibid., June 9, 1908.

[56]Ibid., June 4, 1908.

[57]Ibid., April 4, 1908.

[58]Daily Times-Journal, September 12, 1908; also Daily News, September 14, 1908.

by reportedly winning hundreds of converts for socialism within the labour movement.[59] As a result, the Port Arthur socialists called a nominating convention for the forthcoming federal election to which the Trades and Labor Councils of both Port Arthur and Fort William were invited, along with the other S.P.C. locals in the district. Accordingly, the candidate chosen had the backing of the socialists and the labour councils. The riding of Thunder Bay and Rainy River thus became the only one in Canada where a candidate received such dual sponsorship.

The person chosen as Labor-Socialist candidate was Frederick Urry who accepted the nomination from Halifax where he was attending the Trades and Labor Congress convention.[60] Urry must have joined the Socialist Party as a result of the provincial election (from which he seems to have remained aloof), for he was one of Port Arthur's three delegates to the founding meeting of the Ontario Section of the S.P.C.[61] This was one of two meetings in Toronto he took in on his way to Halifax. The other was of quite a different nature, the Board of Moral and Social Reform of the Presbyterian Church.[62] Urry then was a man with considerable prestige in trade union, socialist and church circles.

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[59]Western Clarion, December 5, 1908.

[60]Daily News, October 1, 1908.

[61]Western Clarion, September 26, 1908.

[62]United Church Archives, Minutes of the Board of Moral and Social Reform, September 9, 1908.

For this reason, the federal campaign was in complete contrast to the provincial one in Port Arthur. Instead of supporting front men to attract the working class vote, each old-line party tried to outdo the other in proving its candidate was the better friend of labour. Opening his campaign in the working class district of Westfort, Conmee praised the Liberal Party's labour record shown in the Lemieux Act and the Labour Gazette in contrast to that of the Conservative Party which had never "done anything to help the laboring man."[63] In his campaign, Keefer argued that "the government had buncoed the laboring class" through the Lemieux Act while the Conservatives, on the other hand, had been receptive to opposition to the Act from the railroad unions.[64]

As for the socialist-labour candidate the press either ignored or denigrated him. The Daily News reverted to its pre-provincial election style of journalism by linking together the "immoral" Finns, the Chronicle and the Liberals together with the Moral and Social Reform League. How could Urry, the member of the Moral and Social Reform League condone support from the Finns who printed material not fit for "women, children and pure-minded men?"[65] Since this material had been printed on the Liberal Chronicle press,

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[63] Daily Times-Journal, September 29, 1908.

[64] Daily News, October 13, 1908.

[65] Ibid., October 16, 1908.

since Urry wrote for the Chronicle, and since the Liberal candidate, Conmee had restored the mailing privileges of the Finnish paper, was there not an implication of Liberal complicity in Urry's campaign?

Urry disclaimed any responsibility for the local Moral and Social Reform League whose Conservative president had shown his "slavish servitude of a party" by refusing to sponsor a debate on moral issues by the three candidates.[66] Urry also clarified his attitude to the Liberal party. "Thank God," he wrote, "socialism stands clean cut from the awful contamination of the political parties of Canada." As the labour-socialist candidate, he affirmed that he stood on "the only politically pure platform at the present time, and that is the socialist party of Canada." But in his appeal to "the Independent man of clear intellect," Urry set forth his own labour programme.[67] Besides such demands as legal compensation, a pension scheme and an equal wage for men and women, was one calling for "a fair day's pay for a fair day's work." Urry's socialism had already lost him the support of the Moral and Social Reform League; his programme would lose him the support of the socialists.

Although Urry's local supporters regarded his seven

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[66]Daily News, October 17, 1908.

[67]Western Clarion, November 14, 1908.

hundred votes as something of an achievement,[68] neither this tangible support for socialism, nor the uniqueness of the socialist-labour unity around his candidacy found favour with the west-coast guardians of the doctrinal purity of the Socialist Party of Canada. Under the heading "A Half-Baked Socialist", the Western Clarion of November 14 initiated an attack on the Lakehead socialists for inviting trade unionists to participate in the nomination and the campaign of a socialist candidate, and on Urry for his "sickly sentimental reform" election appeal. The appeal, wrote J.W.H., was but another example of "a distorted and disordered imagination suggestive of Keir Hardie Labor-Socialism--a concoction noted for its insipid nothings." Among Urry's many errors, the worst had been his advocacy of "a fair day's work for a fair day's wage"; the socialist party, after all, stood for "the abolishment of the wage system".

The prolonged ideological debate conducted in subsequent issues of the Western Clarion reflected three dominant strains within the Canadian socialist movement which till then had found a home within the Socialist Party of Canada. Mark Whitehead of West Fort William defended the Keir Hardie socialism of the British Independent Labor Party and its non-uncompromising attitude as shown in the British House of Commons as against the "impossibilist" position of S.P.C.

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[68]The results were: Conmee, 4,562; Keefer, 3,321; Urry 702.

socialism.[69] J. H. Barrett of the Kakabeka Falls local founded by Harry Bryan reflected a more moderate Marxism by denouncing the abusive attack on Urry, for "we as Socialists have enough to do to fight the common enemy without slinging dirt at each other."[70] Gerald Desmond of Port Arthur upheld the line of the S.P.C., which resembled that of the "impossibilist" policy of the British Social Democratic Party than any other, in his article, "No Room for Reform in Workers Movement--a Call to Repudiate Opportunism and Stay With the International Movement."[71]

The debate ended with the recantation of the S.P.C. locals[72] and the resignation of Urry from the party. Regretting the way "our comrades delight in abusing the workers," and reaffirming his loyalty "to the principles of Socialism," Urry made this forecast:

> When these tactics are abandoned it will be the Socialist Party of Canada indeed and will enlist the workers by thousands and become the dominating force in Canadian politics and will be able to bring about that revolution we hear so much of but see little chance of consummating.[73]

These tactics were not abandoned, however; and the three trends within the S.P.C. which had been expressed in

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[69] Western Clarion, December 5, 1908.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid., December 26, 1908.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid., February 20, 1909.

the Urry debate eventually became three separate political parties. Membership of the S.P.C. at the Lakehead soon dwindled into insignificance, and in 1911, two new parties came into being. The Keir Hardie Labor-Socialists and many trade unionists like Urry regrouped to form the Independent Labor Party of New Ontario, while Marxists like Bryan and Barrett, as well as the Finnish socialists, to whom neither reform measures nor trade unionism conflicted with the class struggle, were to participate in the organization of the Social Democratic Party. When the I.L.P. and the S.D.P. arose from the wreckage of the S.P.C., each would exercise a distinctive and often opposing influence on the trade union movement and its relationship to both the middle class and the yet unorganized immigrant workers.

In 1908, ideas of class reconciliation met their first serious challenge from the socialist intrusion into working class politics. With the founding of the Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council, the theory of the class struggle had been little more than an annoyance; in the provincial election, its proponents succeeded in weaning labour away from a possible collaboration with the Liberal Party, albeit with the encouragement of the Conservatives. With the federal election, the socialist alliance with labour undermined temporarily any entente between labour and the middle class. As the Daily News had predicted in 1906, labour would some day threaten "to disarrange the best laid plans" of the politician.

With the destruction of the labour-socialist alliance by the S.P.C. "impossibilists", this threat was temporarily dissipated. Ironically, when in 1909 labour made its most serious threat yet "to disarrange the best laid plans of the capitalist", no party recognizing the existence of the class struggle would be on hand.

V

"CANADA'S BLOODIEST LABOR RIOT": THE 1909 FREIGHT HANDLERS STRIKE

"Probably the bloodiest labor riot ever in Canada" was the description given by a contemporary labour journal of the violence which occurred on August 12, 1909 during another C.P.R. freight handlers strike in Fort William.[1] As in 1906, the riot resulted when the railway's foreign-born employees and its police force clashed in a gun battle over the use of strikebreakers. Many factors make the 1909 confrontation a classic of its kind, chief of which are the intensity of the violence, the intervention of the military, the predicament of a labour mayor, and the involvement of both the trade union movement and the Department of Labour. The strike also focused local and national attention on the condition of immigrant workers. Yet the violence of 1909 was no isolated phenomenom in the history of the labour relations of either the community or the country as a whole.[2] An analysis of its sources and the reactions to it, then, should reveal something of the nature of the social relations

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[1] The Industrial Banner, September, 1909.

[2] See for example Jamieson, Times of Trouble, for a comprehensive analysis of violence in Canadian labour history.

existing before World War I at the Lakehead and across the country.

The strike began on Monday, August 9 when all seven hundred truckers and most of the ninety checkers at the C.P.R. sheds quit work without warning, demanding a five cent wage increase and abolition of the bonus.[3] For the freight handlers, it had come " . . . to the time when they were not getting enough wages for the work they were doing and not being treated right."[4] The total basic wage was now actually lower than before the 1906 strike which, it will be recalled, had resulted in an increase from 17½¢ to 22½¢ an hour and abolition of the 2½¢ bonus. Meantime, despite a sharp rise in the cost of living,[5] the basic rate by 1909 was back at 17½¢ and the bonus re-introduced, but at only 1¢ an hour.

C.P.R. agent R. Armstrong, it is true, later professed disbelief that the real issue could be higher pay since some men averaged eighteen hours work a day that season, earning "fifty and sixty each month for eight months", plus a thirty

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[3]Daily Times-Journal, August 9, 1909; Daily News, August 9, 1909. According to the Labour Gazette, X (October 1909), 445, the Canadian Northern Railway forestalled a strike by its freight handlers by promising to grant them whatever gains were won by the C.P.R. strikers.

[4]Daily Times-Journal, August 10, 1909.

[5]The Labour Gazette, X (February 1910) 894.

dollar bonus at the close of shipping.[6] Nevertheless, a wage increase was what the men wanted. The effect of working such long hours at hard, physical labour, however, as well as "the constant battle for place", the uncertainty of employment, and the bonus system all contributed to the state of labour unrest at the sheds.[7] As emphasized by the strikers' spokesman, Bosco Dominico, "If the company will give the men the small raise asked for, the men will be thankful, for living here is high and they work hard for the money they are asking for."[8]

Despite the C.P.R.'s claim to have been taken by surprise, it would seem that the strike was not entirely spontaneous. Spontaneity implies lack of forethought, not lack of warning. While the men still had no union and do not appear to have been in touch with one prior to the strike,[9] the immediate posting of pickets and obvious preparations for a "long siege"[10] indicate both a measure of premeditation, and some internal, though probably informal structure. On August 9, whatever organization had existed previously gave way to a more formal strike committee representative of all nationalities.

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[6]Daily News, August 16, 1909.

[7]See below, p. 148-50.

[8]Daily Times-Journal, August 10, 1909.

[9]Daily News, August 9, 1909.

[10]Daily Times-Journal, August 10, 1909.

The largest ethnic group amongst the freight handlers consisted of some two hundred Greeks, with almost as many Italians. These were essentially the same workers who had precipitated the 1906 strike, whom the C.P.R. had refused to re-hire in the spring of 1907, and then had used as strikebreakers that fall.[11] The other strikers included Slavs, Finlanders, and a scattering of immigrants from the British Isles. This time, the English-speaking checkers appear to have remained in the background.

The freight handlers' leading spokesman was Bosco Dominico, the young Italian interpreter who had acted in this capacity during the 1906 negotiations. The representative nature of the strike committee and Dominico's reputation as "king of the coal docks"[12] would belie the C.P.R.'s accusation that the Greeks both precipitated the work stoppage and forced the other nationalities to join them.[13] While railway officials were not alone in singling out the Greeks for their "volatile" temperament,[14] the unison exhibited throughout the strike does not indicate Greek domination. Rather, a measure of cohesiveness seems to have developed within the coal docks community overcoming language differences and the daily competition for work. With this communal support behind

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[11] Daily Times-Journal, August 9, 1909.

[12] Labate interview.

[13] Daily News, August 13, 1909.

[14] See below, p. 135.

them, the strike committee embarked on its two immediate priorities: the organization of the freight handlers into a union, and preparations for their defence against the certain arrival of strikebreakers.

The primary concern of workers in any strike is whether or not they can be replaced by strikebreakers. The freight handlers' resolution to resist such a move by the company must be seen in the context of the determination, bordering on desperation, of a whole community to defend its primary means of livelihood. (It was estimated that of the almost five thousand Europeans resident in the coal dock district, about one thousand were dependent on the docks for their employment.)[15] Mindful of the 1906 shooting episode, the Fort William police conducted a search for weapons during the first night of the strike.[16] After the arrest of only one man (Tom Androuchos, found armed with a .45 Colt revolver), the freight handlers expressed a philosophy not dissimilar to the "community control" demands of North American minority groups in more recent times. Protesting the arrest and demanding that the officer involved be fired, the strike committee insisted on the same right to be armed as the city police. The freight handlers then organized their own police patrols to control the movement of citizens coming into and going from the district. While

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[15] Winnipeg Telegram, August 14, 1909.

[16] Daily Times-Journal, August 10, 1909.

the Daily News of August 10 noted an attitude of belligerency amongst the strikers, the Times-Journal of the following date commented favourably on the lack of disorder and "most law abiding" conduct of the strikers.

Meanwhile, as the C.P.R. made known its strategy by preparing a long buffer of freight cars on the tracks between the sheds and the residential district, no one doubted the outcome of the arrival of strikebreakers. The strikers themselves announced their determination to resist such a move "in any way possible", and in anticipation of such an eventuality a large crowd had gathered to see the inevitable "pitched battle".[17] And in its sub-heading on August 10, the Daily News warned, "If Men are Brought in to Take Places of Strikers Will Likely be Trouble--Company Will Fight it Out."

The freight handlers' second goal--that of organizing themselves into a union--was possibly one factor motivating the strike. But given their experiences of 1906 and 1907 and their isolation from the trade union movement, it is understandable why organization had not been attempted without striking first. Now that the strike was on, the strikers requested assistance in becoming organized from the International President of the International Longshoremen's Association and in settling the strike from the Mayor of Fort William.[18]

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[17]Daily Times-Journal, August 10, 1909.

[18]Ibid.

In 1909, the Mayor of Fort William was L. L. Peltier, who had been elected that January with "the co-operation of the business men, professional men and laboring classes."[19] While Peltier agreed with a deputation of some three hundred strikers that their membership in the I.L.A. would benefit both them and the company, he urged them to return to work, to submit their case to an arbitration board under his own auspices, and then, if still dissatisfied, to invoke the Lemieux Act.[20] But the strikers refused to return to work before entering negotiations. Peltier now had to persuade the railway to negotiate with the workers while the strike continued.

Initially, the C.P.R. had been categorical in its uncompromising attitude towards the strikers. Public utterances by its officials included threats to refuse negotiations under any circumstances as the men were "no longer in the employ of the company,"[21] and to invoke the Lemieux Act whose terms they had violated by striking without first submitting their case to conciliation.[22] But neither action was carried out. Under the persuasive influence of Peltier, they approved his first offer of mediation if the men re-

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[19] Daily Times-Journal, January 5, 1909.

[20] Ibid., August 10, 1909, "Report of Board--Dispute between the Canadian Pacific Railway Company and its Freight-Handlers at Fort William, Ont.", Labour Gazette X (September, 1909) 343-4.

[21] Daily Times-Journal, August 9, 1909.

[22] Daily News, August 10, 1909.

turned to work, but declined to deal with any "outside agents", that is, any trade union representatives.[23] When the men refused to go back to work, Peltier then effected a compromise under which the company agreed to enter negotiations while the strike continued, while the men agreed to be represented by one of their own number instead of by the local secretary of the Longshoremen's Association. On August 12, the negotiations nicely underway at City Hall had just produced a wage offer when they were terminated by news of shooting between strikers and company police.[24]

That morning, thirty heavily armed constables had arrived from Winnipeg as reinforcements for the company police force. They were to be an advance guard for strike-breakers known to be on their way from Montreal. The detachment's appearance at the C.P.R. bunkhouse which was situated across the tracks from the freight sheds had the predicted effect on the immense crowds thronging the intersection in anticipation of trouble. (The Times-Journal of August 12 compared the strikers' reaction to "that a red rag has on an eraged [sic] bull when it is waved before its eyes.")[25] At noon hour, the policemen's attempt to defy the strikers'

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[23] Daily Times-Journal, August 10, 1909.

[24] Ibid., August 12, 1909.

[25] In Deputy Minister of Labor Acland's more subdued account of the event, "The arrival of the special constables appears to have had an irritating effect on the strikers," Labour Gazette, X, 344.

injunction not to leave the bunkhouse for the sheds precipitated the violence which followed.

Eye-witness accounts differed about which side fired first. The Times-Journal story of August 12 implicates the police:

> There are impartial eye witnesses who say the first shot was fired by one of the imported constables. . . . In any event the constables disregarded the orders of their chief.

The Daily News of August 13, however, placed the blame on the strikers:

> After dinner Constable Ball was the first to appear and he was met at the doorway and told neither he nor the others would be allowed out. An altercation followed and soon there was a shot. It came from a revolver in the hands of a striker and the bullet entered Constable Ball's abdomen.

The detailed account in the Winnipeg Telegram of August 13 includes both this version and the following one which contradicts it:

> . . . the constables started to come out of the bunkhouse and were told to return. One of the strikers in the lead motioned to raise a stick and threatened him and the constables at once pulled their revolvers and the fight became general.[26]

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[26]Some material in the Winnipeg Telegram story of August 13 is similar to that appearing in the Daily Times-Journal, August 12. Additional (and sometimes contradictory) material is probably based on accounts appearing either in the August 12 issue of the Daily News, which is missing, or in the Port Arthur Chronicle, the complete file of which has been destroyed. The Winnipeg Telegram strike reports of August 14 and August 16 carry the by-line of its editor Garnet Clay Porter. According to the Daily News, August 16, Colonel Porter stayed with its editor, O. F. Young while at

Press reports later gave with approval the impression of Alderman Rankin who had been at the scene trying to win the workers' acceptance of the settlement reached at City Hall:

> . . . even W. T. Rankin, chairman of the board of public works asserts that the constables fired the first shot in the riot. He was on the spot and ought to know.[27]

But regardless of who fired the first shot, it was generally held that the ultimate blame for the riot lay with the C.P.R. for the provocative manner in which it had introduced its forces into an explosive situation. The Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council not surprisingly expressed its detestation "of the methods employed by the C.P.R. in sending armed special constables in the midst of six or seven hundred of frenzied and angry workers, knowing that many of these workers were armed."[28] More telling was the opinion of Fort William's Chief of Police William J. Dodds; although determined to give the freight handlers "a lesson", Dodds admitted the railway's fault for bringing its police into the midst of the strikers.[29] The discreet judgment of the Deputy Minister of Labour is even

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the Lakehead and accompanied him in his investigations. This would explain a similarity, though not exactness, in their reports. The strike stories in the Toronto Globe do not appear to have originated with either the Daily Times-Journal or the Daily News; it is quite likely that they were based on the Port Arthur Chronicle, since both papers were Liberal.

[27] Daily News, August 16, 1909.

[28] Ibid., August 17, 1909.

[29] Daily Times-Journal, August 16, 1909.

convincing. In that tone of impartiality which distinguishes the civil service, F. A. Acland conceded that ". . . a less prominent display of force would have been dictated by prudence and might have helped to avert the calamity which followed."[30]

In "the calamity which followed", workers in the streets and on rooftops exchanged shots during a half-hour gun battle with C.P.R. police who were positioned in the bunkhouse or in boxcars across the street.[31] The strikers eventually drove all constables back into the bunkhouse and only the persuasion of the twelve-man city force prevented them from storming it. With the railway police now virtually prisoners of the strikers, the city force maintained an uneasy truce for the balance of the afternoon. When the shooting was over, the casualties included at least eight known wounded (four police, two bystanders, and two strikers, both Greeks), and an estimated twenty to thirty injured strikers not officially accounted for.[32] That no fatalities had occurred at the time was attributed both to poor marks-

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[30]Labour Gazette, X, 344.

[31]Daily Times-Journal, August 12; Winnipeg Telegram, August 13, 1909; Daily News, August 13, 1909.

[32]The Daily Times-Journal, August 13, 1909 explains why the number of casualties among the strikers was unknown: "Fearing arrest, several of the men did not have the physicians dress their wounds. One or two who did call doctors, declined to go to the hospital for the same reason. One surgeon commends the strikers on the manner in which they have stuck by their wounded."

manship and the intercession of the civic police.[33]

Initial reactions to the riot equated the belligerency of the workers to mob action. On August 12 the Times-Journal compared the battle to "lawlessness such as caused the streets of Paris to run with blood at the inception of the French revolution," and added this lurid description of the freight handlers:

> The strikers were and are rabid with a thirst for blood. . . . With scarcely animal intelligence they shoot in any direction regardless of who is in the way.

On August 13, the Toronto Globe's main headline also conveyed an impression of the strikers' lawless behaviour:

> FORT WILLIAM RIOTERS USE RIFLES AND REVOLVERS MAKE ATTACK ON POLICE IN MOST DETERMINED MANNER

And while the Daily News editorial of August 13 was ready to divide the blame for the riot between the strikers and the "ignorant recklessness manifested by 'special' constables employed by the railway authorities", it urged investigation into "the causes which give undesirable foreigners the power to make themselves a menance to life and property."

Condemnation of the strikers was also Peltier's first reaction when news of the riot concluded the negotiations which his perseverance had made possible. "The men who have brought on this trouble must take the consequences," he de-

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[33]The Daily News, October 5, 1909 reported the death of C.P.R. constable John Hallworth of Winnipeg from injuries received during the strike.

clared with the strikers in mind. "The law of the land must be observed and the community must be protected."[34]

Subsequent events show the almost insuperable difficulties that can face a pro-labour man in political power, particularly during a period of sharp class conflict. As the municipal police force was scarcely adequate to maintain for long the truce prevailing that afternoon of the 12th, let alone restore order, Peltier requested that the local militia be called out in aid of the civil power. The senior officer in the locality that day was Colonel S. B. Steele, the District Officer Commanding Military District No. 10 who now assumed command. The Mayor now found himself caught in a network of conflicting relationships, complicated by the presence of the military.

By coincidence, Steele had arrived the previous day from Winnipeg for the annual inspection of the Ninety-Sixth Regiment. A legend in his time, Steele's fame had spread throughout the British Empire for his exploits with the North West Mounted Police from its beginnings in 1873 to 1899, then as commander of the Lord Strathcona Horse during the Boer War, and later as chief of the South African Constabulary in the Transvaal from 1901 to 1906.[35] Well experienced in putting down insurgents, Steele added a dimension

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[34] Daily Times-Journal, August 12, 1909.

[35] See Morgan, Canadian Men and Women of the Time, 2nd ed. (Toronto: 1912) for a brief summary of his career. Steele's autobiography, Forty Years in Canada (London: 1915) covers his life only to 1907.

to the strike which might otherwise have been absent. From subsequent events and from Steele's own report on the affair,[36] it is apparent that it was he who directed the proceedings leading to the termination of the strike.

An immediate point of dispute between Steele and Peltier concerned their differing attitudes towards the freight handlers. Notwithstanding his determination to make them "take the consequences" for the violence, Peltier refused to accept the "responsibility of ordering the Troops to fire on the strikers."[37] This responsibility the Colonel then undertook himself until, as he acidly commented later, "a Magistrate was obtained who would carry out his duties without fear or favour."

Shortly after it had been called out, the local militia mustered 172 men, but Steele's appraisal of "the strength and organization of the strikers" was such that he found it necessary to supplement the local soldiers by ordering the Royal Canadian Mounted Rifles down from Winnipeg.[38] Accompanied by C.P.R. General Manager G. A. Bury, the regulars arrived the following morning by special train. But late in the afternoon of the 12th, the appearance of the red-

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[36]PAC, Department of National Defence Papers, RG 24, Acc. 69-440, File 363/17, Steele to Militia Council, August 20, 1909.

[37]Loc. Cit. p. 2.

[38]Ibid., Steele to Militia Council, August 12, 1909. His telegram of the same date referred to the "strength and organized resistance" of the strikers.

coated militiamen armed with bayonet-drawn rifles, and the placing of a Maxim gun at a strategic location, had a pacifying effect at the scene of the disturbance.[39] It was here that the Mayor read the Riot Act, which was then duly translated into Greek, Italian, and "Slavonic".[40]

The penalty provided by the Riot Act for failure to obey its injunction to disperse is life imprisonment.[41] Yet no move was made by the strikers to disband. The press allegation that the "Red Coats" inspired fear amongst the strikers[42] was not borne out by Colonel Steele's impression of their deportment as they attempted to negotiate the terms of their dispersal.[43] Still fearing that they would be replaced by strikebreakers, the strikers agreed to go home only if Colonel Steele would guarantee that no strikebreakers would be brought in that evening. After the militia had released the C.P.R. police from their long confinement in the bunkhouse, the Colonel acceded to the strikers' request. The crowd then disbanded, and the riot was over.

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[39] Daily News, August 13, 1909; Winnipeg Telegram, August 13, 1909.

[40] Steele to Militia Council, August 20, 1909, p. 2.

[41] Daily Times-Journal, August 12, 1909.

[42] Ibid., August 13, 1909.

[43] Steele to Militia Council, August 20, 1909, p. 3

The strike itself, however, was not. For the railway it became imperative that the work stoppage be terminated immediately through the use of strikebreakers. This would not only get the freight moving again, but would so demoralize the freight handlers that they would be willing to rejoin the labour force at the old rate. Despite Colonel Steele's assurances to the strikers, the C.P.R.'s method of accomplishing this included proposals to bring the strikebreakers into the sheds on the evening of the 12th,[44] and then to parade the strikebreakers the following day "through the Crowds of Strikers in the Streets."[45] But Steele opposed inciting the freight handlers to more violence and overruled the provocative intentions of the company officials. Instead, the plan used to break the strike was one he devised himself, which he outlined in his August 20 report to the Militia Council:

> 1. Keep out all strikebreakers being brought in by the CPR until I was satisfied they could enter the City without causing trouble.
>
> 2. Search all strikers and disarm them.
>
> 3. Search the houses in the Dockyard and District for arms and ammunition.
>
> 4. Arrange for the Strikers to hold a meeting in the Finnish Hall to make arrangements to put their case to arbitration.
>
> 5. To then allow strikebreakers to be brought in and set to work.

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[44] Ibid., p. 3.

[45] Ibid., p. 4.

6. If possible, arrest the ringleaders of the strike at the meeting in the Hall.

As the Colonel's plan took shape, the coal docks district must have resembled occupied territory with over two hundred soldiers enforcing the submission of a hostile, foreign community. On the evening of the 12th, the Ninety-Sixth blocked off all avenues of escape.[46] The following day Steele ordered each man and each house searched for weapons. Ostentatiously displaying their weapons, the soldiers rounded up the men and broke into the homes, with the actual search conducted by the civil police in the presence of Police Magistrate William Palling.[47]

The disappointing results of this pacification exercise[48] led to speculation by police officials about the means of escape by a number of wanted Greek leaders,[49] and about

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[46]Daily News, August 13, 1909; Winnipeg Telegram, August 14, 1909.

[47]The Colonel's delicate observance of the legalities connected with acting "in aid of the civil power" prompted Daily Times-Journal editorial commendation on August 14 for his backing of civic authority. In Palling, Steele had evidently found a magistrate who, unlike Peltier, would "carry out his duties without fear or favour." Palling, who had been charter president of Local 1498, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, was found by Steele to be "of excellent tact and very much respected."

[48]PAC, RG 24, Acc. 69-440, File 363/17. According to Steele's report to the Militia Council, August 20, 1909, p. 5, some "30 rifles, shot guns, and revolvers" were discovered.

[49]"Are Riot Leaders Here?", Winnipeg Telegram, August 14, 1909.

secret caches of weapons hidden in the district.[50] For both immigrants and military personnel, the search experience only dramatized the cleavage between the English-speaking and the European-born. As the Europeans watched homes being ransacked, and not without protest from the women in particular, members of the local militia witnessed for the first time the poverty of the foreign quarter, "the wretched apologies for homes, where many people were huddled together in small, dark rooms and children and vermin abounded."[51] The successful hiding of weapons and men and the care of their own wounded show that the immigrants had closed rank against the hostile world outside. While the search operation by uniformed, armed men encountered no open resistance, its effect was to strengthen the strikers' spirit of defiance.

By mid-afternoon of the 13th, order had been sufficiently restored by the military in aid of the civil power, that Colonel Steele deemed it was now time for the military to come to the aid of the C.P.R. and break the strike. The moment for the bringing of the strikebreakers into the sheds had arrived. The strikers had sent word that day to both Peltier and Bury that they would still resist such a move.[52] But would they? Assembling the strikers, Steele warned them

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[50]The Daily News, August 13, 1909 and Winnipeg Telegram, August 14, 1909 give detailed accounts of the search and reactions to it.

[51]Winnipeg Telegram, August 14, 1909.

[52]Ibid.

that "the Militia would do their duty as ordered without doubt or hesitation of any kind, as the law must be upheld."[53] Then the veteran campaigner used the occasion to overawe the strikers by deploying his forces in such a way so as to ensure no possibility of interference with the strikebreakers.[54]

> . . . thirty regulars were drawn across the entrance to the docks at McTavish and McIntyre streets where the bloody riot yesterday occurred. The balance of the regulars were scattered over the (photo-copy indecipherable) and high buildings as sharp shooters. The one hundred and fifty members of the Ninety-Sixth Regiment . . . were thrown out as an advanced picket line surrounding the thirty blocks in the dock district where reside the four thousand eight hundred European foreigners.

And as Steele demonstrated on whose behalf this show of force was being used, there came the crowning touch when in full view of the strikers, "Secret Service Chief Andrews of the C.P.R. and thirty constables were brought forward and marched around the company's boarding house." Protected by a row of bayonets, the strikebreakers were then marched up the tracks to the ships waiting for unloading. "All the elements of tragedy were there," observed Colonel Porter in the Winnipeg Telegram, but the moment came and went with only a murmur of protest heard from the strikers.

The tradition of using surplus cheap labour to end industrial disputes and the reluctance of the labourers involved to be so used repeated itself in 1909. The imports

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[53]Steele to Militia Council, August 20, 1909, p. 5.

[54]Winnipeg Telegram, August 14, 1909.

this time were French Canadians, who like the strikebreakers of the past, had not been informed of their intended use when hired.[55] Learning of the strike during the train stop at Port Arthur, the French Canadians debated whether or not to work, many deciding in the negative. But to prevent their desertion, C.P.R. officials ordered the train locked and taken directly to the railroad yards where the strikebreakers were said to have been "practically prisoners."[56] Although penniless, about one-third of the one hundred and fifty French Canadians walked off the job when given the opportunity. This action seems to have been based on some instinctive class consciousness, as a commonality of ethnic origin with the strikers was lacking. Despite the unreliability of the imported labourers for whatever reason, the C.P.R. was satisfied that they had broken the strike.[57]

General Manager Bury could now express confidence that all strikers, except the Greeks, would be working that evening, August 13. The Greeks, whom he accused of inciting both the strike and the riot, would be permanently banned from the C.P.R.'s employ, for "the two hundred Greeks are an impossible, dangerous and disturbing element."[58] The Greeks came in for criticism from other sources as well.

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[55]Toronto Globe, August 14, 1909.

[56]Daily News, August 14, 1909.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Winnipeg Telegram, August 14, 1909.

Police Chief Dodds was reported as believing that "of all the European polyglot the Greeks were by far the most dangerous and difficult to handle." Because of the Greeks, some of the English-speaking checkers declared their unwillingness to return to work when the soldiers left. "The Greeks will be there with their smiles and long sharp dirkes and I don't want to work where a man is likely to be made the target by those who have sworn vengeance."[59]

The reaction by strikers of other nationalities shows that they believed neither that the strike had been broken nor that they were victims of Greek tyranny. In a "conference of all nations", the Italian, Finnish and other workers declared they would refuse to work, unless all strikers were taken back.[60] And Steele reported "the strikers refused to consider the advisability of going to work at the former rates of pay, and were very sulky and sullen in manner."[61] The men, instead, asked for a renewal of negotiations which the company rejected.[62]

This extraordinary defiance by the strikers made it necessary to execute the balance of Colonel Steele's plan for ending the strike. Granting the strikers permission to

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[59] Daily News, August 14, 1909.

[60] Daily Times-Journal, August 14, 1909.

[61] Steele to Militia Council, August 20, 1909, p. 6.

[62] Daily News, August 14, 1909.

hold a meeting where he suggested "they could talk over their grievances and decide whether they would agree on some action as to returning to work," the Colonel deemed "that it would be a good time to arrest the ringleaders" while the meeting was in progress.[63] The combined military and civil forces then "swooped down" on the gathering, and as soldiers ringed the hall, the Fort William police searched each man and arrested six of them.[64] Fourteen additional "ringleaders" were apprehended later that day. Order was now sufficiently restored for the C.P.R. to give its approval to the Mayor to have the militia released from active duty. No move, however, was made by the strikers to return to work.

According to his version of the events, Steele had already suggested to both Peltier and Bury that they find ways of getting the men back to the sheds. But it is likely that Peltier resumed the role of mediator on his own volition, not on Steele's directive. There can be little doubt that the Chief Magistrate who, on the one hand, had sanctioned the raiding of the strikers' meeting, had also been trying behind the scenes to win concessions from the railway. In one assessment, Peltier's ". . . tireless work in the interests of a settlement has been the single force for peace" in the strike.[65]

Meanwhile, as the initial shock-wave of general revul-

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[63]Steele to Militia Council, August 20, 1908, p. 6.

[64]Daily Times-Journal, August 16, 1909.

[65]Winnipeg Telegram, August 16, 1909.

sion against the strikers began diminishing, reporters and others began delving into the underlying causes of both the strike and the riot. In an open letter to General Manager Bury published on August 14 in the Times-Journal, Peltier gave official expression to the changing sentiments towards the freight handlers. In an appeal to what he termed the C.P.R.'s generosity in such cases, the Mayor again offered his services towards affecting a settlement, but added the following reproof:

> From information furnished me, one way and another I gather that the conditions of employment in the freight sheds had grown very unsatisfactory to the men employed therein, and it is generally understood that the rate of pay was less than conditions warranted your company in paying.

The railway did not accept Peltier's offer. It did agree, however, to accept the findings of a conciliation board appointed under the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act if the men returned to work within thirty-six hours; and despite its earlier pronouncements on the Greeks, the company also agreed to take back all strikers regardless of nationality, except those found guilty of an offence.[66]

Now came the task of persuading the men to accept these terms. On Sunday, August 15, at what was "probably the most remarkable public gathering ever held in the interests

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[66]The Winnipeg Telegram, August 16, 1909 gives the text of Bury's reply to Peltier, as well as Peltier's letter to the C.P.R. Bury's reply is also included in the text of Peltier's open letter to the strikers given in the Daily Times-Journal, August 16.

of labor on the shores of Thunder Bay," this was accomplished.[67] For over two hours, the entire population of perhaps five thousand people from the coal dock district stood in the pouring rain listening to Peltier's exhortations. The presence of the "platoon of regulars" reportedly did not deter the strikers' defiant interrogation of the Mayor. But as they heard him read his letter to the C.P.R. criticizing their conditions of work and pay, then Bury's letter agreeing to conciliation, then a wire from Mackenzie King urging acceptance of the Lemieux Act, and finally Peltier's own appeal to the strikers, they soon came under "the spell of the speaker's genius." Peltier's appeal was irresistible:

> My dear fellow citizens: return to your jobs and trust the government to give you justice and the mayor to help you all he can. I am only asking you to do what other good Canadian labor men on strike have agreed to do many times and leave three good men to say that you will hereafter be treated better and paid more. The company has given me its word and name signed that it will do all I say to you and I promise you that it will keep its agreement.

The word of the railway, though, had been somewhat ambiguous:

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[67] Garnet Clay Porter, "Men Return to Work . . .", Winnipeg Telegram, August 16, 1909. Porter gives a remarkable description of the meeting and of the interaction between the immigrants and the mayor.

> After the men return to work if they elect to apply for a conciliation board asking that their rate be made 22½¢ per hour days, and 25 cents per hour nights, without a bonus, the company will agree to the appointment of such a board under the Lemieux Act . . .

Under the impression that the C.P.R. had actually acceded to their demand for five cents an hour, the freight handlers returned to work the following morning but at the old rate of pay.[68] With the crisis over, the Mayor requested that Steele order the return of the regulars to Winnipeg.[69] The strike was over. Whether or not it had been broken remained to be seen.

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[68] Daily Times-Journal, August 16, 1909.

[69] Steele to Militia Council, August 20, 1909, p. 7. The Globe, August 17, 1909 reported that the C.P.R. relied on the protection of its own force "now armed with Winchesters" after the regulars returned to Winnipeg.

As the military had been called out "in aid of the civil power," the civil power bore its expense. Included in Steele's statement submitted to the city of Fort William was an amount of $1,258.00 to cover the cost of rail transportation for the regulars from Winnipeg.(Daily News, November 10, 1909.) The city, in effect, thus paid the C.P.R. for the transportation of soldiers to subdue C.P.R. strikers.

VI

AFTERMATH OF VIOLENCE: THE LEMIEUX ACT ON TRIAL

Throughout the strike, strangely little had been heard from either the trade union movement or the Department of Labour. Afterwards, however, the intercession of both became significant in the strike's settlement, as well as in the evaluation made in its aftermath of the causes of the dispute and its violence. As seen in connection with the earlier freight handlers strikes, the attitude of organized labour to immigrants was often one of indifference, if not hostilty. How true was this in 1909? We have also seen how the philosophy of reconciliation between capital and labour was generally accepted as a solution to industrial strike. How beneficial was it to the freight handlers when applied by the Lemieux Act? These are just some of the questions which remained to be answered as the C.P.R. resumed normal operations on August 16, 1909.

Although the Department of Labour possessed the means to settle labour disputes in the transportation industry through the Lemieux Act, reference to both the Department and the Act throughout the strike had been minimal. Peltier in his own right had initiated negotiations after the strike started, a course open to him as mayor under the Railway Act

of 1903. His obvious reluctance to use the Lemieux Act or to accept the offered assistance of the Department could have been governed by any of the following factors: his confidence that a settlement could be expedited more quickly through his own auspices than through the machinery of government; a distrust of the legislation shared by the men of the railway brotherhoods; or an understanding that the Lemieux Act did not apply during an illegal strike.

The Minister of Labour had not been notified of the strike by either the Mayor, the C.P.R. or the strikers, but had learned of the situation only through the press. On August 12 (apparently before learning of the riot), King wired Peltier to offer the conciliation services of his Department.[1] On August 13, the day military operations had permitted the successful introduction of strikebreakers, Peltier declined King's offer, stating that the situation was "well in hand," but that he "might use Act yet." The onus for evading the Act Peltier placed squarely on the strikers for their refusal in the first place to return to work on August 11 before a settlement was reached.

After the riot, the Mayor's decision to persuade the men to accept conciliation came only after the C.P.R. refused his own offer to mediate.[2] Yet no application for a board

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[1] Labour Gazette X, (September, 1909), 345. The text of King's wire and Peltier's reply are given in the Report of the Deputy Minister on the dispute.

[2] See p. 137.

resulted from the Sunday meeting at which Peltier extracted the strikers' agreement to use the Lemieux Act. With the men back in the sheds on the next day, Peltier again urged the C.P.R. to grant the wage increase expected by the men immediately without reference to the Act, a request which the company refused.[3] It was not until Wednesday the 18th that the formal application for a board of conciliation and investigation was made, when a committee of freight handlers presented it personally to F. A. Acland, Deputy Minister of Labour.[4] Acland had arrived in Fort William the previous evening in response to the following telegram forwarded to the Minister of Labour on Saturday, August 14: "Strike Committee on freight-handlers Fort William request your presence here to hear their grievances and effect settlement."[5]

This request for the Department's intervention had been sent on behalf of the strikers by Frederick Urry in his dual capacities as secretary of the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council and as local correspondent for the Labour Gazette. In Urry, the freight handlers had found a formidable protagonist, not only for his own qualities, but because through him the trade union movement now undertook the advocacy of their cause. Apart from some tentative communication

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[3]Daily News, August 17, 1909.

[4]Labour Gazette, X, 345.

[5]Ibid., p. 342.

with the grain handlers local of the longshoremen's union at the beginning of the strike,[6] it is doubtful whether organized labour had concerned itself with the dispute prior to this time. (The Fort William Trades and Labour Council, from which some kind of response might have been expected, had as its main item of business on August 11 the need for the municiplaity to adopt printed assessment rolls.) But Urry himself had intervened sometime during the week-long strike and on the 14th had attended the strikers' meeting in the Finlanders Hall for the purpose of helping them achieve "something like discipline."[7] It was following this meeting that Urry requested the assistance of the Department of Labour on behalf of the strikers.

No suggestion had been made in Urry's telegram about the men returning to work or accepting conciliation. When the workers yielded to Peltier's appeal to do both, Urry's reaction had been one of dismay for he was of the opinion that the freight handlers' fight was just beginning and that "they should stick for 27¢ an hour."[8] On Monday, August 16, the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council met "to consider the situation caused by the freight handlers strike at Fort William and the part played by the militia."[9] With its

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[6]Daily Times-Journal, August 10, 1909.

[7]Daily News, August 19, 1909.

[8]Ibid., August 17, 1909.

[9]Ibid., August 16, 1909.

denunciation of the handling of the strike by the Mayor, the Council opened up to public debate all issues surrounding the conflict. That the strike did not end in immediate defeat for the freight handlers may be attributed in large measure to this subvention by Urry and the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council.

Urry's principal motive in seeking the intervention of the Department of Labour was not the establishment of a Conciliation Board but an investigation by the Department itself of the root causes of the strike. That this concern was shared by the Council delegates is indicated by the strong resolution calling on the government to investigate the following:

1. The workshop conditions of the freight handlers.
2. The abuses under which the men have worked and which caused their protest in the strike.
3. The wretched pittance called wages of 17½¢ and 22½¢ an hour.
4. The iniquitous bonus system.[10]

Although Mayor Peltier had publicly suggested to the C.P.R. that its treatment of the freight handlers was less than just, his general handling of the strike came in for severe criticism by the delegates to the Labour Council.

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[10]The Daily News, August 17, 1909 prints the entire text of the resolution as does the Daily Times-Journal of the same date. The resolution is also given in the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, Proceedings, 1909, p. 52.

Previously under pressure from the military as the man in the middle between labour and capital, Peltier now found himself under attack from organized labour.

Among the many subjects of dispute which erupted at the Council and which ensued as an open debate between Peltier and Urry was the way Peltier had persuaded the men to return to work without a definite settlement.[11] To Urry's accusation that Peltier had a secret agreement with the C.P.R. and that he had persuaded the men to return to work under false pretenses, Peltier replied that his main concern was to prevent the places of the freight handlers being permanently taken by strikebreakers.

According to Urry, Peltier had violated the Riot Act by holding the Sunday mass meeting with the strikers, and had done so with impunity because he had urged them to return to work and not to fight it out. But that meeting, held with military permission, had been necessary in Peltier's view because of the C.P.R.'s resolve after the riot not to enter either negotiations or conciliation proceedings until the men returned to work. That no secret agreement existed was proved by the company's rejection of Peltier's request that it grant an increase without a conciliation board, a request in which Urry had evidently concurred. Accused of refusing to invoke

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[11]See the Daily News, August 19, 1909 for an interview with Peltier answering the Labour Council's criticisms, and for a letter from Urry elaborating his position on the strike and Peltier's role in it. The Daily Times-Journal, August 20, 1909 reprints the Peltier interview and the Urry letter.

the Lemieux Act because he wished to be a member of a conciliation board as mayor under the old Railway Act, Peltier responded that the delays involved in the Lemieux Act had prompted this action, not his desire to serve on a board. It was only after Mackenzie King had waived all such disabilities in connection with the strike that Peltier assented to using the Lemieux Act.

Retreating from some of his criticisms, Urry acknowledged that Peltier had emerged as "a sincere champion of the men" doing the best he could "from his own view". It is true that Peltier had concurred in Steele's plan to suppress the strike; on the other hand, he had used his good offices for mediation; he had pressed for concessions from the railway; and he had refused to accept responsibility for ordering the soldiers to fire on the strikers. The assessment of Peltier as "the only force for peace" during the strike itself seems valid.[12] And as Urry himself admitted, Peltier was "the most anxious man to have a full inquiry into the treatment of the men", a consideration Urry regarded as even more important than a wage increase.

That investigation was to be made, not by the Department of Labour, but by a Board of Investigation and Conciliation established under the provisions of the Lemieux Act. Convinced of the effectiveness of this legislation, King had

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[12]Garnet Clay Porter, "Men Return to Work . . .", Winnipeg Telegram, August 16, 1909.

been anxious to have such a Board appointed.[13] Acland's first task in Fort William, then, was to convince the strike committee to apply for such a Board. According to Acland, the freight handlers did so with the encouragement of both Peltier and Urry. But whether Urry felt this to be the best means for a thorough investigation is open to question, for he declined the freight handlers' nomination as their representative on the Board "in the interests of the labour movement of both these cities".[14] The men's second choice was Alderman W. T. Rankin; the C.P.R.'s representative was Winnipeg lawyer, W. J. Christie, and the chairman was the prominent Fort William contractor, S. C. Young, captain of the 96th Regiment and former member of the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen.

Considered by Acland to be "an object lesson" to freight handlers and leading citizens alike, the Board investigated and compared wage rates, the cost of living and working conditions.[15] Section 32 of the Act forbade publication of evidence presented at Board hearings; however, it is likely that this evidence was similar to reports which began appearing in the press about the conditions of the freight handlers.

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[13] Labour Gazette, X, 345.

[14] Ibid., 346.

[15] Ibid., 347-8; Daily Times-Journal, August 21, 1909.

The amazing shift in press reaction to the strikers within a few days of the riot has already been noted. Mayor Peltier's lead in criticizing conditions at the sheds and public condemnation of the C.P.R.'s employment practices by the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council had been augmented by newspaper reports investigating the causes of the strike. Included in articles vindicating the strikers' case were press interviews with freight handlers and other inhabitants of the coal dock district which illuminated their situation even more than the analysis of wages, hours and the cost of living presented at the hearings, and which are unique sources of local history.[16] "A Greek's Story" from the Daily News of August 16 is such an example:

> Macineo Diligines, a little withered [sic] old Greek, was in the fight and bears marks of the encounter. . . . "Seven years I worka the docks," he explained. "I came from Sparta and I have a wife and three children. Also I support my sister and mother and wife's father. They live in Greece. I send them twelve hundred dollars in seven years. I work here. My board costs eighteen dollars. It is not very good board. When lucky I make $55 per month but I work 15 hours a day some days when I make so much. This is for eight months. Then I go to the bush. Always I come back for I like to live by the lake. It is not enough they pay, no but if we got every day so many hours it would not be so bad. It is hard work, you see this?" and he held out two hands knotted and twisted. "Seven years in the docks do this for not always are the men strong and when the man at the other end he let go the heavy box it fall on me. Sometimes

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[16] Winnipeg Telegram, August 14, 1909; Daily News, August 16, 1909.

> it makes knots like these then maybe it is worse. We got a free doctor, yes, for that we pay one dollar each month and that is well to. But we should not have to fight to get the little checks. That is where I gotta my ribs break. In the crush. I was much strong when I come here seven years ago but each season this fight for the little check it get harder. We should not have to fighta for chance to work so hard."

Such on-the-spot reports led to general agreement in the press as to the causes of labour unrest at the C.P.R. freight sheds. Pointing to the bonus system, the irregular hours and the low pay, the Times-Journal editorial of August 17 urged the C.P.R. to ameliorate these conditions for the sake not only of the men, but for the well-being of the community as a whole. The Daily News story of the same date backed Mayor Peltier's claim that higher pay was warranted with the following facts:

> For instance the scale established by the fair wage clause is two dollars per day of ten hours work for unskilled labor. This twenty cents an hour is also what the trades and labor council has placed as the minimum for unorganized [un-] skilled labor. This city pays it on all municipal work and there is a great deal of such work going on at present. The same scale applies in Port Arthur. The water works laborers draw twenty-five cents an hour. . . . Therefore, these men claim a higher wage than even the city pays rough laborers would be the fair thing on the docks.

The Winnipeg Telegram of August 16 gives this analysis of the basic cause of dissatisfaction:

> The waste of human effort in the system against which all coal dock towns is complaining is so obvious that the chief

> astonishment one feels over the situation is that the great industrial institution whose keynote is economy and business administration is satisfied. It is the same today at the head of navigation as it always has been all over the world. The surprise is more that one thousand able bodied men can be found regularly applying for this work on the basis on which it is conducted when the whole west is demanding labor on a more normal standard.

Such reports must have influenced the outcome of the Board of Conciliation and Investigation, as did the comparison made with freight handlers wages elsewhere. The revelation that the freight handlers of Owen Sound received a lower rate at 15¢ an hour was found by the C.P.R. representative on the Board to reflect favourably on the Fort William scale,[17] a view later castigated by a socialist paper which found nothing praiseworthy in the Fort William freight handlers being the second lowest paid in Canada.[18] The Board's eventual acceptance of the idea that the Fort William wage required upward revision was based principally on its comparison of wages paid locally for similar labour.[19] Included in the Board's unanimous report handed down on August 24 was a recommendation setting the new rate at 20½¢ an hour for days and 23½¢ for nights. Also recommended was immediate cancellation of the bonus system.

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[17] Daily Times-Journal, August 26, 1909.

[18] Cotton's Weekly, September 2, 1909.

[19] Labour Gazette, X, 348-9 gives text of the findings of the Conciliation Board.

With the abolition of the one cent bonus, the raise in pay was only two cents an hour, half the amount for which the freight handlers had struck, and which they thought they had won when they returned to work August 16. During the Board hearing they had announced their intention to refuse anything less than their original demand; they neverlesless reluctantly acceded to the Board's decision.[20] The C.P.R. had already given its pledge to abide by whatever the Board recommended.

It is apparent that the C.P.R. was willing to accept the Lemieux Act because it had no intention of granting the five cent increase. The strikers, as it turned out, had been deceived into returning to work. Without a board, on the other hand, there might have been no increase at all. With a strengthened C.P.R. police force and the men back at work, things could have remained much as they were before August 9, 1909.

With little evidence available about the actual hearings, it is impossible to judge the nature of the inquiry into the working conditions of the freight handlers which both Urry and Peltier had been anxious to have. The Reports of both the Conciliation Board and the Deputy Minister of Labour indicate that the results of the investigations were superficial at best. With regard to the contentious bonus

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[20]Daily Times-Journal, August 26, 1909.

system, for example, the Deputy Minister had only this to say:

> The question of the degree of hardship imposed on the men by a bonus system which holds them to the employing company until the end of the season regardless of the amount of work received, unless the extra remuneration involved be sacrificed, similarly depends largely on local conditions and on the character of the men employed, and it is not one concerning which any general pronouncements may be made with advantage.[21]

In its report, the Conciliation Board said nothing about the basic cause of unrest inherent in the irregular hours and the daily battle for employment. The analysis of working conditions went no further than an examination of specific complaints concerning maltreatment by certain foremen. Nonetheless, the wage increase and abolition of the bonus were important gains, which possibly would not have been attained without the appointment of a Board whose recommendations, in turn, could have been even less generous without the violence and the resulting focus on the conditions of the Fort William freight handlers.

And what was the source of this violence? A rather ingenuous explanation is found in the interpretation of the events given by Acland. As noted in the previous chapter, the role of the C.P.R. police in triggering the riot had not been ignored by the Deputy Minister. In fact, the only

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[21] Labour Gazette, X, 343.

specific criticism of the C.P.R. in his report relates to the railway's use of its private police force. Throughout the hearings, Acland and the members of the Board emphasized that the strike had been occasioned by the failure of the freight handlers to seek conciliation in the first place.[22] Had the workers but invoked the Lemieux Act instead of striking, the violence could have been avoided (as could "the great loss to shipping the mercantile interests of the country").[23]

For their part, the strikers pleaded ignorance of the labour legislation on account of being foreign, stating that they had "acted in good faith, and as they would have acted in their own respective countries".[24] This explanation seemed plausible enough to the Board members and to the Deputy Minister who accepted the freight handlers' promise never to strike again without resorting first to the Department of Labour. Indeed, there seems to have been a genuine effort to understand the position of the workers as immigrants, which may not have been the case had it not been so dramatically exposed. Nevertheless, the lesson of the strike

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[22] Ibid., 343; 347.

[23] Ibid., 348-49.

[24] Ibid., 347. "Had we but known of the existence of the Lemieux Act, we would not have ceased work until we had invoked the good offices of the Minister of Labour."

which the Department wanted to emphasize was this: If workers would only make use of the conciliation service it provided through the Lemieux Act, strikes and the violence arising out of labour disputes would become avoidable, unnecessary, and obsolete.

The representative of another government department did not share the sanguine views held by the Department of Labour either of the cause of the violence or of the immigrant workers' good intentions to abide by the law in the future. From the vantage point of the District Officer Commanding Military District No. 10, the source of past and future violence lay with the immigrants themselves. In Steele's view (in which, he reported, both C.P.R. officials and the Mayor concurred), the military operation had been "beneficial", for "on previous occasions the offences of the foreigners had been condoned and very little punishment meted out."[25] The Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council had recorded its view that the purpose of the militia was defence against foreign foes abroad.[26] But Colonel Steele was thinking in terms of "foreign foes" inside Canada when he recommended to the Militia Council the augmentation of both the local militia and the permanent force stationed in Winnipeg. The former was necessary "owing to the very great number of foreigners in the two cities of Fort William and Port Arthur",

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[25]Steele to Militia Council, August 20, 1908, p. 8.

[26]Daily News, August 17, 1909.

and the latter in the eventuality of more than one such crisis occurring at the same time in the District.[27]

But what of the relationship of the employer of this foreign labour to the violence? Given the evidence of the part played by C.P.R. constables in the riot, the provocative role of railway police in labour disputes could not be ignored. Included in the Deputy Minister of Labour's Report was his cautiously phrased recommendation to limit the powers of private police forces:

> . . . it is at least arguable whether the public interests do not demand such an amendment of the law as would require that the consent of the public officers responsible for the peace of the community should be procured before so large a body of armed men is brought within the limits of the municipality concerned.[28]

In 1909 the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada endorsed a similar proposal when it adopted a resolution presented by William Higgins of Fort William protesting the "practice of allowing private corporations to employ private constables with the powers of regular police."[29]

The local courts, however, upheld the powers of the company police.[30] The Canadian Pacific police, although employed and paid for by the company, were found to have the

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[27]Steele to Militia Council, August 20, 1909, p. 8.

[28]Labour Gazette, X, 344.

[29]Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, Proceedings, 1909, p. 69.

[30]Daily Times-Journal, November 3, 1910.

same status as the municipal police, as they were duly sworn in as officers of the law. This was the decision reached in the suit by Dr. G. E. McCartney against the C.P.R. for damages to his windows incurred during the strike by bullets fired by the railway police. The case was dismissed for "the king and the law can do no wrong. If the king or the law does anything the act is right whether it is or not."[31]

Another source of antagonism to the C.P.R. police in labour circles related to the trials following the riot. No constable involved in the shooting was charged,[32] but rather, the police appeared as crown witnesses in the cases of "ringleaders" arrested for disturbing the peace.[33] Of the fifteen men involved, all were Greek except for two Italians. At the insistence of lawyers A. E. Cole, who frequently acted in labour cases, and J. E. Swinburne, the accused appeared before judge and jury. One case was dismissed without trial, eight men were acquitted, and six were convicted, receiving sentences ranging from thirty days to nine months. In view

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[31]The issue of private railway police forces has remained a contentious one in labour organizations. See editorial, "Undue Private Power", Globe and Mail, August 21, 1971 which endorses criticisms by the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Transport and General Workers of "one of the more glaring of those relics from a bygone era--the special police forces the railways are empowered by law to employ."

[32]The Industrial Banner, September, 1909 made this observation.

[33]Reports of the trials may be found in the Daily Times-Journal, August 17 and 25, 1909 and the Daily News, August 18, 26 and 28, 1909.

of the initial reaction against the strikers after the riot, these sentences appear somewhat light. Deportation, the conviction of "every mother's son of them of an offence which will send them to prison", and life sentences for violation of the Riot Act had been considered as possible sequels to the shooting.[34] But harsh sentences handed down simultaneously with the announcement of the Conciliation Board's report might have been impolitic, for they could have destroyed the apparent atmosphere of reconciliation created by the Department of Labour.

If the role of the C.P.R. police was abhorrent to the trade union movement, that of the military was even more so. Among the Port Arthur Labor Council's criticisms of the Mayor was his calling out of the militia,[35] an action which Peltier defended on the ground that "the regularly authorized or recognized force of the militia" was preferable to that of the C.P.R. police in restoring order.[36] The use of the militia in strikes was intolerable to the Labor Council for several reasons. Since its ranks came mainly from the upper level of

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[34]The Daily Times-Journal, August 16, 1909 gives these two reports: (1) "That deportation is being considered officially as a means of curing the lawlessness which has obtained in the coal dock district was the declaration of Magistrate Palling from the police court bench this afternoon." (2) "Chief Dodds today announced that immunity would be granted to none of the strikers who can be identified as men who handled any kind of a weapon during the riot Thursday."

[35]Daily News, August 17, 1909.

[36]Ibid., August 19, 1909.

the working class, the use of the militia in strikes had the effect of splitting labour and of pitting trade unionists against other workers. The intervention of the military also added to the advantageous position of the employers. In the view of W. G. Whiteside, Chairman of the Port Arthur Labor Council, "It wasn't the company that beat the men it was the militia," an attitude expressed in the resolution of the Council on the strike. The Council, it said,

> respectfully requests the government and the military authorities to consider the advisability of keeping the militia to defend the city from foreign foes, if deemed advisable, but not to disgrace the citizen soldier in the eyes of all working men by compelling him to take up arms to force his fellow worker back into a condition of wage slavery that is a disgrace to civilization, such as the employment of men at 17½¢ an hour for hard and precarious work by one of the wealthiest companies in the world--all for more profit.[37]

Organized labour found fault less with the general demeanour of the military than with the use of both the military and the Fort William police in coercing strikers. As witness to the combined military and police operation against the strikers' meeting of August 14, Urry had been more than disturbed by "the action of the authorities, whoever they were, that ordered or consented to that meeting being blockaded and every man examined and searched by the

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[37]Daily News, August 17, 1909.

constables with armed men in the room."[38] The special Council meeting denounced this use of military and the police as a misapplication of the law. "If that is what they call law, I fail to see it," declared Urry. "I would call it anarchy."[39] Some trade unionists present drew stronger conclusions about the function of the law from the handling of the strike:

> Someone asked what the law was anyway and the answer came from the body of the hall that the law was only for the masters. There was no law for the men. It was all for the masters against the workers.

For such condemnations of the law the Labor Council found itself under attack. An anonymous "laborer" publicly described the Council's actions as unrepresentative of the views of local workers who had "little in common with Urry or hot blooded Europeans."[40] In an editorial on August 19, the Times-Journal reminded Urry that, "it was insinuations and innuendoes against policemen that led to the Haymarket riot in Chicago and the consequent hanging of five men as inciters of the riot." The conflict between the freight handlers and the C.P.R., thus, had furthered a class conscious attitude within labour circles towards the military

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[38] Daily News, August 19, 1909.

[39] Ibid., August 17, 1909.

[40] Ibid., August 23, 1909. "Laborer's" letter concluded: "Here's wishing Canadians and white men always get top wages and confusion to secessionists and anarchists."

and its role in strikes, an attitude which some sections in the community found alarming.

Another result of the strike for the Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council was its new sense of identity with immigrant workers, which it translated into a pledge to organize the dock workers of both cities at the Lakehead.[41] Although trade unionists had placed ultimate responsibility for the violence on the C.P.R. and its police force, they also believed that because the strikers were not organized, "they did not handle their trouble right." The task of unionizing the freight handlers, though, fell to the International Longshoremen's Association. In response to the freight handlers' plea on the first day of the strike for the intervention of the I.L.A.'s international president, its vice-president Isaac Sanderson finally arrived at the Lakehead on August 20.[42] At first indefinite about granting a charter to the freight handlers because of the questionable permanence[43] of such a union, Sanderson was able to announce in October that that organization would proceed.[44]

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[41] Ibid., August 17, 1909.

[42] The Globe, August 14, 1909; Daily Times-Journal, August 20, 1909.

[43] Daily News, August 23, 1909.

[44] Ibid., October 9, 1909.

For the strikers, then, the results of the riot appeared somewhat felicitous. Instead of threatened deportations, harsh prison sentences and the exclusion of any nationality from the sheds, the outcome had been an improvement in wages, abolition of the bonus, minor convictions, and investigation into the conditions at the freight sheds by the local and national press and by the government. The riot had also focused the attention of the labour movement at the local, national and international levels on the plight of the unorganized foreign-born worker. In commenting on the significance of the number of strikes among this class of labourer whom it said had been imported to take the jobs of native Canadians, the Industrial Banner (September, 1909) contended that "the poor, exploited foreigners had good cause for revolt", and urged that they be organized. The socialist Cotton's Weekly (September 2, 1909) elevated the strike rioters to the status of "martyrs since, through them and their deeds, the conditions of wage slavery of their comrades have been discovered." And now it seemed that the freight handlers at last were to be organized. But Sanderson's return the following spring to complete this task coincided with the adoption by the C.P.R. of an employment policy which made organization impossible.

Before the 1910 shipping season began, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company announced that no longer would it hire

Greeks or Italians as freight handlers.[45] Rumours that this might invoke the excluded workers to riot were met with confidence by the chief of the C.P.R.'s secret service department:

> . . . you can bet your life that they won't make as much headway as they did last fall. The police department of the C.P.R. is organized this year, and just now enough constables could be mustered to compete with a company of soldiers, let alone a bunch of foreigners who would not stop running if they saw a red coat walking down the coal docks streets. We don't anticipate any trouble, but should the Greeks and Italians start a riot we will be on hand.[46]

As the railway's secret service men mingled with the Greeks and Italians watching from a distance, the first ship of the season uneventfully docked at the C.P.R. sheds for unloading by three hundred and fifty men imported to Fort William to replace them.

For the Greeks and Italians, then, the strike had been broken. The C.P.R. had repeated its earlier practice by replacing successful strikers with imported men. It is true that the new employees and the non-Greek and Italian strikers benefited from the new wage agreement resulting from conciliation. But for those who had initiated the strike, a total lock-out prevailed. Their exclusion resulted from a labour dispute; since no such dispute prevailed

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[45] Daily Times-Journal, April 8, 1910.

[46] "350 Men Arrive . . .", Ibid., April 13, 1910.

when the C.P.R. issued its mandate against the Greeks and Italians, the provisions of the Lemieux Act regarding lock-outs did not apply. Mackenzie King's intervention in the 1909 freight handlers strike to prove the beneficience of his labour legislation had been futile.

In its intervention on behalf of the freight handlers, the trade union movement has been as ineffective as conciliation when confronted by the power of the C.P.R. Yet its commitment to lend assistance to unorganized, immigrant workers had been no idle gesture, for the Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council later appointed its own organizer for the purpose of unionizing this class of workers.[47] Neither had the International Longshoremen's Association refused to intervene in the case of the Fort William freight handlers. After the 1907 strike, the I.L.A. had tried to organize the freight handlers, but had failed.[48] We have seen how the C.P.R. handled its 1910 attempt to organize the strikers of the previous year. The I.L.A. protest against this discriminatory policy and its guarantee that the freight handlers would refrain from violence in the future went unheeded.[49]

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[47]See p. 176-7.

[48]Daily Times-Journal, August 20, 1907.

[49]Ibid., April 14, 1910. Sanderson reported the result of his fruitless interview with General Manager Bury to the Fort William Trades and Labor Council.

Until the mid-1930's, there would be no permanent organization of freight handlers in Fort William.[50]

With the exclusion of the Greeks and Italians from the C.P.R. sheds was heard another voice sympathetic to immigrants. In an impassioned "Plea for the Foreigners", railway contractor John King condemned C.P.R. policy because of its detrimental effect on both the excluded workers and on local business.[51] "The interests which will benefit from the change to the detriment of some of our citizens, law abiding ones, are the interests of Toronto, Montreal, Quebec and the C.P.R.," King argued. King's ownership of considerable property in Fort William's coal docks section perhaps had some bearing on his obvious outrage at C.P.R. policy. His view, though, must have been representative of businessmen whose pro-labour attitudes were inspired by their own working class origins and by the commercial benefits to be derived from a stable and well-paid labour force in the community. King's assertion, that it was up to the law to persecute criminals, not up to the C.P.R. to discriminate against whole nationalities whose ownership of property had increased assessment values in the municipality, is not surprising in this context.

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[50]According to Mr. Frank Mazur, President, Local 650, Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks.

[51]Daily Times-Journal, April 20, 1910. See Ibid., May 13, 1911 for biographical sketch of King.

Sympathetic reaction to the plight of the foreign-born also came from the Protestant churches, particularly Wesley Methodist in Fort William, and St. Paul's Presbyterian in Port Arthur. The Reverend Dr. S. C. Murray of St. Paul's reacted to the strike by delivering an outspoken sermon on the relationship of capital to labour and the effect of this relationship on the community.[52] Unlike many Protestant clergymen who placed responsibility for the destitution of immigrants in Canada on their religious beliefs and social customs,[53] Murray perceived that the source of the immigrant problem lay within the control of the economy by the big corporations. Taking his text from Luke 10:7, "the labourer is worthy of his hire", Murray asked his congregation:

> Can we, out of the raw material that is coming from Continental Asia and Europe, develop a type of citizen commensurate with Canadian ideas, on $1.75 a day? Is this a question which we as citizens have a right to consider, or must we submit to the will of certain corporations and then struggle with the problems that arise without thought to the conditions from which these problems generate, problems of education, sanitation, child labor and police and evangelization problems effecting the physical and moral well-being of our city?

A practical response to these problems came from the Wesley Methodists during the ministry of the Reverend Hiram Hull.

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[52]The Daily News, September 8, 1909 prints the text of the sermon.

[53]See for example p. 62, n. 10 for a sample of such opinion.

As a result of the strike, they established an industrial mission house in Fort William's coal dock section,[54] which has played a considerable role in the "Canadianization" of the inhabitants in that locality.

The long-term effect of the riot on the coal dock community itself is difficult to assess. That the riot and the exploits of the strikers became legendary can be seen today in the pride still evinced in the defiance of the workers and in the leadership of men like Bosco Dominico.[55] The sense of solidarity which allowed "ringleaders" to escape after the riot is still expressed in a guarded reluctance to to give information about participants in the riot. A not uncommon reaction was that of an eighty-five year old striker of 1909 who told the writer, "Why should I cause anyone trouble when I have only a few years left to live."

More immediately, the strike resulted in the scatter-

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[54] Daily Times-Journal, November 16, 1909. For a brief history of the mission, see Wesley United Church, 1891-1961, The History of Our Church [Fort William, 1961] pp. 16-21. In it the following claim is made: "The Hon. G. D. Robertson of Ontario Labour Board has said that the foreigners at the head of the lakes have not aggravated the labour situation in the least as far as his dealings with labour are concerned. All this would not have been possible without Prohibition and but for the great constructive activities in citizenship which have been brought about by the constant vigilant, inspiring leadership of Wesley Institute."

[55] Through the courtesy of Mrs. Julia Marchiori and Mrs. Amy Lenton, nieces of Bosco Dominico, the writer was able to talk with many pioneer residents of the coal dock district who preferred, however, to have their conversations unrecorded.

ing of the Greeks throughout the Lakehead and beyond, many returning to their homeland. (One Greek old-timer told the writer that the C.P.R. only recently has lifted its restriction on Greek labour.) The majority of Italians remained in the district, however, many returning to the freight sheds in 1912 when the C.P.R. reversed its policy towards them. As will be seen in the following chapters, the experiences of 1909 did not diminish the militancy of the Italians, Greeks and other foreign labour at the Lakehead.

VII

TRADE UNIONISM AND IMMIGRANT LABOUR: THE MYTH OF CONCILIATION

One conclusion drawn from the 1909 strike had been that its violent outbreak could have been averted had the workers invoked the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act before striking. This idea, expressed by the Department of Labour and by the freight handlers alike, had also been implicit in the pledge by the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council to organize immigrant workers: from unionization, it was believed, proper procedures would follow precluding violence. In 1912 the Canadian Northern Coal and Ore Dock Company was struck by immigrant workers who had been organized into a union and who twice presented their case to a conciliation board established under the Lemieux Act. Nevertheless violence occurred under these conditions, supposedly conducive to industrial peace.

Besides the inclusion of the coal handlers within the trade union movement and their use of conciliation proceedings, the 1912 strike was distinguished from that of 1909 by the growing influence of radical socialists within the labour movement, particularly amongst immigrant longshoremen. The involvement of both the trade union and socialist movements in the strike poses the problem of

their relationship to the violence which occurred. Can either be implicated in the riot, particularly the socialists who at the time were held to be at least partially responsible? And what of the immigrant workers themselves? Did they represent a permanent source of violence to the community, as Colonel S. B. Steele had believed? And finally, what influence did the changing relationships of immigrants, trade unionists and socialists one with the other have on their relationship to the larger community?

Between 1909 and 1912, labour organizations grew and radical thought spread in Canada as they did throughout the world. Canadian trade union membership jumped from fifty thousand in 1900 to one hundred and seventy-five thousand in 1913, with a corresponding rise in the number of strikes.[1] While socialist and labour strength at the polls never was as spectacular as in Britain or in the United States, significant electoral successes did occur, particularly at the municipal level.[2]

The economy of the wheat boom's climactic years stimulated this development. The "increased and increasing" cost

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[1]Charles Lipton, The Trade Union Movement of Canada 1827-1959 (Montreal: Canadian Social Publications Limited, 1966), p. 99.

[2]Ibid., pp. 118-21. The mayoralty of L. L. Peltier, 1909-10 is an outstanding local example. Some obscure socialist victories are given in Cotton's Weekly. On January 2, 1911 it reports the election of "comrade" R. M. Beal as Mayor of Lindsay, Ontario, and on January 11, 1911 it reports three socialists elected to the Ignace council in Northwest Ontario.

of living, the "most vital of all problems" accompanied a decline in real wages.[3] Startling contrasts between the extravagances of the rich and the privations of the poor reinforced radical thought about the class nature of society, while on the other hand, full employment and labour shortages, those adjuncts of economic growth facilitated trade union membership and strike activity.

Two memorable events in 1910 symbolized the way these developments expressed themselves at the Canadian Lakehead. These were the opening of the new Finnish Labor Temple in March and the meeting of the twenty-sixth annual convention of Trades and Labor Congress of Canada that September.

Made possible by the sacrifice and dedication of Finnish workers, the Finnish Labor Temple at 314 Bay Street was regarded as one of the finest buildings in Port Arthur.[4] The centre for political and cultural activities of the Finns and socialists of other nationalities, it also became a popular meeting place for many labour unions. In the year of the Temple's opening, the Finnish socialists seem to have had good rapport with the larger community as well, at least as represented by the municipal government. In response to

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[3] J. Castell Hopkins, ed., Canadian Annual Review, 1912 (Toronto, 1913), pp. 278-9. See also "The Cost of Living", Daily Times-Journal, March 8, 1910 for analysis of the effect of rising costs on workingmen's standard of living in Fort William.

[4] Daily News, March 17, 1910.

the convivial banquet and concert held at the Temple for city officials to promote the Finnish building by-law,[5] the Daily News made this appeal to the electorate:

> It is not too much to you, is it, if the Finlanders get their common hearth of education free from taxes, when tax exemption has been granted to wealthy corporations.[6]

The radical stance of the Finns did not deter the mayor and city council from seeking Finnish support for certain by-laws in return for endorsation of a by-law exempting the Labor Temple from taxation for five years. But not enough English-speaking voters expressed interest in helping preserve in Canada the civilization which "the tyrannic government of Russia is trying to destroy" in Finland. The vote of 296 in favour to 260 against the by-law fell short of the required percentage for its success.[7]

The relationship between the Finnish socialists and the trade union movement seems to have been an amicable one at this time. The Finns participated in the Labour Day parades sponsored by the two labour councils. With the largest contingent in the 1909 parade, for example, they displayed such slogans as: "'Workers of the world united,' 'Down with capitalism,' 'Keep the class lines clear,' 'Down

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[5]Ibid., June 10, 1910.

[6]Ibid., June 11, 1911.

[7]Daily News, June 16, 1910.

with alcohol,' etc."[8] Of the three carpenters unions affiliated with the Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council, one was the Finnish Carpenters Union.[9] Labour returned these gestures of unity. Frederick Urry represented both the trade union movement and the English-speaking community at the Temple's openings ceremonies on March 19,[10] and later it was probably he who praised the Temple as "a monument to the industry, thrift and co-operative spirit of our Finnish fellow workers."[11]

One of the most celebrated functions in the history of organized labour at the Lakehead took place at the Finnish Labor Temple on the occasion these words were written, the 1910 convention of the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada.[12] The other assembly point was Fort William's city hall, and the place chosen for the public meeting in honour of the event

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[8] Ibid., September 7, 1909.

[9] Souvenir of Port Arthur and Fort William, (hereinafter referred to as Congress Souvenir). Published by the Trades and Labor Councils in honour of the 1910 Trades and Labor Congress Convention, this pamphlet lists the affiliates of both councils, and contains other useful information about the local labour movement and the two municipalities. The writer is indebted to Mr. Eli Bro for directing her attention to the Souvenir and to Mr. William Arnberg for his permission to duplicate it.

[10] Daily News, March 18, 1910.

[11] Congress Souvenir.

[12] Daily Times-Journal, September 10 to 17, 1910 gives extensive coverage of the convention. The Daily News for these dates is missing.

was Wesley Methodist Church. These three places symbolized important aspects of working class activity. The Finnish Labor Temple represented immigrant workers and socialists; the Fort William City Hall during the mayoralty of L. L. Peltier expressed the political achievements of the upper level of the working class and the fulfillment of its anti-monopoly policies through the municipal ownership of public utilities;[13] Wesley Methodist Church manifested the social gospel tradition and the close ties between church and labour which resulted in Ministerial Association representation on the labour councils of the two cities.[14]

At the Congress, the two often conflicting goals of organized labour stood out. Secretary-Treasurer P. M. Draper, on the one hand, urged that "organized labour must go among the yet unorganized and preach the gospel of fraternity, mutuality of the interests of the toilers,"[15] while most delegates concerned themselves with the protection of the interests of the organized from the influx of immigrants. The Times-Journal noted the anomoly between this emphasis of self-interest to the neglect of "the great majority of

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[13]See L. L. Peltier, "Fort William and its Utilities", Congress Souvenir for his exposition of "the benefit and justice of municipal ownership."

[14]The Thunder Bay Ministerial Association elected delegates to the Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council in 1910 (Daily News, March 1, 1910), and to the Fort William Labor Council in 1911 (Daily Times-Journal, July 13, 1911).

[15]Congress Souvenir.

workers . . . who are at the mercy of predatory interests," and criticized the programme of the Trades and Labor Congress for "not going far enough":

> . . . the aristocracy of Labor cannot afford to neglect the grave and pressing questions in which its weaker brother is deeply interested, but which he has no voice to proclaim. It is only by enrolling under its banner the interests of this silent army that the present Labor party of Canada can become a great power.[16]

This commentary may have been prompted by the Congress resolutions; it was not entirely justified, however, by the actions of the trade union movement. The many strikes of the period show that organized labour's neglect of the unorganized was dictated as much by its own conflicts with "unwilling and antagonistic employers"[17] as by its traditional exclusiveness. Within the trade union movement as well, there were many individuals and organizations who sought to unionize the unskilled and the immigrant workers, and where unionization proved unfeasible, who acted on behalf of this class of worker.

The Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council is a good example of a labour body taking an active interest in the welfare of unorganized unskilled labour, as we have already seen how it intervened in the 1909 freight handlers strike. From its founding in 1908, the Council had championed the

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[16] Daily Times-Journal, September 14, 1910.

[17] P. M. Draper in Congress Souvenir.

cause of labourers employed on the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway whom the Council found to be "victims of a system of robbery and espionage hard to believe in this civilized age."[18] Resolutions initiated by the Port Arthur group and later passed by both labour councils, court actions, and headlines like "Shame's Giant Shadow in Darkest New Ontario"[19] finally resulted in government investigation. Only temporarily, however, were the worst offences in the camps ended.[20]

Unscrupulous labour agents also exploited workers by taking a fee and then sending them by rail to non-existent construction jobs. With the support of the Fort William Labor Council and the Thunder Bay Ministerial Association, the Labor Council of Port Arthur successfully initiated the demand for municipal labour bureaus to overcome "the terrible suffering and loss of limb and life, by exposure in this district, and the victims are scarce regarded."[21] The Port Arthur Labor Council supported the unionization of workers

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[18]Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council Object and Aim", Congress Souvenir.

[19]Daily News, April 17, 1909. Under this banner headline were following sub-heads: "Allegations Made in Port Arthur, if True, Reveal a System of White Slavery on Railway Construction in This District", and "Victims are Mostly Foreigners whose Inability to Talk the Language is Taken Advantage of---Investigation Demanded".

[20]The Daily News, May 26, 1911 reports investigations by the Department of Labour of similar complaints at the request of the City of Port Arthur.

[21]Daily Times-Journal, September 30, 1911.

in the bush. The first such venture took place in 1908 with the Brotherhood of Lumbermen, an affiliate of the Canadian Federation of Labor,[22] whose Schreiber branch is listed in the 1910 Congress Souvenir. In 1911, the Council lent its support to an A.F.L. union named the Lumber and Construction Workers Union whose purpose was "to protect workers against abuses."[23] Contrary to the editorial opinion of the Times-Journal, then, these initiatives of the Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council show that sections of organized labour did become concerned with the "system of barely disguised peonage" prevailing in many railroad camps.[24]

The Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council also directed itself to the unskilled and unorganized workers. As seen earlier, it gave high priority to the unionization of the immgrant dock workers of both Port Arthur and Fort William following the 1909 freight handlers strike. Although the Trades and Labor Congress had vetoed requests from Port Arthur delegates Frederick Urry and Andrew Boyd in 1908 and 1909 that it take measures to extend organization to "New Ontario in the interests of the Congress,"[25] in 1910 it appointed machinist Andrew Boyd, secretary-treasurer of the

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[22]Ibid., April 22, 1908, April 27, 1908; Daily News, April 28, 1908.

[23]Daily News, May 18, 1911.

[24]Daily Times-Journal, September 14, 1910.

[25]Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, Report of Proceedings, 1908, p. 87; Report of Proceedings 1909, p. 80.

Port Arthur Council as its organizer for Port Arthur and Fort William. In 1910 Boyd reported to the Congress on his organizational progress with the dock workers:

> The coal handlers are organized in Fort William, a strong and numerous body. Here in Port Arthur they are all foreigners, but I will get them also. The freight handlers in both cities are unorganized in spite of their experiences a year or so ago. We will get them bye and bye.[26]

The freight handlers eluded organization, but the Port Arthur coal handlers responded. At the Finnish Labor Temple on March 18, 1911 Andrew Boyd presented the inaugural meeting of the Port Arthur Coal Handlers Union with its charter as Local 319, International Longshoremen's Association.[27] Employees of the Canadian Northern Coal and Ore Dock Company, the union recruits were mainly of Italian origin, the balance comprising Finns, Slavs, and some British. Most lived in Port Arthur, but many seem to have been resident of Fort William's coal dock district and perhaps had participated in the 1909 strike. Now drawn into the orbit of the labour movement, they would soon become exposed to the various political and social ideas surrounding it.

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[26]Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, Report of Proceedings, 1910, p. 38.

[27]Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Archives. Port Arthur Coal Handlers Union, Minutes, March 18, 1911. The writer is grateful to Mr. Gordon DiGiacomo for locating this document in the possession of Mr. John Tiboni who subsequently donated it to the Museum.

As shown by this verbatim excerpt from the Union Minutes of April 25, 1911, the immediate objective of the coal handlers in becoming organized, however, was an increase in wages over the current 20¢ an hour for days and 25¢ for nights:

> They all said that the wages in the boat we all wanted 32½¢ an hour in boat working in the Dock 27½¢ an hour after six o'clock we wanted all time and half. working in Sunday we wanted double time And Hope we get it.

In presenting these demands the new union was confronted not only by company opposition to its wage proposals but also by a challenge to its very existence. In counteracting the moves of the Canadian Northern Coal Company, the union would have the guidance of the Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council.

In response to these wage demands, the company fired five executive officers of the union, including Mike Pento and George Ross, the president and secretary.[28] The company made its attitude clear by denying to the press any knowledge of either the union's existence or of any difficulties with its employees. At the same time, it was reported that company superintendent N. N. Jorpland had travelled to Duluth to import men for employment at the coal docks, in violation of the Alien Labour Act.[29]

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[28] Daily News, May 11, 1911.

[29] Ibid., May 15, 1911.

The coal handlers first reaction was to strike, but on the advice of Frederick Urry, Organizer Boyd and President Price of the Port Arthur Labor Council, they agreed to apply to the Department of Labour for a conciliation board.[30] The Department acted immediately, with somewhat favourable results for the coal handlers.[31]

As the recommended increases fell short of the C.P.R. schedule for coal handlers, the union at first rejected the Conciliation Board's unanimous report,[32] but decided later against striking on the advice of Andrew Boyd, their representative on the Board.[33] Besides time and a half for Sundays and overtime, the increases ranged from five to ten cents an hour, making the basic rate 25¢ an hour for dock work and 30¢ for boat work.[34] The winter rate was a flat 22½¢ an hour. Another result of conciliation was

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[30]Coal Handlers Union, Minutes, undated. Daily Times-Journal, May 11, 1911.

[31]"Report of Board in Dispute between the Canadian Northern Coal and Ore Dock Company, Limited of Port Arthur, Ontario and certain employees, members of coal handlers union, No. 319", Labour Gazette, XII (July 1911), 47-49.

[32]Coal Handlers Union, Minutes, June 6, 1911. The Daily News, May 16, 1911 reports that the union demands had been based on the C.P.R. schedule in Fort William which paid 27½¢ an hour for dock work and 32½¢ for vessel work. The C.P.R. coal handlers had been organized for some time. See "List of Organized Labor Unions in Fort William", Congress Souvenir, 1910.

[33]Coal Handlers Union, Minutes, June 15, 1911.

[34]Ibid.; Labour Gazette, XII, 49.

recognition by the company of the union's existence, for it agreed to reinstate the five discharged union officers and not to discriminate against union members in the future. The winning of a contract in force until April 30, 1912 seemed to represent a victory for the men, and as well a vindication of their use of the Lemieux Act.

During the term of the contract, many developments took place in the politics of the working class to which the coal handlers would become exposed through their affiliation to the Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council. Interest in the political process was stimulated by Frederick Urry's election in 1911 as labour's representative on city council.[35] Then just prior to the 1911 federal election, the coal handlers sent the largest contingent of any union to the Labour Day parade where they heard speeches on two aspects of working class politics.[36] The Alberta M.L.A., Charles O'Brien of the Socialist Party of Canada, urged the abolition of "wage slavery" by the workers whose "only excuse on earth was to provide profit for a parasite class, and their only hope was to secure parliamentary representation." Representing independent labour politics was Frederick Urry who predicted electoral success for labour if workers' organizations "would stand together on the main

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[35] Daily News, January 6, 1911.

[36] Daily Times-Journal, September 7, 1911.

principle" despite differences amongst them. Stressing the internationalism of the labour movement, Urry made a special appeal to the immigrant workers, warning that if they were "led astray by politicians" those conditions they had fled would prevail in Canada.

But appeals for class unity had little effect in the 1911 federal election. The reciprocity issue so overwhelmed all other considerations in Lakehead politics that most sections of the working class swung from traditional labour or Liberal loyalties to the Conservatives. Mike Pento, president of the Port Arthur coal handlers, Bosco Dominico, the spokesman of the freight handlers of 1909, Sam Wright, the socialist advocate of "workingman's clubs", and leaders of the Slav community all campaigned on behalf of the Conservative candidate, Port Arthur's Mayor J. J. Carrick.[37] The Daily News also wooed the workers. The headline "Reciprocity would Wipe Fort William and Port Arthur off the Map of North America" which blazoned across the front page of September 5 typified its election pronouncements. So did the heading "Workingman Scores Reciprocity Party" over a front-page letter on September 7 advising, "If you cannot send members of your own class to represent your class interests, try new pasture." The New Ontario Independent Labor Party had been founded by Urry and labour council officers in both cities to contest the

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[37]Daily News, September 2, 1911; Daily News, September 8, 1911; Daily Times-Journal, September 8, 1911.

election,[38] but it never managed to make a nomination. The Liberal incumbent, James Conmee, withdrew and on October 5 J. J. Carrick won the seat of Thunder Bay and Rainy River by acclamation.[39] (The national election date was September 21.)

The Independent Labor Party recovered sufficiently for the December provincial election campaign when it presented a radical platform which advocated "the establishment of production for use and not for profit."[40] With Frederick Urry as its candidate in Port Arthur riding and the backing this time of the trade unions (including the coal handlers),[41] the I.L.P. threat was considered sufficiently serious that the Liberals did not contest the election to ensure a Conservative victory.[42] In Fort William, the working class divided its vote between the I.L.P. and the Liberals. With the latter concentrating its energies in the coal docks section,[43] the Conservative won there as well.[44]

Another disadvantage for the I.L.P. was suggested in

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[38] Daily Times-Journal, August 3, 1911.

[39] Daily News, October 5, 1911.

[40] The Daily Times-Journal, November 6, 1911 gives the complete platform of the New Ontario I.L.P. According to Urry, the provincial I.L.P. platform on which the federal election had been contested had been "too conservative".

[41] Coal Handlers Union, Minutes, November 19, 1911.

[42] Daily News, December 4, 1911.

[43] Daily Times-Journal, December 8, 1911.

[44] Ibid., December 12, 1911.

1913 by the Social Survey of Port Arthur: ". . . owing to class considerations, the Finnish and English-speaking socialists in both cities refused to vote." These were the socialists who had left the Socialist Party of Canada because of its opposition to "palliative measures" and trade unionism,[45] participated in the formation of the Canadian Socialist Federation in April, 1911 and then the Social Democratic Party in Winnipeg later in December.[46] The new party included the Finnish and Ukrainian socialist federations and English-speaking socialists who had switched their support from the S.P.C.'s Western Clarion to the independent Cotton's Weekly of Cowansville, P.Q. Although the S.D.P. was broader than the Socialist Party of Canada in its stated goals, it found common ground with the independent labour movement only occasionally. This divergence which had been observed locally in the 1911 provincial election widened during the following year. As the Social Survey of Port Arthur commented: "During 1912 the friction between the labor men and the Socialists was increased by outside men coming in, who knew nothing of local conditions."

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[45] Canadan Sosialistipuolue ja Sosialidemokratia, (Port Arthur: Tyokansas Kustannusyhtion Kirjapaino, 1909) gives the arguments leading to the breach with the Socialist Party of Canada. In the Western Clarion, August 28, 1909 is a detailed reply to the Finnish pamphlet.

[46] Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, p. 104 ff. See also Tim Buck, Thirty Years, 1922-1952 (Toronto: Progress Books, 1952) pp. 15-7 for his analysis of the Socialist Party of Canada and the Social Democratic Party.

Theoretical differences between the labour men and the socialists are observable in the Wage-Earner, a labour weekly which commenced publication during the 1911 provincial election.[47] Edited by Urry and sponsored by the Port Arthur and Fort William labour councils and the New Ontario I.L.P. the Wage-Earner received the endorsation of most local unions (including the coal handlers).[48] With the slogan "CAPITAL without trusts is a Wanderer ---- LABOR without unionism is a Slave," its masthead proclaimed the Wage-Earner as "The paper that goes into the home of the workingman in the Twin cities." Its June 21, 1912 issue continues a debate on "consistency in words and actions," in which Urry countered the argument of the S.D.P. organizer in Fort William that "the system" not individuals caused exploitation by declaring, "A man is not obliged to rob and cheat and defraud another for the acquisition of wealth." These ideological differences were soon extended to embrace questions of strategy and tactics in a series of strikes on the Lakehead waterfront during the summer of 1912.

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[47]The only known extant issues are those of June 21 and June 28, 1912. The June 21 issue is available on microfilm at the Thunder Bay Public Library. The June 28 issue, formerly in the possession of Mrs. Helen Strickland, is now located with the Fred Moore Papers, Public Archives of Ontario.

[48]The Wage-Earner, June 21, 1912 lists twenty labour organizations paying $10 for a twelve months inclusion in its directory. Included are the Port Arthur Coal Handlers, whose Minutes of December 17, 1911 record their agreement to support the paper.

The first of these strikes was that of the Coal Handlers Union. During its first contract, it had waged a continual battle for survival against the coal company which frequently violated its pledge of non-discrimination against union members. The Union Minutes of August 6, 1911 noted that members were being discharged in favour of new men brought in at higher pay and that Superintendent Jorpland had threatened union president Pento with dismissal. On November 16 is recorded a request that the president enquire why the company did not pay time and a half, and on February 18, 1912 the Minutes again noted that non-union men were being given preference for employment.

As the contract required, Jorpland met the union officers in January to negotiate a new agreement.[49] Demanding the C.P.R. schedule for coal handlers, the union rejected the company's one concession to pay 25¢ instead of 22½¢ an hour for winter work.[50] The union threat to "ask the government for an Investigation board" was forestalled when the superintendent agreed to re-enter negotiations in April.[51] But at the union meeting of April 1, "a letter was read from Superintendent Jorpland saying that Mike Pento and Geo. Ross were discharged from the works and that he would not do business with them any longer." The union treasurer,

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[49] Coal Handlers Unions, Minutes, January 7, 1912.

[50] Ibid., January 12, 1912.

[51] Ibid., January 21 and February 4, 1912.

Nicolo Ciacco, was also discharged. The union decided not to accept Jorpland's offer to negotiate with a new committee to replace the one which had been fired; as the Majority Report of the Conciliation Board somewhat guilelessly observed later in criticism of the workers:

> None of the employees of the company requested an opportunity of discussing the questions with the company's representatives subsequently thereto.[52]

Resolving to "stick together", the union instead applied for a conciliation board.[53] With "the best man" available as their board representative, Alderman Frederick Urry, they received the encouragement of the Port Arthur Labor Council who "congratulated the Brothers on there [sic] choice and pointed out the strenuous work that Brother Urry has done and is doing at the present for the labour cause."[54] As they waited for the results of conciliation, the coal handlers were in a defiant mood, as seen in their reply to the superintendent's request for the union membership list:

> On a vote being taken it was decided that if Mr. Jorpland waited [sic] a List of the names to consult the pay roll of his office.[55]

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[52] Daily News, July 27, 1912. The complete text of the Conciliation Board Reports is given in the Daily News of this date; it is also included in the Labour Gazette, XII (August 1912), 130-138.

[53] Coal Handlers Union, Minutes, April 1, 1912.

[54] Ibid., April 21, 1912.

[55] Ibid., June 16, 1912.

The wage schedule and the dismissal of the union officers were the two issues facing the Conciliation Board which was appointed on May 22. No unanimity prevailed in 1912, for the chairman and company representative differed with Urry on all counts. In their majority report, they opposed wage increases and re-instatement of the men, arguing that the Canadian Northern Coal Company in effect paid higher wages than the C.P.R., and that the discharged men had fomented illegal strikes.[56] The well-documented arguments and passionate appeals on behalf of the coal handlers in Urry's minority report apparently carried no weight with the other members of the Board.

Why this was so, when the same two men had supported increases to the coal handlers as members of the 1911 Conciliation Board, is open to conjecture. In 1911, the Department of Labour under the Liberal Government had sent a fair wage officer to investigate the coal handlers grievances upon receipt of their application for a hearing;[57] in order to show the effectiveness of its labour legislation it may have put pressure on that recipient of government largesse, the Canadian Northern Railway, to have its subsidiary coal company grant wage increases and a form of union recognition. But the Conservatives who had come to power since then, albeit with the support of labour, had no interest in

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[56] Labour Gazette, XIII, 131-132.

[57] Daily News, May 26, 1911.

maintaining the facade of the credibility of the Lemieux Act. Conciliation proceedings for the coal handlers in 1912 produced nothing but frustration.

But whatever lay behind the majority decision, the minority report formed the basis for the coal handlers' decision to strike. The union officers had been discharged unjustly, Urry claimed. The allegedly illegal strike, in which no union officer was involved, had been a one-hour work stoppage when the workers demanded an explanation for the change to three men from the usual four to each car-loading machine. As to the union refusal to accept the company offer to meet replacements for the discharged officers (an action the majority held favoured the company position) Urry asked the obvious question:

> What guarantee have the men that as soon as the manager receives the names of three other men who are also members of the union that he will not dismiss them when he pleases?

As to the claim that the Canadian Northern paid higher wages than the C.P.R., Urry showed that the Canadian Northern employees with the largest cheques had worked long hours of overtime and that the names of those in the highest category appeared only once because, as he explained, "Physical exhaustion is apt to follow such an output of vital energy." Also favouring a pay raise were the nine percent increase in the cost of living, the more modern equipment at the Canadian Northern plant enabling it to operate "economically and expeditiously," and the saving of $2.50 per day per

machine resulting from the reduction from four operators to three. Urry's plea on behalf of "men struggling to live on an average wage of less than $700 a year" and his castigation of the system whereby "profits can be made only by taking the necessary commodities of life from the worker", served to strengthen the coal handlers' resolve to fight it out. Their demands rejected and the legalities observed, the coal handlers voted on Sunday, July 28 to strike at noon hour the following day.[58]

During the two month conciliation period, the coal handlers had been psychologically prepared for this eventuality both by company obduracy, and by the reinforcement of their belief in the justice of their cause by Urry who advised that they "take action" if the Board went against them.[59] The coal handlers who had wanted to strike prior to the 1911 and 1912 conciliation board hearing were also strengthened in their resolve by their president Mike Pento:

> if the company Don't pay this and the Board decide against the union was the men prepared to strike or would they accept the Board stand decision he pointed out the men should as organized faced the situation firm to get the union recognised[60]

To this determination of the coal handlers came an impetus from another source, the "outside" socialists who

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[58]Coal Handlers Union, Minutes, July 28, 1912.

[59]Ibid., June 4, July 7, July 28, 1912.

[60]Ibid., June 4, 1912.

were now gaining influence amongst the unskilled and immigrant workers along the waterfront. All members of the Social Democratic Party, the leaders of this group were Herbert Barker, James P. McGuire and Madison Hicks. Like Harry Bryan, Barker was a volunteer organizer for the American Federation of Labor, and like Bryan had appealed to Gompers without success for literature in such languages as Greek, Polish, Bulgarian, Italian and Swedish.[61] Barker's goal was the organization of all labourers, not yet unionized, into one federal labour union; prior to the strike he had asked the coal handlers for their assistance in this endeavour.[62] Madison Hicks, former Baptist minister, one-time member of the Australian Parliament and currently organizer for the Fort William S.D.P., was noted for his oratory, his journalism, and his distinguished and colourful appearance.[63] Hicks had come to the Lakehead via Cobalt from Hamilton, where he was alleged to have fallen out with the I.L.P. in the 1911 provincial election. Also from Cobalt was J. P. McGuire, now organizer for the English-speaking branch of the S.D.P. in Port Arthur who frequently reported

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[61]Library of Congress, Gompers Letterbooks, Gompers to Rubart [sic] Barker, organizer, April 9, 1912. (See p. 67 for reference to Bryan's efforts in this regard.

[62]Coal Handlers Union, Minutes, June 16, 1912.

[63]For biographical data on Hicks see the Daily News, August 1, 1912; the Daily-Times-Journal, August 2, 1912; and the Winnipeg Voice, October 11, 1912.

on Lakehead activities to Cotton's Weekly.[64]

These socialists seem to have been motivated by the goal of organizing "the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party" as instructed by the Communist Manifesto. The trade union was seen as a tool not merely for increasing wages but for raising the class consciousness of the workers. As the strike deadline drew near, the socialists devoted their energies towards this goal. One week before the decision to strike, for example, P. J. McGuire delivered an "eloquent address" to the coal handlers. Offering his assistance "in their present and Impending dispute", McGuire interpreted for the workers its root cause and offered his solution. As the Union Minutes reported,

> He asked the men to do there part to the strike he said he was out to abolish the big bear that caused the men to strike namely Capitalism and It is the duty of every one of the workers to Join their own party Under one flag to demand their rights then we will have no more strikes. we will be Living under Free Conditions and looking to Future for Italians of this district--to organize Political as well as Industrial[65]

The conditions of 1912, then, were vastly different from those of 1909. Through their association with the trade union and socialist movements, the coal handlers possessed a degree of organization, discipline and outside support which the freight handlers had initially lacked. Moreover, the

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[64]Daily Times-Journal, July 30, 1912; Cotton's Weekly, May 22, 1912.

[65]Coal Handlers Union, Minutes, July 21, 1912.

legalities of the Lemieux Act had been carefully observed. In addition, whereas in 1909 violence had been perceived as a natural response to strikebreaking, in 1912 it had been remonstrated against by the union leadership.[66]

Nonetheless, violence erupted during the first evening of the strike.[67] As on previous occasions, its provocation was strikebreaking. Instead of large numbers of workers imported under the protection of company police, this case involved only two local strikebreakers; and instead of hundreds of strikers engaged in a shooting melee with a contingent of railway police, this time perhaps one hundred workers battled with a handful of civic policemen.

The coal docks entrance on Fort William Road had been picketed during the day without incident in the presence of Canadian Northern Railway police. But that evening, a lone city policeman interfered when a picket turned back two would-be strikebreakers. Finding himself suddenly surrounded by men "flourishing revolvers," the policeman negotiated his release and then obtained reinforcements in the person of Chief Angus McLennan and three constables. In the meantime, some one hundred and fifty strikers and sympathisers from Port Arthur's coal dock district had assembled, some

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[66]Thunder Bay Labour History Interview Project, Ivor Seppala Interview. Mr. Seppala was one of the strikers.

[67]Daily Times-Journal, July 30, 1912; Daily News, July 30, 1912.

armed with clubs and guns. In true Quixotic fashion, the five police attempted to disarm the men and arrest the offending picket. The strikers resisted with clubs; the police responded with gunfire. Among the casualties were the chief with serious club wounds to his head, three constables with lesser injuries, an unknown number of wounded strikers who escaped, and with near fatal bullet wounds, Dominick and Nicola Deprenzo who were arrested and hospitalized.

At the same time as these events were happening at the coal docks, two meetings were taking place elsewhere in Port Arthur. News of the disturbance interrupted the regular meeting of city council, whereupon Mayor S. W. Ray immediately requested that the Ninety-Sixth Regiment be mustered.[68] The clarion call of bugles quickly rounded up the militiamen who departed for the coal docks by street car. Meanwhile, the majority of the strikers and their supporters from the trade union and socialist movements had just met at the Finn Hall and were now parading through the city streets to the accompaniment of the Italian band. As the Mayor headed for the coal docks to read the Riot Act, he met the procession led by the socialist orator, Rev. Madison Hicks. The Mayor later described the encounter with Hicks as follows:

> He stopped the procession and informed Hicks that there was a riot at the coal docks, that several had been injured, that the Riot Act was to be read, and that the procession

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[68] Daily Times-Journal, July 30, 1912.

> must be disbanded as it was likely to inflame the feelings of the strikers, and cause grave trouble to themselves and the public. He stated that Hicks informed him that the best thing to do was to keep the men together and march them away from the scene of the trouble.[69]

According to a socialist marcher, this is how Hicks responded:

> "Mr. Hicks told the mayor that in his opinion he would be very unwise to read the Riot Act at the moment. He pointed out that they had the parade under perfect control and that the men would follow him to any place he took them. He said that a much wiser plan would be for to allow him to lead the parade to some quiet open place and there hold a meeting, which would have the effect of keeping the men away from the coal docks if they had any disposition to go there, which he feared they had. Accordingly the meeting was held, and the crowd dispersed in an orderly fashion, after he had implored them to keep away from the docks and on no account to resort to any violence."[70]

As the strikers and their allies marched off in one direction, the Mayor and his party proceeded to the scene of the disturbance where the militia and the coal docks inhabitants had already gathered. On the reading of the Riot Act, the crowd at first refused to disperse, but emphasis on the life imprisonment provision of the Act and threats by Colonel Little to "extend the troops for action" effected the desired result.[71] The "riot" officially concluded, assessment could now be made of its cause and its consequences. No one,

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[69] Daily News, August 2, 1912.

[70] Ibid., August 1, 1912.

[71] Ibid., July 30, 1912.

however, could attribute the riot to the failure of the workers to bring their case to a Board of Investigation and Conciliation before striking, as required by the Lemieux Act.

VIII

REACTIONS TO VIOLENCE: "AGITATORS AND THE FOREIGNERS"

With the 1912 coal handlers strike began a new phase in the history of working class relationships at the Lakehead. In comparison with the protracted battles between striking freight handlers and railway constables in 1906 and 1909, the scuffle between the coal handlers and Port Arthur police in 1912 had been a relatively minor affair; its repercussions on the external and internal relationships of the working class, however, were profound and prolonged. In earlier labour riots, public hysteria towards immigrants had given way to gestures of goodwill, from elected officials in particular; this time there was no softening of the initial reaction. Within the trade union movement, the distinctions between the independent labour men and the socialists which had surfaced only sporadically since 1903 now assumed proportions of significance which would endure for decades to come. While the 1912 riot sparked these changes, in essence it was the socialist role in the strike and its epilogue which laid the foundation for this transformation in attitudes and social interrelations.

The coincidental timing of the strike parade led by socialist orator W. Madison Hicks and the outbreak of rioting elsewhere in the city raised the question of the responsibility for the violence on the socialists. By themselves, the socialists of the Social Democratic Party posed no real or imagined menace to the citizens of Port Arthur. What alarmed the English-speaking community was the newly won influence of the socialists with the immigrant workers. The old fear of the foreign proletariat had been reawakened by both the riot in which the police had fought Italians and by the procession of "some hundreds of men, a motley crowd of various nationalities."[1] The socialist involvement made the immigrant strikers seem all the more ominous. Contributing to public antagonism towards the coal handlers and their socialist supporters was the fact that the wounded police were local men of the municipal force, and not imported railway constables as on previous occasions. The atmosphere in the community was one of alarm:

> As the citizens watched this crowd go through the streets the word of the trouble at the coal docks, the wounding of the chief and the other officers passed around and, all having come with such startling suddenness, something akin to a panic was created. It looked as if the city had fallen altogether into the hands of a disturbing element.[2]

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[1] Daily News, July 30, 1912.

[2] Ibid.

In a state of near social psychosis, the citizens directed their furore against the man who had been heading the procession:

> Feeling against the strikers and W. Madison Hicks, a Socialist organizer, is running high in the twin cities, particularly in Port Arthur. The latter addressed a large meeting at Port Arthur Saturday night and this it is declared had considerable bearing in causing the men to quit work. He was addressing another meeting when the riot started.[3]

"Admittedly the finest platform orator in Canada today," [4] according to his admirers, Hicks attracted attention and created controversy wherever he went. Already known as a socialist orator locally, his leadership of the procession somehow attested to his complicity in the violence. As the Daily News reported on August 1:

> The question has been freely asked on the streets since Monday night's affair "Why don't the police arrest this man Hicks? He is the cause of the trouble."

And at City Hall, at least one alderman joined this anti-socialist vendetta by demanding a "stop to seditious and inflammatory speeches."[5]

The authorities evidently agreed that Hicks had been connected with the riot, or rather with the public panic

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[3] Daily Times-Journal, July 30, 1912.

[4] Chas. J. Schmidt in the Voice, October 11, 1912. The Wage-Earner, June 21, 1912 announces lectures to be given by Hicks in Fort William on "The Vision of the Western Continent From Daniel in Babylon and John on Patmos", and "The Workingman Not Guilty, or the McNamaras the Tools of the Rich".

[5] Daily News, July 31, 1912.

created by the riot, for he was summoned to appear in court on August 2.[6] The charge against him made no link between the procession and the events at the coal docks. Hicks offence was causing to congregate and march "a tumultuous assembly", an action "likely to promote a breach of the public peace, such action being also to the fear of citizens living in the vicinity of the tumultuous assembly."

The Hicks case created a sensation. The appearance of the articulate British subject with his flaring red tie and "exaggerated coiffure" in what was essentially a political trial explains the crowds at his August hearing and October trial.[7] Conducting his own defence in August "with all the skill of a trained criminal lawyer", Hicks was able to wring from one crown witness, Sergeant Burleigh, that "there was not likely to be any trouble in the ranks of the procession, and a substantiation of the statement that the parade was going in the opposite direction to that which lead [sic] to the scene of the riot."[8]

Largely on the evidence presented by Colonel Little, Hicks was arraigned for trial. In Little's opinion, the procession was deemed likely to cause a breach of the peace (although, in fact it had not) because of the crowds of excited

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[6]Ibid., August 1, 1912.

[7]Daily News, August 1, 1912; Daily Times-Journal, October 10, 1912.

[8]Daily News, August 2, 1912.

people and because of the presence of Hicks. With the charge against Hicks upheld, the defendant was released on bail set at four thousand dollars, this considerable sum posted by Frederick Urry and by Ontario Land Surveyor Aaron Lougheed, a well-known socialist intellectual.

The political overtones of the case were again manifested in October when an article Hicks had written for Cotton's Weekly was read in evidence against him:

> "You spoke along these lines at the meeting, did you not."
>
> "I did not speak about Socialism that night. I was speaking about the C.P.R."[9]

Witnesses on Hicks' behalf held that his diversion of the marchers from the scene of the riot had militated against violence, the proof being that none had occurred despite the public hysteria. On the advice of Judge Middleton and his lawyer, Hicks pleaded guilty instead of submitting to the mercy of the jury. Given a suspended sentence, he was required to post a five hundred dollar bond, which Urry contributed, as a guarantee of good behaviour for two years.

The anti-socialist reaction focused on Hicks for two reasons. One was suggested by an admirer at the time: "The reason for Mr. Hicks being singled out and prosecuted is the fact the grafter is handled without gloves by the Australian."[10] Hicks' notability, or to some, notoriety, had

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[9]Daily Times-Journal, October 10, 1912.

[10]The Voice, October 11, 1912.

made him an obvious target for attack. Other socialist leaders including Port Arthur S.D.P. organizer McGuire and A.F.L. organizer Barker escaped attention although the former had invited Hicks to participate in the procession and the latter had organized it. Another factor in the outcry against Hicks was the socialist relationship to the immigrants. As Judge Middleton suggested in questioning a witness:

> You have agreed that a body of foreigners are a dangerous band, taking things of that night into consideration. Imagine yourself as mayor of Port Arthur for a moment: would you not have been afraid of disastrous results?[11]

But no relationship between socialism and violence had been proven or had existed apart from this fear "of disastrous results". The Daily News itself made this point following the riot, on July 30:

> There is no connection between socialism and last evening's affair at the coal docks. Give the socialists the credit of being opposed to violence.

Such a connection, nonetheless, had been firmly planted in the public mind. The socialists had not only caused the violence at the coal docks, it seemed; their presence had also intensified the danger to the community from the foreign-born. These attitudes contrast vividly with those of the 1909 freight handlers strike which, without

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[11] Daily Times-Journal, October 10, 1912.

socialist involvement, was seen as a struggle between an immigrant community and a gigantic corporation. But in 1912, the red spectre began to loom large, obscuring for the public the issues of the strike.

A causal connection between the socialists and violence can be discounted; but what can be said of the role of the immigrants? Was Colonel Steele correct in his contention following the 1909 strike that the large population of immigrants at the Lakehead posed a permanent threat to the peace of the community?

According to press reports, only one nationality was implicated in the 1912 riot:

> Eyewitnesses of the riot say that the Austrians, Hungarians and Finlanders did not take any part in the trouble. All the shooting and wielding of clubs was done by a gang of from 25 to 35 Italians who were urged on by the Denico [sic] brothers.[12]

Of this group of Italians, the Deprenso brothers bore the brunt of punishment for the riot. At their trial in October 1912 for attempted murder, prosecution and defendants alike agreed as to the origin of the fight. After the police had attempted to arrest the picket who had earlier interfered with two strikebreakers, "The Italians with clubs resisted the arrest and the shooting started."[13]

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[12]Daily Times-Journal, July 30, 1912. The name "Deprenzo" was spelt variously by both the Daily Times-Journal and the Daily News, even within the same news story.

[13]Daily News, October 9, 1912.

As might be expected, there are discrepancies in the evidence of the police and the defendants as to the course of the battle. Although the press reported that many coal handlers used guns, the only weapons referred to in the trial were clubs, while those of the police were guns. According to the crown presecution's version of the battle,

> Dominick Durenzo was the man that struck the chief down and while he lay on the ground attempted to complete the deadly work he had begun.

This prompted the police attack on Dominick, which in turn prompted his brother Nicola to attack the police with his club. Constable Peterson related that when he shot at Nicola to keep Sergeant Burleigh from being clubbed, Nicola turned his attention to him. Although wounded five times, Nicola finally felled Peterson by a blow to the head, before being finally shot down by Burleigh.

Nicola Deprenzo recalled the same event differently:

> He said he saw his brother lying on the ground crying for help after being shot down and that he saw one of the police raise his brother from the ground and fire another bullet into him, holding him in position for the favorable reception of a shot.

In refuting allegations of premeditation made by press and prosecution alike, Deprenzo stated that the workers had made the clubs "for friendly josts among one another," and that their use against the police had been for self-defence.

In his plea for leniency, defence lawyer A. E. Cole presented an analysis of the social conditions experienced by

European immigrants in Canada. As foreigners, the defendants had many disadvantages, Cole argued, as at their trial where they had no witnesses who could speak English. Language was only part of the problem:

> They did not know the laws nor the language of the country and were accustomed to different customs and usages than obtain in Canada. He said they were mostly coarse, rough, uneducated peasants from southern Italy, their only advantage being their strong frames and tough sinews that made them an invaluable acquisition to Canada, for performing the rough, dirty work, such as handling coal. . . . Most of them had dependents away back in Italy and as each pay day came along they sent home their savings to support their loved ones at home.

But Judge Middleton would have none of this. To him, the foreign condition of the defendants had caused the riot and deserved punishment, therefore, not understanding. The police had insisted that they had shot the Deprenzo brothers in self-defence after an attempt to kill the chief and other policemen with clubs. The issue before the jury, he asserted, was the right of the police to discharge their duties:

> . . . these foreigners must not be led to believe that they can take the law in their own hands, throwing aside the measures provided by civilized society for the punishment of crime. If this condition was once allowed civilization would descend to barbarism and anybody having a grievance would be inclined to take the law in his own hands and resort to violence and outrage to avenge his wrongs.

For this reason, the Deprenzo brothers were found guilty and sentenced to imprisonment for ten years at Stoney Mountain Penitentiary.

In passing sentence, Judge Middleton had tempered his remarks somewhat by an admission of his belief that responsibility for the violence lay elsewhere: "Organizers and agitators are I believe more to blame than these misguided men."[14] Except in labour circles,[15] nowhere was there any suggestion that perhaps the municipal police had been overly precipitous in their actions. According to prevalent notions about foreigners within the English-speaking community which Judge Middleton articulated, violence seemed an inherent characteristic of the immigrant worker:

> The point that must be brought home to these people was that violence in any form will not be tolerated in this country, regardless of any customs or usages prevailing in Russia, Finland, Italy or whatever country the foreign element comes from.[16]

If the police shared this bias, the question arises, would they have intervened with the picket had the strikers been British subjects instead of European immigrants? The anti-foreign bias certainly pervaded the community. In the same period as the trial, for example, a Daily News report of October 8 concerned a communication to the Port Arthur city council about bad roads in the coal docks section, "signed by about twenty unpronounceable names." This attitude also came out at the Hicks trial. Regarding the Italian band

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[14] Daily Times-Journal, October 10, 1912.

[15] Ibid., July 30, 1912.

[16] Daily News, October 9, 1912.

which had accompanied the procession, the crown prosecutor asked:

> "Do you think that the coal dock band could arouse the sympathies of any citizens?"
>
> "Yes; I don't see why it couldn't."
>
> Mr. Cole [defence lawyer] : "It's the best band in town."[17]

The 1912 riot seems in a sense accidental. Yet within the context of the Anglo-Saxon bias against foreigners, which the police likely shared, may be found some explanation for its cause, particularly when that bias was combined with the well-known prediliction of Italian immigrants to take action against strikebreakers.

If this bias extended to the trade union movement, it was not universal as reactions to the Deprenzo case show. The Coal Handlers Union initiated its own defence actions through the hiring of its lawyer, and through the appeal of its president to members to "come forward and give evidence of what they saw at the time of the interference of the police." The campaign went beyond this, though, into national and international labour associations. The Deprenzo defence fund received donations from as far away as San Pedro, for example.[18]

Evidence of labour defence action on behalf of the Deprenzo brothers is scanty, but what there is suggests that

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[17] Daily Times-Journal, October 10, 1912.

[18] Coal Handlers Union, Minutes, September 22, October 6, 1912.

it was organized by Barker, the A.F.L. organizer. Sometime around the time of the strike, Barker became a business agent for the coal handlers union,[19] and in 1913 the union delegated him to attend the Trades and Labor Congress convention to advance the cause of the Deprenzo brothers:

> The reason for sending him was to present to the Congress the case of our two Bros. who are now in prison, and impress upon the other delegates that they are serving an unjust term in prison, and bring all the facts of their case and trial to their notice in order that they may take some action and have the proper authorities greatly reduce their sentence.[20]

The Congress adopted a resolution presented by Barker which gave the coal handlers union's interpretation of the events of the evening of July 29, 1912:

> Chief of police ordered strikers to throw down sticks, this command was obeyed, then police endeavored to arrest one man. It was in resisting this arrest that the Deprenzo brothers were shot.[21]

The resolution demanded the release of the brothers as they already had "suffered sufficient punishment to fit the crime":

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[19] Ibid., October 6, November 17, 1912.

[20] Ibid., August 17, 1912.

[21] Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, Report of Proceedings, 1913, p. 121.

> . . . one of the men was shot in seven places and the other in five places and only two of the police were injured with sticks one very slightly . . . and whereas, both policemen who were injured were about attending their duty after the affray within a month while both the men shot were lying in hospital for weeks and one was in a very critical condition.[22]

All unions in Canada and the Congress executive were urged to appeal to the Minister of Justice for the release of the Deprenzo brothers. The extent of the protest has not been determined; in any case, the attempts to free the men proved futile. In a sense, the pattern of earlier strikes had repeated itself. But instead of entire ethnic groups being punished as in the case of the Greeks and Italians who lost their jobs after the 1906 and 1909 strikes, in 1912 two individuals became the scape-goats.

This brings us to the relationship of the local trade union movement to the violence. Since the leaders of the Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council had expected that unionization of the unskilled, immigrant worker would prevent violence in industrial disputes by this class of worker, how was it possible for a riot to have occurred during a strike within their jurisdiction? In the judgment of the Daily News which attributed the fighting to the drunkenness on the part of some coal handlers, there had been no riot at all, "merely a mismanaged strike movement."[23] While no other

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[22]Ibid., pp. 120-121.

[23]Daily News, July 30, 1912.

reference to inebriated strikers has been found, there is perhaps some justification to the charge of mismanagement. That no violence had been anticipated by the leaders of the labour movement including the Coal Handlers Union is testified to by the fact that they were all at the meeting at the Finn Hall, leaving the manning of the picket line to an unsophisticated rank-and-file. Their warning against violence on the eve of the strike had been the only preventative measure taken against violence. Had the labour men been at the coal docks instead, their intercession perhaps could have prevented the shedding of blood. In retrospect, they may be said to have been guilty of the sin of non-anticipation.

As seen earlier, the Labour Council not only opposed violence, but believed that industrial peace could be a by-product of unionization. Meeting with the strikers, Urry reminded them that "strike or no strike they were in a civilized country," and asked that order be restored.[24] Urry personally had a pacifying effect on the coal handlers whose emotions had been inflamed by the wounding of their comrades. The 1912 coal handlers resolution seems the likely subject of the following recollection by Urry's daughter of his influence with the workers:

> In those early days of labour unrest and riots, dad would often be called in the middle of the night to go down and speak to the men. He had a magnetic personality,

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[24] Ibid.

> and could quickly take command and quieten the men. The police would be there with drawn revolvers, and there were often shootings and knifings. Mother would be so afraid of something happening to him. The men would never turn on him, but she was afraid a stray bullet might hit him.[25]

Like the socialists, the trade union movement had neither caused nor prevented the riot. One can only guess at the possible magnitude of repercussions which might have stemmed from police intervention and the arrest of the Deprenzo brothers without the moderating influence of Urry and the union executive. Just as the socialists had becalmed the marching demonstrators, so had organized labour contributed to the restoration of order amongst the rioters, possibly more effectively than had the militia.

The attention centred on the riot and on the socialist-led procession completely overshadowed the fact that one of the principals in the strike was the Canadian Northern Coal Dock Company. Yet there is little doubt that since the birth of the union, company intransigence had brought on the mounting belligerency of the coal handlers which the delays and frustrations of two conciliation boards had only intensified. When the strike began, the danger of strikebreaking loomed large, for there had been little doubt of company intentions in this regard. The company's labour policies combined with the Italian workers' traditional response to strikebreaking had

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[25]Mrs. Enid Urry Cowan to writer, May 5, 1971.

thus created an explosive situation. The result of even one policeman interfering with two strikebreakers is not surprising.

On July 30, the company announced that it would use strikebreakers to bring its operations back to normal by the following day.[26] To ensure against further trouble, it requested that the militia be retained,[27] but instead of the city paying for this expense (as Fort William had in 1909), the company agreed to assume it as long as it needed the militia's services.[28] Legal action to deter criticism of this use of the militia was undertaken immediately. One Francois Boulonois was sentenced to a twenty-five dollar fine or one month in jail for utterances like these at the time of the reading of the Riot Act: "We'll show these --- militiamen," and "One bunch of workingmen have been called out to shoot down and murder another bunch of workingmen."[29] Included in the evidence brought against Hicks had been his earlier denunciation of the militia.[30] In the meantime, the militia conducted a search of all homes in the

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[26]Daily Times-Journal, July 30, 1912.

[27]Daily News, July 30, 1912.

[28]Ibid., July 31, 1912.

[29]Ibid. Notwithstanding his name, Boulonois appears to have been an Englishman, for he had a wife and two daughters in England. (The deletion is in the text.)

[30]Ibid., August 2, 1912.

Port Arthur coal docks for weapons, with disappointing results.[31] At city council, only the voice of Alderman Urry was raised against the deployment of the militia in labour disputes: "So long as the militia is called out for every little trouble," he declared, "just so long would men feel they are not getting a square deal."[32] Urry expressed the anti-militia sentiment which ran high among workingmen at this time; but it was not for this reason that the militia was disbanded on August 1, but because the company preferred to rely on its own force, now reinforced with additional men and weapons.[33]

But these preparations for possible violence proved unnecessary for no strikebreakers arrived. One reason probably was the severe labour shortage of 1912; another was explained by the Times-Journal of July 30:

> The company endeavored to hire men in Winnipeg this morning but when they heard that there had been shooting they backed down, notwithstanding the fact that fancy wages were offered with the guarantee of steady work the year round.

Neither did local men present themselves for work after the riot. The striking coal handlers themselves stood firm, while the blacksmiths, engineers and other skilled men at the coal dock signified their intention of going out in sym-

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[31] Ibid., July 31, 1912.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., August 1, 1912.

pathy.[34] In the meantime, the distinct approaches to industrial strife of the socialists and the trade union men asserted themselves, each to have an influence on the conclusion of the strike. The socialists who were organizing all waterfront workers into one federal labour union threatened a general strike in sympathy with the coal handlers.[35] And quietly working behind the scenes to effect a settlement was Frederick Urry.[36] A combination of all these circumstances--the failure to obtain strikebreakers, the solidarity of the strikers, the threat of a sympathy strike by the longshoremen--prompted the company to yield to Urry's persuasions and come to terms with its employees.

One week after the commehcement of the strike, the company acceded to most union demands, giving the coal handlers substantially what they had asked for before striking.[37] These included re-instatement of the union officers who had been discharged, an average wage increase of 2¢ an hour, and general acceptance of the terms of the C.P.R.'s contract with its coal handlers. "These facts," declared the Trades and Labor Congress resolution on the Deprenzo case, "prove the injustice of the Board's Report against the men which caused

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[34] Daily Times-Journal, July 30, 1912.

[35] Ibid., August 5, 1912; Daily News, August 5, 1912.

[36] Daily News, August 5, 1912.

[37] Ibid.

the strike."[38] The press gave the credit for ending both the strike and the threat of a sympathy walkout by Lakehead longshoremen to Urry. "The sane labor element," it was suggested, "appeared satisfied by the agreement."[39]

With the coal handlers' victory, however, came an intensification of labour unrest along the waterfront. Class militancy which had been aroused by the events surrounding the riot, now was to express itself in demands for improvements in pay and working conditions by longshoremen seeking to duplicate the success of the coal handlers.[40] The lesson of that success seemed to imply that workers could win gains, not through negotiations or conciliation, but through strike action. Supporting the idea of a continued strike movement were the socialists under the leadership of A.F.L. organizer Herbert Barker. Opposed were "the sane element," that is, the Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council led by Frederick Urry.

As we have seen, Barker began organizing all waterfront workers into the Federal Laborers Unions before the coal handlers strike began. His approach to industrial unionism was that of the Social Democratic Party; his vehicle was one union; his province included the unskilled and the immigrant; and his weapon was the general strike. The S.D.P. advocated

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[38]Trades and Labor Congress, Report of Proceedings, p. 121.

[39]Daily Times-Journal, August 5, 1912.

[40]Ibid., August 7, 1912; Daily News, August 8, 1912.

the strike, and preferably the general strike, instead of the use of the Lemieux Act. The Act was condemned on many counts, especially the advantage given companies by the delays involved in conciliation and investigation proceedings. While the S.D.P. acknowledged the prematurity of the general strike in Canadian conditions at the time, it nevertheless advanced the idea in theory:

> No doubt, when sentiment becomes a little more crystallized, general strikes will be inaugurated in Canada to protest against political restrictions and laws which hinder the workers from taking their full advantage of selling their commodity, labour power, for the best possible price they can force their exploiters to pay.[41]

The day following the signing of the coal handlers agreement, the rail handlers of Port Arthur struck for higher pay apparently without prior notification to the company of any dissatisfaction.[42] All Finns, the Port Arthur rail handlers were a cohesive group who would "not have a Canadian working with them, or an American or Britisher, but things would be unpleasant." Members of the Federal Laborers Union, these were Finns evidently in sympathy with the socialist movement. Their demands included 30¢ an hour over the current 25¢, 45¢ for overtime, double time for Sundays and holidays, sick and injured benefits, and full pay for time lost

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[41] Cotton's Weekly, May 8, 1913. Unfortunately, there are no known extant issues for the period of the 1912 strikes.

[42] Daily News, August 6, 1912, August 8, 1912; Daily Times-Journal, August 7, 1912.

due to injuries or illness. Since all rail handling at the Lakehead was controlled through one stevedore company, the Finns sought to extend the strike to their counterparts employed in Fort William and Westfort.

The militancy of the Finns and their parades headed by Madison Hicks overcame the original reluctance of the other rail handlers to join the strike movement. Socialist warnings about the strike to outside centres and the current labour shortage forestalled the introduction of strikebreakers. The following telegram is an illustration of socialist activity in support of the strike:

> STEEL DOCK WORKERS ON STRIKE. DANGER IF SCABS COME, NOTIFY EVERY UNION AND POST BILLS AT ONCE. I LED PARADE OF FIVE THOUSAND TONIGHT. WE WILL WIN STRIKE. HELP US.
>
> W. MADISON HICKS, FOR STRIKE COMMITTEE[43]

Amidst talk of a general strike, the union won most of its goals after one week, including a 5¢ increase, time and a half, and salaries for injured men.[44] The theory that direct action as opposed to conciliation best served the interests of the working class had been vindicated, giving further impetus to the strike movement.

The rail handlers strike ended on August 13, the day prior to the termination of the contracts between the Canadian Pacific and Canadian Northern Railways and their freight hand-

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[43]The Voice, August 9, 1912.

[44]Daily Times-Journal, August 13; Daily News, August 14, 1912.

lers which had been signed after the 1909 strike. The socialist-led Federal Labor Union had won over the Canadian Northern freight handlers among whom were many Greeks whom the C.P.R. had fired in 1910. Little progress had been made, however, with the C.P.R. men. As rumours circulated of more strikes and of a general strike, negotiations commenced with the Canadian Northern for increases similar to those put forth by the rail handlers. Negotiations on the same basis began with the C.P.R., but to the dismay of the union, the C.P.R. workers accepted the offer of a flat 2½¢ an hour. This move by the C.P.R. to defeat the strike movement was imitated by the Canadian Northern. Its freight handlers, however, rejected its offer of 2¢ an hour and time and a half and in the midst of negotiations on August 19 they walked off the job.[45]

The next few days were filled with frantic activity on the part of the union to extend the strike to the C.P.R. and the Grand Trunk Pacific. Mass meetings in several languages, parades several hundred strong through Fort William,[46] and exhortations by "professional agitators" and by "howling mobs"[47] did not convince enough men from either railway to to make the strike effective. On the one night when it looked

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[45] Daily News, August 14, 1912; Daily Times-Journal, August 19, 1912.

[46] PAC, RG 27, PARC Box 14753. Port Arthur Chronicle (clippings), August 21, August 23, 1912.

[47] Daily Times-Journal, August 21, 1912.

as if most C.P.R. workers might strike, the railway adopted tactics far less bellicose than those of 1909. It simply closed down its operations in order "not to inflame passions", and the following day concentrated the handling of freight at a new shed far removed from the intersection of McIntyre and McTavish, the site of agitation in 1912 and of riots in 1906 and 1909.

Far more militant were the Canadian Northern freight handlers. At a mass strike meeting, they hooted down special agent MacDonald who argued that the company was powerless to pay more than two cents because of current shipping contracts.[48] The Greeks, it was reported, were particularly contentious, threatening both violence and a general strike. While the chairman, socialist organizer McGuire, discouraged disorderliness, both McGuire and Hicks urged "that if the men would stick up for their rights that they could make the company 'come to time.'"

The next day, the socialists reversed this position; McGuire joined Urry in bringing about a settlement of the Canadian Northern dispute, and Hicks persuaded the C.P.R. men still out to return to work.[49] Among the factors leading to this decision included the failure to win over Fort William,

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[48]PAC, RG 27, PARC Box 14753. Port Arthur Chronicle (clipping), August 23, 1912. Note that the special agent's name is still being variously spelt (see p. 69 n. 26).

[49]Ibid., Port Arthur Chronicle (clipping) August 24, 1912.

signs of vacillation that morning in Port Arthur, the lack of support from the labour council, and perhaps the possibility of Department of Labour intervention in the strike movement because of the threatened blockade of western grain.

If the strike was not a victory for its leaders, neither was it a failure for the strikers. It had yielded gains which were not rescinded following the strike.[50] Neither did the three railways fire any striking employee. Railway policies had been determined, one might suspect, not by magnanimity but by the desperate labour shortage and by the necessity to keep trade lines open during the most bountiful year to date in Canadian commercial history.[51]

This then was the end of the 1912 strike movement by Lakehead longshoremen. In common with strikes in the construction trades that year, it had begun under the auspices of the Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council. From the coal handlers it had extended under socialist leadership to embrace unskilled and immigrant labourers on the waterfront. Through the Federal Labor Union, it had also included the city

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[50] Daily Times-Journal, August 24, 1912; Daily News, August 24, 1912.

[51] The Daily Times-Journal, August 17, 1912, gives one example of the almost daily press accounts on the labour shortage. Citing the need of the C.P.R. system for two thousand men, it attributes the manpower shortage to the demands of harvesting and to new European restrictions on emigration.

workers of Port Arthur who made similar demands to those of the rail and freight handlers through an ultimatum to city council.[52] City council opposition forced a retreat; with the general loss of momentum, the strike movement spread no further.

Dominated as it was by immigrants, the labour unrest of 1912 had reinforced the anti-foreign attitudes of the community, especially of business interests. Within the immigrants' new-found freedom in Canada and their relationship to the socialists was found some explanation for their belligerency:

> "It would appear," said the official of the stevedore company, "that the foreign laborers who have flocked to Port Arthur and Fort William have had their heads turned by their sudden access to freedom, after suffering the oppressive rules of the autocratic Czar of all the Russias. They have suddenly stepped from oppression into freedom and a fair wage, and their minds were not sufficiently well balanced to stand the shock. Instead of working to ameliorate the small differences that from time to time have arisen between the men and their masters, certain agitators who do not know what a day's work is, have taken the opportunity to tell the men that they were the victims of oppression worse than they ever knew in Europe. The result is the series of strikes which have occurred and which are promised.[53]

The solution found to the problem of immigrant labour was similar to that of 1906. While the manpower crisis made it impracticable, the replacement of foreign-born longshore-

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[52] Daily News, August 20, 1912.

[53] Ibid., August 8, 1912.

men by English-speaking workers remained an objective for the future:

> It has been proposed that as far as practical work shall be given to English speaking persons only. . . . It is said that the stevedore companies at lake ports on the United Seates [sic] side of the line have weeded out men of almost all nationalities other than Scotch, Irish, German and Swedes, with the result that they get greater efficiency and ultimate less cost of handling, though paying a higher wage.[54]

Another important repercussion of the strike movement became apparent in the strained relationships within the labour movement. The general strike strategy of the socialists ran counter to the constitutional approach of the independent labour men. "Change the law if you don't like it, don't defy it," was the essence of Urry's advice to the violators of the Lemieux Act.[55] At the same time, the Port Arthur Labor Council called upon the workers to settle "all differences with their employers in a friendly spirit," failing which to then apply for a conciliation board. To "a leader who labors as well as leads", the collapse of the strike movement seemed to vindicate this position by showing that conservative methods, not "spectacular fronts" work best in industrial disputes.[56]

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[54]PAC, RG 27, PARC Box 14753, Port Arthur Chronicle (clipping) August 21, 1912.

[55]Daily News, August 16, 1912.

[56]Daily Times-Journal, August 24, 1912. This paper's editorial "Why not arbitrate?" August 9, 1912 gives the press attitude.

Equally damaging to labour's cause, in this view, had been its loss of public sympathy and newspaper support as seen in editorial disapproval of the actions of "professional agitators".

The press, public and labour leaders alike held "outside agitators" responsible for the labour unrest of 1912. Within this accusation is the implication that the workers who went on strike were merely pawns of the socialists. This explanation is too simplistic. It overlooks, for example, that the Finns were predisposed to labour struggles by association and by tradition; that the coal handlers' grievances had been aggravated by company policy; that the Canadian Northern freight handlers included fighters from 1909. It also overlooks the rise in the cost of living which had assumed the status of a national crisis, as well as the general state of labour unrest internationally. The discontent was there; the socialists were there to organize it.

The reluctance of the C.P.R. freight handlers to join the strike does not detract from this argument. As either survivors of the 1909 strike or replacements of the displaced Greeks and Italians, they knew well the hazards of battling the C.P.R. Such a battle no union of freight handlers could win, as the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway

Employees discovered to its chagrin later that year.[57]

With the exception of the coal handlers riot, none of the longshoremen's strikes conducted had been marked by violence. Yet they had been conducted by workers of similar ethnic backgrounds and they had been accompanied by activities designed to radicalize the strikers. While vociferous in the rhetoric of the class struggle, the socialists had nonetheless declaimed against violence. In a typical address, McGuire had advised striking freight handlers in 1912 "to abide by the law and not make trouble, to keep away from the docks, where they would find it without much seeking."[58] Ethnicity in itself did not lead to violence; neither did the presence of socialists or of unions. The longshoremen's strikes conducted by the Federal Laborers Union lacked the principal combustive element of violent labour disputes. In these, violence seems to have been unleashed by strikebreaking activities. When this element was missing, as in the longshoremen's strikes of 1912, no violence occurred. In the following year, however, when that element was present in yet another labour dispute, it would erupt again.

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[57]For a discussion of the nation-wide C.B.R.E. strike against the C.P.R., see W. E. Greening and M. M. Maclean, It Was Never Easy, 1908-1958 (Ottawa, 1961), 23-30. Reports on the effect of the strike at the Lakehead are contained in the Daily News and the Daily Times-Journal, November 4 - 14, 1912.

[58]PAC, RG 27, PARC Box 14753, Chronicle (clipping) August 23, 1912.

IX

POLARIZATION, 1913: MUNICIPAL OWNERSHIP AND THE WORKING CLASS

The trade unions movement of the Lakehead had been founded in an atmosphere of mutual good will with the local business community. Just as labour leaders since Harry Bryan in 1903 had advocated the winning of public sympathy as a requisite for trade union success, so local commercial interests relied on labour support in confronting the outside transportation and construction firms who dominated the economy and against whom most labour disputes were conducted. This class alliance, albeit tentative, had nowhere been more in evidence than around the municipal ownership of public utilities. Open antagonism of the middle class towards workers, at first, had been based more on ethnic considerations than on those arising from trade union activity. Even then, as has been seen, hostility towards the foreign community, inevitably aroused by labour riots, had frequently been tempered by propitiatory gestures from middle class spokesmen representative of the press, the clergy, and the civic administration.

Such moderating of public opinion had been absent in the longshoremen's strikes of 1912 when the hysteria roused by socialist influence with the immigrants negated any notice-

able assessment as to the justice of the strikers' cause. The middle class now directed its antagonism towards both immigrants and socialists in correlation with the impact seemingly made by the latter's revolutionary message on the former. While this antipathy did not extend to the entire trade union movement, labour council officials lamented the loss to labour generally of public and press support induced by socialist strike tactics among the immigrants, and sought to close the gap between the classes through advocacy of mediation either under their own auspices or those of the Department of Labour.

But in 1913, the street railwaymen's strike shattered what remained of the old trade-union-middle-class alliance, forcing organized labour into the socialist-immigrant camp. The division of society into two opposing classes became complete. The old socialist-immigrant phobias aroused during the strike hastened this development, but the principal source of this change of class relationships was the one which originally had sparked class unity: the municipal ownership of public utilities.

As with the telephone systems of Port Arthur and Fort William, controversy had surrounded the early years of the electric street railway.[1] But unlike the anti-monopoly

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[1]For brief accounts on the street railway, see "Our Transit System Carries On!", Fort William Diamond Jubilee Historical Booklet (1952); "Port Arthur Street Cars Made Fort William Town," Port Arthur Evening News-Chronicle, June 23, 1934. According to F. O. Robinson, "First Electric Lights Blinked Here in 1885", News-Chronicle Centennial Edition, July 1967, "Port Arthur was "the first town on this continent to build and own an electric street railway."

campaign which united the two communities for municipally-owned telephones, the ownership and control by Port Arthur of the street railway system in both communities from its inception in 1892 until 1908 led to acrimonious conflict between them. Even after Fort William acquired possession of the street railway within its own boundaries in 1908, Port Arthur still assumed all profits (and losses) from the entire operation until the end of 1913 after which each city owned and operated completely independent systems. From 1908 to 1913, the street railway's management came under the supervision of a Joint Board consisting of an appointed chairman and four other commissioners, two elected from Port Arthur and two appointed from Fort William. In its final year, the constant battles over costs, extension of services, and inefficiency, which marked the Joint Board's brief history, took second place to its conflict with the union of street railwaymen.

Although the conflict had no direct relationship to the longshoremen's disputes of the past, its origins lay partly in the coal handlers strike of 1912, specifically in the refusal of Conductor Maurice Enright to take militiamen by street-car to the scene of the riot.[2] For this action, which he reportedly based on tiredness after fourteen hours on duty (and not on any principled opposition to the militia's role in the strike), Enright received an indefinite suspension.

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[2]Daily News, August 8, 1912. The union of street railwaymen organized by Bryan seems to have been short-lived.

The ensuing controversy, though sparked by the Enright case, was symptomatic of the street railwaymen's deep-seated discontent with the Joint Board's labour policies.

The motormen and conductors had been organized in 1909 into the Amalgamated Union of Electrical Car Workers of America with Enright as their first president.[3] From the beginning, union and Joint Board clashed over the authority of the manager from whose decisions the employees had no redress. The refusal of both the manager and the Joint Board to hold discussions with the union in cases where "men have been most unreasonably disciplined" was a major cause of discontent.[4] Accordingly, the union demanded that the following terms be included in its first contract with the Board: (1) union membership to be a condition of employment; (2) an investigation to be held in cases of dismissal; and (3) where such investigation found insufficient cause for dismissal, the employee concerned to be entitled to reinstatement.[5] The Board rejected these principles of unionism, insisting that "the management must be the sole judge in the choice of employees and also of the acts of the

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[3] Daily Times-Journal, June 7, 1909.

[4] Daily News, February 12, 1910.

[5] Daily News, February 3, 1910. Its editorial of February 15, 1910 suggesting that behind the union agitation was a "plot" by Fort William "to cripple the road" typifies the inter-city wrangling over the street railway.

employees."[6] A strike over these issues and over demands for higher wages was averted when the Board announced that it had received twelve hundred applications to replace its employees.[7]

Complicating the issue was the question of the relationship of the street railwaymen to the Joint Board, a creation of the two municipalities. Should the workers as citizens have access to the Board in their grievances with management, or should the Board automatically uphold the manager's decision? The Board chose to adopt the latter policy.[8]

The prerogative of the manager as opposed to the right of an employee to an investigation in cases of dismissal became the critical issue in the Enright case which the union submitted, along with other grievances, to conciliation under the Lemieux Act. The unanimous recommendations handed down by the Conciliation Board underlined the many sources of unrest other than those associated with job protection:

> that 60 hours' work in six days should be adhered to as closely as possible; that all cars should be equipped with permanent seats for the use of the motormen; and that the management should adhere more closely to the terms of the agreement.[9]

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[6] Daily News, February 11 and 12, 1910.

[7] Daily Times-Journal, June 25, 1910.

[8] Daily News, February 3, 1910.

[9] Labour Gazette, XIII (January 1913), p. 733.

But in the Enright case, no such unanimity pertained. While indicating the need for improvement in the street railway's labour relations, the chairman and the company representative upheld the dismissal by arguing that the final authority of the manager was necessary "to preserve discipline, and in the best interests of the public."[10] Dissenting from the majority was the employees' representative, Frederick Urry, who reommended "that in the best interests of the road it would be wise to concede the claims of the men by reinstating Conductor Enright."

During the conciliation proceedings, the Joint Board fired six additional union men, including secretary Stephen Muldoon.[11] When the Conciliation Report was handed down on December 16, 1912 the majority decision on the Enright case made it unacceptable to the union, particularly in light of the recent firings.[12] Throughout the Christmas holiday season, the press featured reports of union attempts to have all the dismissed men re-hired, of union plans to call a strike, and of Joint Board plans to import strikebreakers. Then on December 28, the street railwaymen announced that their decision to strike would be postponed until after the

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[10] Ibid., p. 734.

[11] Daily News, December 24, 1912.

[12] Ibid., December 16, 1912; Daily Times-Journal, December 16, 1912.

municipal elections on January 4 which, it was hoped, would result in changes to the composition of the Joint Board.[13]

The state of working class politics thus became of significance to the outcome of both the 1913 municipal elections and of the street railwaymen's dispute with the Joint Board. Labour politics centred largely around the Independent Labor Party and the Social Democratic Party and the interaction between them. Although the longshoremen's strikes had aggravated the strained relationships between the two parties, this situation had temporarily been eased by the collaboration by Frederick Urry and Madison Hicks on a manifesto acceptable to both parties.[14] This brief modus vivendi was terminated, however, by the expulsion of Hicks from the S.D.P. for being a "fakir" guilty of fraud and other offences.[15] As Hicks had been its organizer, the Fort William S.D.P. had its charter withdrawn leaving its members to affiliate with the Port Arthur branch. As the municipal elections neared, the S.D.P. declared its opposition to any dallying with the I.L.P. on the ground that the latter did not "recognize the class struggle and the necessity for abolishing capitalism."[16]

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[13] Daily News, December 28, 1913.

[14] The Voice, October 11, 1912.

[15] Cotton's Weekly, November 7, 1912.

[16] Ibid., November 14, 1912.

The numerous signs of its increasing influence undoubtedly helped the S.D.P. in its decision for unilateral political action. Cotton's Weekly, for example, now had 1078 subscribers in the District of Thunder Bay and Rainy River,[17] and Työkansa had become a daily.[18] Now purified from internal and external contamination, the S.D.P. diagnosed itself healthy enough to contest the municipal elections independently, with candidates chosen from a cross-section of the working class.[19]

Concurrently with the S.D.P. nominating meeting in the Finn Hall, the I.L.P. moved in a separate gathering not to contest the Port Arthur aldermanic race, even though Frederick Urry was a sitting alderman.[20] Instead, Urry and James Booker of the Machinists Union were nominated for Port Arthur's two places on the street railway's Joint Board of Management, in order not to split the labour vote and to concentrate on the street railwaymen's dispute. This decision emphasized the gravity with which the I.L.P. regarded

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[17] Ibid., November 7, 1912.

[18] Bryce Stewart, Social Survey of Port Arthur, p. 10.

[19] Daily News, December 20, 1912. The original S.D.P. nominees were Peter Katainen (a Finn), K. Balcombe, W. Carter, and Paul Root (a Russian), but by nominating day, Carter had withdrawn in favour of Sydney Wilson of the Amalgamated Carpenters Union and secretary of the Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council whose normal affiliation was with the I.L.P. The Daily News, January 2, 1913 and The Wage-Earner, April 25, 1913 give more information about Wilson.

[20] Daily News, December 20, 1912.

the outcome of this dispute for the trade union movement, as did the forceful address by the union's international representative on the "sweat system" under which the men worked.

Urry and Booker faced several disabilities in their campaign. The high property restriction disqualified most workers from the Joint Board franchise while the Daily News condemnation of January 4 that if elected they would represent the street railwaymen only "and not the general public" convinced enough of the small electorate to defeat them. Whether the S.D.P. supported them, its principles notwithstanding, is not known. The Finnish base from which the S.D.P. operated, however, was split by the candidature for alderman of Wilho Kyro. The former manager of the Finnish Labor Temple, Kyro had broken with the socialists and, with the endorsation of the Daily News, promised to "promote better understanding between what is known as the foreign element and the citizens."[21] Enough voters favoured Kyro over the socialists (because Kyro had stolen the S.D.P. platform, Työkansa editor Moses Hahl later charged)[22] to elect him, and the S.D.P. like the I.L.P. failed to place. With Urry out of municipal office, with the Finns divided, and with the two workers' parties in disarray, the interests of neither labour unity nor the street railwaymen benefited from the election.

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[21] Daily News, January 3, 1913.

[22] Ibid., January 31, 1913.

In Fort William, a differing electoral structure influenced both the approach and the outcome for labour. As the mayor was one of Fort William's appointed commissioners to the Joint Board, the I.L.P. concentrated its energies on the candidature of L. L. Peltier for that post. Unlike Port Arthur's elections at large, Fort William's ward system traditionally favoured representation on city council of working class spokesmen. In 1912, A. H. Dennis and E. C. Smith of the I.L.P. filled two of three aldermanic positions for Ward I in which the coal docks district was situated. By some mix-up, Smith failed to qualify for the 1913 contest and the three remaining candidates were elected by acclamation.[23] Besides Dennis and the other incumbent, the third was the S.D.P. candidate, K. E. Grandahl, manager of the Finnish Co-operative Company. This development made it possible for the I.L.P., the S.D.P. and representative immigrant community spokesmen like Bosco Dominico to unite around Peltier's candidacy. Among the issues discussed at an I.L.P. rally in the coal docks district where they joined forces was that of the street railwaymen:

> They are having trouble on the street railway. The present mayor is on the joint board. This board is flim-flamming the men and I believe that the next one will probably do so. The only way to stop strikes is to put workingmen in the city, provincial and Dominion governments.[24]

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[23] Daily Times-Journal, January 2, 1913.

[24] Ibid., January 4, 1913. The speaker was Alderman E. C. Smith.

As the long-time protagonist of municipalization, Peltier seemed the logical choice in labour's bid to stop the Joint Board from "flim-flamming" the street railwaymen. His support from the working class, however, was not universal. Madison Hicks, for example, had founded a Workingmen's Club where a Federal Labor Union meeting, limited in numbers but representative of ten nationalities, refused to endorse either Peltier or his opponent George Graham as "neither was a working man."[25] Hicks' influence over the electorate undoubtedly was limited, yet the attitude expressed towards Peltier may have been general, for Graham's victory was decisive.[26] In the two cities, then, labour succeeded only in Fort William's Ward One. As this could not compensate for its overall defeat, plans for a strike on the street railway were abandoned for a more propitious moment.

Despite this set-back, the trade unionsand socialists each showed signs of vigour in the months to come. In a special edition of the Wage-Earner, the two Trades and Labor Councils launched a campaign for the construction of a central labour temple.[27] The I.L.P. named Frederick Urry as its president and heard L. L. Peltier's plea for "municipal

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[25] Daily Times-Journal, January 4, 1913. The speaker was Alderman E. C. Smith.

[26] Ibid., January 7, 1913. The results: Graham, 1,332; Peltier, 802.

[27] The Wage-Earner, April 25, 1913. The temple was designed by Frederick Urry in "the gothic style of architecture as lending itself to the democratic nature of the work.

righteousness", or "the necessity of a pure municipal policy for the benefit of all."[28] As well, the I.L.P. and the S.D.P. relationship showed signs of improvement. Following the municipal elections, for example, the Finnish socialists sent a memorandum to the labour men asking for unity.[29] In addition, the A.F.L. organizer and S.D.P. spokesman, Herbert Barker, had become director of organization for the Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council.[30] As noted by an outside observer, Bryce Stewart, the socialist momentum and the drive for labour unity seemed to be in concert:

> The signs of the times are optimistic to the Socialists in Port Arthur and they believe the day not far distant when the whole Labor movement will be with them. The Independent Labor Party will do all they can towards this solidarity of the working classes.[31]

If labour's internal relationships were becoming more amicable, there was no abatement in the hostility from without which had been manifested during the longshoremen's strikes, the street railwaymen's dispute, and the municipal elections. Bryce Stewart described the atmosphere thus:

> The general sentiment of the city with reference to Organized Labor, is not in the main sympathetic, although the labor party has had a varied history, and has made enemies as well as friends in the district . . . There is no open warfare between the Labor Organizations

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[28] Daily News, January 31, 1913.

[29] Social Survey of Port Arthur, pp. 9-10.

[30] The Wage-Earner, April 25, 1913.

[31] Social Survey of Port Arthur, p. 10.

> and Employers' Associations at present, although it seems generally agreed that considerable friction exists.[32]

The undercurrents of antipathy towards Finnish socialists which had surfaced during Kyro's aldermanic campaign also became stronger within and without the Finnish community. Although socialist influence with the foreign element in labour disputes had initially provoked anti-socialist attitudes, the militant atheism of the Finnish socialists also became a focus for controversy. The Finnish S.D.P. defended itself by arguing that their opponents intended to distract public attention from the party's primary objective, "prosperity for all," by their accusations of atheism and "free love";[33] the Finnish Lutherans, on the other hand, called on city council for police protection of their religious services from continual disruption by Finnish socialists, "a wicked and ungodly people, who openly break marriage vows and exchange wives," and who "neither recognized nor respected religious and moral laws."[34] The anti-religious reputation of the Finnish socialists (and probably of other S.D.P. members as well) was seen as detrimental to the advancement of the socialist cause. Despite "a sympathetic

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[32] Ibid., p. 8.

[33] Daily News, January 14, 1913.

[34] Ibid., May 20, 1913. The many accusations of "free love" levelled against the Finnish socialists may be based on their practice of considering themselves married with the obtaining of a marriage license and without the ceremony.

view of Socialism in Port Arthur," Stewart contended, "the Socialist cause, however, in this City, has been held back because a great number of Socialists are free-thinkers."[35]

In spite of "considerable friction" between business and labour and the increasing antagonism towards socialists, May Day 1913 seemed to give substance to Stewart's optimism concerning socialist influence and "the solidarity of the working classes." As reported in the Times-Journal on May 1, some two thousand socialists celebrated the day at Port Arthur, and with the exception of a strike at the Canadian Car and Foundry Company in Westfort, labour had "no score to settle." Yet one dispute did remain unsettled, that of the street railwaymen. Labour's attempt to resolve it would show the vulnerability of "this solidarity of the working classes" when opposed by a united business community.

In a surprise ultimatum presented to the Joint Board on May 8, the street railwaymen's union made the following demands: a new contract, an answer within twelve hours, and a meeting within forty-eight hours.[36] But before the ultimatum expired, a clash occurred in the Canadian Car strike which became, in a sense, a dress rehearsal for the more serious violence yet to come in connection with the street railwaymen's dispute.

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[35]Social Survey of Port Arthur, p. 10.

[36]Daily News, May 8, 1913.

The four hundred immigrants working on the construction of the Canadian Car plant had been in a state of unrest since January when the company lowered the minimum wage to 20¢ from 25¢ an hour.[37] In April, the men struck for 25¢, the rate long advocated by the two Trades and Labor Councils as the minimum "fair wage" for unskilled labour, and which the company had agreed to pay in return for tax bonuses from the city of Fort William.[38] The strikers, whom Herbert Barker had organized into the Federal Laborers Union,[39] were mainly east Europeans who had been moving into Fort William in large numbers during the past few years.[40] On May 9, "addresses were delivered by a few of their leaders" after which strikers and some two hundred sympathizers forcefully effected the retreat of, perhaps, one hundred strikebreakers resulting in injuries to a number of the combatants.[41] The strike came to an end with the arrival of police reinforcements the following day. This short-lived affair is significant if considered as part of both a pattern and a problem. Was it part of the

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[37] Daily News, January 31, 1913.

[38] Labour Gazette, XIII (May 1913), 1199.

[39] Daily News, April 25, 1913.

[40] Social Survey of Fort William, pp. 6 and 8. Stewart found the "Ruthenians" to be the largest immigrant group in both Westfort and the coal docks section. See also Friends in Need (Winnipeg: Workers Benevolent Association of Canada, 1972), pp. 101-2 for references to early Ukrainian activity in Fort William.

[41] Daily Times-Journal, May 9, 1913.

pattern of immigrant workers taking militant action against strikebreakers leading to violence? And where did the incitement to action originate--with outside "agitators" or with the workers themselves? We shall return to these questions later.

In the meantime, the Canadian Car strike had been overshadowed by the street railwaymen's ultimatum to the Joint Board. Besides the reinstatement of Enright and others, their demands were basically those made since the union's inception, including an investigation in cases of dismissal and the employment of union members only after a three month probationary period.[42] Although the Joint Board had unilaterally raised wages in April, the union sought additional increases on the ground that the new rates did not compensate for losses incurred from the enforcement of the Conciliation Board's recommendations with respect to hours, and that the current rates were still among the lowest in western Canada. In justifying its demand for a new contract before the expiry of the old one in December, the union cited numerous infractions of the current one by the Joint Board, including the recent non-negotiated pay increase.[43]

Not surprisingly, the Joint Board rejected the ultimatum. Its mandate for insisting "that order and discipline

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[42] Daily News, May 8, 1913.

[43] Ibid., May 9, 1913.

must be maintained and that the manager must manage," the commissioners argued in a statement to the public, had been clearly given by the electorate in the overwhelming vote for Graham as Mayor of Fort William and in the defeats of Urry and Booker.[44] When the strike began on Saturday, May 10 the Board pledged to break it. Until imported strikebreakers could arrive, minimal service on the Main Line only was maintained, with cars operated by the commissioners themselves, as well as by civic officials, members of the Boards of Trade, "sons of some prominent citizens,"[45] and a few locally obtained strikebreakers.

From the beginning, then, civic officials and the business community had united against organized labour to break the strike. In this, they were joined by the press which, unlike previous strikes, never faltered from an anti-labour stance. The use of innuendo to denigrate the strike began on its first day, as seen in the following editorial from the Chronicle of May 10:

> The men have been subjected to agitation for a long time. They have been importuned by two or three professional agitators here and at a distance. The constant dinning in their ears of fancied grievances has had the effect desired by the schemers--and the public must suffer.

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[44] Ibid, May 10, 1913. See also PAC, Department of Labour Records (RG 27, Vol. 302, File 73) for Chronicle clipping (May 10, 1913) giving Joint Board's statement and for other clippings, reports and correspondence relating to the strike.

[45] Daily News, May 12, 1913.

If there was a connection between the calling of the strike and the activity of "agitators", none has been uncovered. There is no doubt of socialist activity, however, in the strike itself. Among the speakers to address a demonstration of strikers and sympathizers in Port Arthur on the first day was J. P. McGuire, the S.D.P. organizer.[46] Undoubtedly, he was one of the unnamed labour leaders who addressed a rally of one thousand sympathizers in Fort William the following day, Sunday, May 11. According to the Times-Journal account (May 12), the crowd consisted mainly of "foreigners" whom the speakers warned against violence.

But despite this admonition, violence erupted later that day. The place was Simpson Street at the edge of Fort William's coal dock district where large numbers of immigrants had gathered, evidently with a view to either harrassing or blocking the street cars running on the Main Line. The outcome was the derailment of one car and its occupants forced to flee, the stoning of another and the turning back of a third.[47] After the arrest of a demonstrator for rock-throwing, a crowd estimated at two thousand gathered at the coal docks jail where he was lodged and made a rush to free him. The police fired into the crowd, killing one man and wounding another. No further violence occurred during the strike.

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[46]Daily News, May 12, 1913.

[47]Ibid.; Daily Times-Journal, May 12, 1913.

Just as the press had earlier attributed the calling of the strike to socialist influence on the street railwaymen, it now attributed the riot to the same influence on the immigrants. The Daily News editorial of May 12 qualified its remarks by the word "probably", yet its meaning was clear:

> The men responsible for last night's riot at Fort William were probably of that type looked upon as agitators . . . Unfortunately, the Twin Cities give shelter at times to strangers who, as they gradually become known, reveal characteristics of anarchy, and make their presence felt by fire-brand speeches delivered on soap boxes at convenient street corners.

No evidence as to the presence of "agitators" at the riot itself was suggested; instead, it was their speeches at the earlier demonstration which were reported to have stirred the foreigners to violence. This theme was also emphasized in the national coverage of the riot, of which the following excerpt from the Mail and Empire of May 12, 1913 is a typical example:

> The mob consisted of foreigners worked up to a frenzy by agitators. During the afternoon the strikers held a parade and speeches by local Socialists of a highly inflammatory nature were delivered at the mass meeting which followed. The greater part of the audience was made up of foreigners.[48]

Throughout the strike's duration the press continued to place responsibility for both the strike and the riot on agitators. In its editorial "The False Prophet" of May 23, the Times-Journal continued the argument:

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[48]PAC, RG 27, Vol. 302, (May 12, 1913) Box 73, clipping.

> The false prophet, in the shape of the blatant agitator is the man who is primarily responsible for the colossal blunder in staging our own street railway trouble. The death of one man and the serious injury of another as well as the destruction of public property in the recent riot is traceable to the door of the false prophets in the two cities whose inflammatory speeches led a certain section of the foreign element to believe that riot rule would avert wrongs that never were and never will be inflicted upon them.

In contrast to the local and national dailies, the S.D.P. organ Cotton's Weekly of May 22, 1913 offered its own interpretation of the riot. It attributed the shooting thus: "How long will this beastly law stand which allowed a uniformed savage to haul out guns and blaze away into a crowd of toilers?" it asked while depicting the episode as one more example of workers everywhere being "the chosen elect to face bullets ever since bullets were invented." Cotton's Weekly found the anti-strikebreaking activity of the immigrants to be ironical, for it revealed that the plan to use immigrants as a docile cheap labour force had backfired:

> How the capitalist press gurgles over the arrival of a shipload of foreigners! How the masters chuckle as they fondly imagine they will be able to get cheap labor! . . . But they often make a mistake in the spirit of the foreign slave. He gets wised up to the rotten system of robbery and peonage practised on his kind, and revolts with his Canadian brother slave. Then the capitalist papers turn around and blame him for every conceivable crime imaginable.

The riot and the reaction to it in "the capitalist papers" facilitated the Joint Board's objective to break both

the strike and the union. The following day, the commissioners affirmed that "hereafter they will be governed by no agreement between them and the employees. They are determined, they said, to utterly crush this strike."[49] After a one-day cessation of service, the street cars resumed partial operations under the direction of the Thiel Detective Agency of Winnipeg.[50] Two to five armed guards accompanied each street car while other armed men patrolled the route.[51] The highly charged atmosphere created by these developments is shown by the following front-page notice in the press:

> WARNING!
>
> Don't mix in a crowd that shows hostility to the men operating the street cars.
>
> The officers on every car are armed with automatic guns and are authorized to shoot into any crowd that attempts to destroy street railway property.[52]

As can be seen, the importation of armed strike-breakers arising from the riot had disastrous consequences for the strike, even though the street railwaymen themselves had not been implicated in the violence. All denunciations of force by the union could hardly undo the damage.[53]

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[49] Daily News, May 12, 1913.

[50] Daily Times-Journal, May 13, 1913.

[51] Daily News, May 13, 1913.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Daily News, May 12, 1913.

The one redeeming outcome was the rallying of the trade union movement to the aid of the strikers.

To the Trades and Labor Councils of the two cities, the strike had become more than a struggle between the Joint Board and its employees. The importation of strikebreakers symbolized the determination of the local business to crush trade unionism. At stake in the strike was the application of such union principles as "a living wage, sanitary workshops, reasonable hours of labor and no discrimination against a workman because he is a trade unionist," the Councils argued in a public statement on the issues in the strike.[54] Because of its attempts to extend these principles and to organize the unorganized, the trade union movement had incurred the wrath of business:

> By doing this we have incurred the displeasure of certain short-sighted business men and large property owners who run the affairs of these cities . . . [and who] have set themselves out to break international trade unionism.

Underlining the outcome for the community if the strike were defeated, the statement by the Councils prophesied:

> Trade unionism cannot be broken although a single union may be, but this will engender bitter class hatred which will have a disastrous effect on the civic life of these cities.

To prevent such an eventuality, the Councils made two appeals: one, to "the citizens of these cities not to degrade

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[54] Daily News, May 13, 1913.

themselves or the fair name of these cities by riding on street cars," and the second to its affiliates and workingmen to consider joining in a sympathy strike.

While important in any strike, the winning of public support became doubly urgent in one against a municipally-owned company and in one whose success required a general boycott of its operations. To the trade unionists, the use of armed strikebreakers only intensified the urgency. Public support of the strike expressed itself by many workers as well as women and children walking instead of riding,[55] and by the wide-spread wearing of red badges bearing the slogan, "Don't ride on scab cars."[56] This latter action and the shouting of insults at passing street-cars was particularly noticeable in the Bay Street area, the centre of Port Arthur's Finnish district. None of these measures, however, was effective enough to prevent general acceptance of the re-institution of transit service.

The appeal for consideration of a sympathy strike made even less headway as affiliated unions found ways to evade the question. Under this circumstance, each labour council resolved to support the strikers "morally and financially"[57] while seeking alternate solutions for the successful conclusion of the strike. After a futile three-hour meeting

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[55] Daily News, May 14, 1913.

[56] Ibid., May 13, 1913.

[57] Ibid., May 15, and May 16, 1913.

with the Joint Board at which all issues connected with the strike were rehashed,[58] the strike committee under the signature of Frederick Urry issued a proclamation to the working men of the two cities.[59] Its purpose was two-fold: (1) to warn the workers to keep the peace and not to impede with the strikebreakers. "Do not be misled" cautioned the proclamation. "Your enemies are among you and will lead you into peril." (2) to urge attendance at strike-committee-sponsored meetings in each city on Sunday, May 18. Each of these well-attended gatherings enthusiastically adopted the strike committee's last proposal that the issues in the strike be taken to the people in a referendum conducted by each municipality.[60]

The city councils rejected the resolutions asking for a referendum.[61] The only remaining hope for the strikers now lay in a general strike. Meeting in the Finn Hall on May 21,

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[58] Daily News, May 14 and 15, 1913. The labour men first refused to meet the Joint Board at its headquarters, the car barns, because it was guarded with Thiel detectives armed with repeating guns. Following the meeting, a resolution presented to the Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council thanked "the Joint Board for the courtesy received from them at the car barns in that we were allowed to leave without being shot."

[59] Daily News, May 17, 1913. Copies of the proclamation may also be found in the Department of Labour records.

[60] Ibid., May 19, 1913. The heading "Strikers Hold Meetings on Sabbath" possibly is a veiled reference to religious attitudes. Among those attending the meetings were Urry, Peltier, Alderman Dennis, Harry Bryan, Sam Wright, and the street railwaymen's business agent, J. Gibbons of Toronto.

[61] Ibid., May 20, 1913.

labour and socialist leaders alike joined in unanimously resolving that workers "take a holiday on Friday, May 23, and remain out on holiday until a settlement of the street railway is effected satisfactory to the men and the strikebreakers are dismissed."[62] The lack of response from the unions led the Strike Committee itself to call for a "general holiday" on June 4.[63] But with the exception of the engineers and the hoisting engineers and some individuals, organized and unorganized workers reported for work as usual.[64] The strike was over. "The Street Car Men felt the shock of want of support and several applied for their old positions."[65] On June 6, the Daily News reported that many, though not all, had been re-employed. "The only change from the former situation is that no union is recognized by the joint board or manager."

Why did the strike fail? In retrospect, it seems that failure was inevitable. The union's position had been weakened prior to the strike, first by the delays of the conciliation proceedings lasting from September 25 to December 16, and then by labour's failure in the municipal elections. The timing of the May ultimatum reflects an over-estimation of labour's progress since January and an under-estimation of

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[62] Daily News, May 22, 1913.

[63] Ibid., June 2, 1913.

[64] Ibid., June 4, 1913.

[65] PAC, RG 27, Vol. 302, File 73, "Report of a Street Car Strike at Port Arthur and Fort William."

the Joint Board's power to break the union. But the dilemma facing the union was this: either it used the strike weapon to win job security for its members or its existence could not be justified. In view of the Joint Board's attitude, better timing would probably have produced no different result.

The availability of strikebreakers also facilitated the defeat of the strike. The Voice attributed this to the failure of the trade union movement to organize unskilled labour, the ready source of strikebreakers who in this case had come from Winnipeg.[66] But in 1913, rising unemployment nationally made strikebreaking more feasible than the previous year when the country had experienced a labour shortage.

But poor union tactics and the availability of strikebreakers in themselves only superficially affected the course of the strike. A far greater determinant was the alignment of class forces. When the strike began, the promptness with which the local elite joined forces to break it led the various groupings within the working class to join forces to support it. These included the labour councils and the Independent Labor Party; the various immigrant groups from the socialist Finns to the numerous nationalities of the coal docks; the S.D.P. whose influence extended beyond the Finns into other immigrant groups and into the English-speaking

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[66]The Voice, June 13, 1913.

trade union movement; and many labour men who had achieved prominence in public life such as L. L. Peltier and William Rankin.

But broad as this support was, it did not extend beyond these groups from the working class to the public at large. The public, which had voted against the street railwaymen in the municipal elections, had been further alienated by the strike against a utility it used and owned, and by the derailment of a passenger-laden street-car. Coming only two days after the clash between immigrants and strikebreakers at the Canadian Car plant, and following similar eruptions in past labour disputes, the violence on behalf of, though not by, the street railwaymen reinforced anti-foreign attitudes and directed them towards the non-foreign strikers. The socialist presence which had caused so much alarm in the summer of 1912 only added to the general antipathy to the strikers.

Besides lack of public sympathy, Manager M. O. Robinson of the street railway offered another reason for the defeat of the strike to the Department of Labour: "Only Motormen and Conductors struck, no other Dept. upholding them."[67] But the unwillingness of other employees on the street railway and of workers in general to join the strike movement does not necessarily mean lack of sympathy for the strikers;

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[67]PAC, RG 27, Vol. 302, File 73. Robinson made these remarks on the form "Trade Disputes" supplied by the Department.

it does suggest, though, that unlike many in the leadership of the local trade union movement, the vast majority of workers lacked the high level of class consciousness required for such action. Walking to work, attending rallies, hurling invectives at strikebreakers and their passengers, and even derailing a street-car were the extent of support from the working class. Those who pressed for a sympathy strike were expecting too much.

The way the coal handlers union approached the problem probably was typical. On May 18, its Minutes record that Organizer Barker asked "the members be ready to walk out on protest with the Trades Unions of the two cities." On June 1 a special meeting was held "for the purpose of taking a vote on the sympathy strike, but this could not be done on account of the small number of members present." Other trade unions evaded the question by reporting the necessity for approval from their international headquarters for such a move.[68] Even the Finnish socialists opted out of the June 4 sympathy strike, their defence reported to be "the lack of sympathy towards them and their causes on different occasions by the English speaking union men."[69] Under these circumstances, the description in the Voice (June 13, 1913) of the call for a general strike as "either a bluff or very

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[68] Daily News, May 22, 1913.

[69] Ibid., June 6, 1913.

bad tactics" is correct. But it was not the general strike movement which defeated the strike: defeat had become a certainty with the importation of armed strikebreakers.

The call for a general strike, however, appears to have been a move of desperation on the part of the union men. It is evident that the trade unionists were stunned by the use of armed strikebreakers by a municipally-owned enterprise, for the trade union movement had always been a staunch supporter of the principle of municipal ownership. Despite the Joint Board's policies and pronouncements, strike leaders clung to their faith that public ownership was synonymous with ownership by the people and that the people would support the strikers as citizens and ratepayers. All publicity issued in the interests of the strikers emphasized the municipal ownership of the street railway as an argument in favour of the men. Frederick Urry's proclamation of May 17 which warned workers against provocation is an example of this approach:

> The street cars belong to the people. Do as we bid and you will regain possession of them.

But apart from the labour movement, there was little opposition to the idea that the Joint Board represented the wishes of the electorate. Both city councils endorsed the Board's policies, with only Aldermen Dennis and Grandahl dissenting in Fort William,[70] and Alderman Wilho Kyro in Port

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[70] Daily News, May 14, 1913.

Arthur being obliged to ask for an investigation of the charges against Enright and Muldoon at the request of his "constituents."[71] Historically, trade unions and labour parties had based their belief in public ownership not only on the economic benefits derived therefrom but from populist theories such as those voiced by L. L. Peltier. As the strike showed, however, the goals of municipal ownership and trade unionism could diverge, to the detriment of trade unionism.

This revelation was no surprise to the Social Democratic organ, Cotton's Weekly (of May 22, 1913) which held that the function of the Port Arthur and Fort William Street Railway was the provision of "cheap transportation for wage slaves." By this analysis, low fares, made possible by low wages for street railwaymen, made possible a low wage structure for the local labour market, a situation local business wished to preserve. The street railwaymen's strike had shown the error reformers made in confusing municipal ownership with socialism, Cotton's Weekly argued, for "at Port Arthur the workers found that under capitalism there is no difference between municipal ownership and private ownership."

There is some logic in arguing that the primary beneficiaries of municipal ownership were the employing class, for it explains the change in the business community's attitude towards organized labour since 1903. At that time,

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[71] Daily News, May 20, 1913.

merchant-dominated civic administrations found it advantageous to support demands for higher pay made upon the principal employers--the railways and construction companies. But with some diversification of the economy by 1913, civic policy centred on the enticement of more industry. Low wages in both the public and private sectors came, therefore, to be seen as an asset. Thus on June 14, in an edition celebrating the near completion of the Canadian Northern Railway to the east, the Daily News made the following claim under the heading, "Port Arthur Can Offer Unequalled Inducements to the Manufacturers":

> Labor may be obtained in Port Arthur as cheaply as in any other city of the continent of the same size, and in many cases it is cheaper . . .

The prospect that this inducement could be undermined by pay increases for street railwaymen, which then could have an escalating effect on the local wage structure, helps to explain the attitude of the Joint Board.

This anti-union policy, in which the middle class concurred, became entangled during the course of the strike with a rising fear of the left, loosely defined as socialists, anarchists and agitators. Although this fear must be viewed in the global context in which headlines shrieked daily of uprisings, general strikes, shootings and bombingsrelated to working class movements, it had also been carefully cultivated by the local press with regard to socialist influence, first with immigrants, and then with the street railwaymen.

The more obvious the socialist presence became, the more ominous it appeared. While the press unceasingly credited the socialists with deeds more imaginery than real such as the fomenting of the strike and the riot, the vehemence of its attacks increased with the actual socialist-labour accord stemming from the movement for a general strike. As the defeat came closer, some trade unionists placed the blame for the strike as much on the press as on management.[72]

The socialists no doubt had originated the general strike idea in line with similar moves for one in the longshoremen's strikes of 1912 and tentative suggestion for one in the Canadian Car strike. Its acceptance in 1913 by the strike committee appears to have been a last desperate move, especially after the failure of the appeal for municipally-sponsored referendums. The unanimity between labour and socialist leaders for the sympathy strike (among them Urry, Booker, McGuire and Harry Bryan) at the Finn Hall meeting of May 21 delighted the socialists:

> "I might have criticized the Trades and Labor Council," he continued, "for not being radical enough to resist the ruling of an unscrupulous upper class, but I have not been antagonistic towards it. They will in the future, I hope, be more radical and the rule of those 'pig faced dough heads' will be broken."[73]

Animated by either the socialist-labour accord, the call for a general strike, or by this pungent oratory of

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[72] Ibid., May 19, 1913.

[73] Ibid., May 22, 1913.

P. J. McGuire, the press reacted with a degree of sensationalism whose result, if not intent, was the furthering of class animosity. Under the heading "Organized Labor Out for Anarchy", the Daily News described the meeting as follows:

> Sedition, anarchy, socialism, violence and most everything else calculated to worry orderly society and responsible government filled the meeting which was held in the interests of the striking street railway men. For the time being the labor and socialist parties, which have recently been drifting apart, merged their interests. The hatchet was buried, a love feast was held, and the men who have made Port Arthur what it is and provided work for the agitators that they might have food, shelter and a home were denounced as "traitors," "Unscrupulous capitalists," and "pig headed mutts," to say nothing of other terms of derision.

Notwithstanding McGuire's counsel of "no open violence" and Urry's advocacy of moral rather than physical force, the labels of "sedition" and "anarchy" became associated with socialists and trade unionist alike. This persisted not only until the strike's defeat (which labour attributed more to the press than to the Joint Board) but for years to come.

In this climate of alarm the Mayor of Port Arthur, J. A. Oliver, sought the intervention of the Department of Justice for assistance in eliminating the socialist presence from the Lakehead. In his letter, Oliver expressed the anxiety of local business over the slow rate of economic growth which he attributed to "the continual state of unrest which has existed during the last three years among the laboring classes

and more particularly among the Socialists here."[74] This unrest which had expressed itself in the strikes and riots of the freight handlers in 1909, the coal handlers in 1912, the Canadian Car workers and the street railwaymen of 1913, the Mayor asserted, appeared "simply to have been the result of a number of Agitators who keep continually holding meetings and delivering fiery speeches suggesting action." The result was ruinous to the area's financial development, for "no man feels safe in making an investment here at present for this cause."

Besides the Finnish socialist paper, Työkansa, the Mayor singled out two individuals as being especially responsible for the strikes and riots: Frederick Urry and J. P. McGuire. "On all occasions during the past Strikes," the Mayor charged, Urry had done "everything in his power to cause a General Strike and urged every Union to go on Strike and do Picket Duty." As well, Urry was said to have urged the intimidation of passengers during the street railway strike and the stealing of goods from local merchants. McGuire reportedly had explained the use of dynamite to strikers and sympathizers, and Työkansa had continually condemned the country's governmental and judicial processes.

In reply to Oliver's request that the Department of Justice "do anything to help us get rid of this bunch of

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[74] PAC, RG 13, Central Registry File 797-1913, J. A. Oliver to Edmund Leslie Newcombe, Deputy Minister of Justice, June 6, 1913. The writer would like to thank Mr. Ron Grice for drawing this document to her attention.

of Agitators" and to control the numbers of Finnish socialists being naturalized, the Department pointed out that "the administration of criminal justice and the preservation of the peace came under provincial jurisdiction.[75] The Department of Labour, though, responded to copies it received of the Mayor's letter and the Justice Department's reply, as seen in the concluding paragraph to a departmental report on the street railwaymen's strike:

> For . . . an investigation into labour unrest, socialist and anti-religious propaganda through native Finnish Press, etc. see Files.[76]

The street railwaymen's strike, then, meant more than defeat for the union. Fought by both sides on the issues of job protection, improved conditions and wages, and union recognition, it ended with hostility, if not hysteria, towards the working class as represented by the trade union movement, the immigrants and the socialists. Although the strike weakened labour's bargaining power, it resulted in increased militancy of the working class and an alliance, albeit intermittent, between the socialists and the independent labour men. All of this contributed to the outcome of the strike's defeat as predicted by the Trades and Labor Councils: "bitter class hatred which will have a disastrous effect on the civic life of these cities."

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[75] Ibid., Deputy Minister of Justice to Mayor of Port Arthur, June 11, 1913.

[76] PAC, RG 27, Vol. 302, file 73, 721-5. The "Files" have not been located.

We have seen how, in the course of one decade, the working class of the Lakehead defined itself through changing relationships within itself and with other classes. In the early days of organized labour, both the working and middle classes had been caught up in the wave of populist and social reform movements. Municipal ownership, mediation of labour disputes, the social gospel, and newspaper coverage of labour and social movements are some manifestations of this period of goodwill towards the labour movement.

The bond of sympathy between the classes existed when the community united against a common enemy, the outside corporations. Changes within the classes, however, untied the bond. Bias against foreigners gave way to class hatred when the foreigners seemed to come under socialist influence. Even with the foreign and socialist factors, it was the threat by organized labour to the interests of the middle class which ultimately caused the breakdown in community relationships. A symbol of this process was the career of Frederick Urry, the middle class Christian socialist whose interventions on behalf of immigrant workers, and declamations against armed intervention in labour disputes, and finally, his joining in the call for a sympathy strike in support of trade unionism led to his brandishment in 1913 by the Mayor of Port Arthur as an "undesirable character" responsible for the labour troubles of the past years.[77]

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[77] PAC, RG 13, Central Registry File 797-1913, Oliver to Deputy Minister of Justice, June 6, 1913.

The pervasive element throughout this process of .ction and reaction was violence. We have seen how its .mmediate cause was the response of immigrant workers to ;trikebreaking. Did ethnicity produce violence, or merely letermine the economic and social relationships of the .mmigrant workers? That violence was inherent in these relationships may be seen, first, by the use in labour dis-)utes of such instruments of force as railway police, the ıilitary, private detective agencies, and to a lesser extent, municipal police forces; second, in the failure of conciliation to prevent violence; and third, in the way the middle class changed from opposing the use of force in 1907, to condoning it in 1909, to initiating it in 1912, and then using it in its own interests in 1913.

World War I represents a great divide in Canadian labour history, yet many features of the post-war years had their roots in the period before 1914. The radical unionism of the lumber workers had its origins in the industrial unionism of socialists like Bryan and Barker. The general strike movement did not come out of the air in 1919, but had been implanted in the consciousness of workers in a different era. The Social Demodratic Party would give rise to the Communist Party whose strength lay amongst immigrant workers; while various forms of independent labour politics would eventually merge to become the C.C.F. At the same time, there was nothing new in the anti-alien hysteria of World

War I, nor in the "red scare" which swept the country during the period of the Winnipeg General Strike and the One Big Union. The 1913 Street Railwaymen's strike had been but the forerunner of community conflict in the future.

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The sources cited below have been supplemented by much correspondence and many conversations, only some of which are acknowledged in the text. Some of the tape-recorded interviews have been deposited at Confederation College, along with the "Reminiscences about Bryan" tape made in 1960 by Mr. Einar Nordstrom and others, for inclusion in the Thunder Bay Labour History Interview Project, 1972 (funded by Opportunities for Youth) in which the writer took part.

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