THE TRANSFORMATION OF A UNION LOCAL:

LOCAL 1075 INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AEROSPACE AND AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA (UAW-CIO),

1952-1962

BY

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INTRODUCTION

What is there in common between socialism and labour in Canada? Or, phrased differently, is there a history of socialism and the labour movement in Canada? Historians and other academics have asked themselves these questions, or ones like them, for a long time. Some students of history doubt the relevance of such questions at all. But there is a historiography attesting to the importance of associating ideas of socialism with a labour movement. Historians of the left, E.P. Thompson foremost among them, have concentrated a great deal of their work upon consciousness in "working class" culture. Historically, class consciousness has developed, in part, through its own opposition to other interests in capitalist society.

And here we ask ourselves, to what extent is a class conscious of itself? How does this consciousness manifest itself? In Canada, there is a history of socialism, to be sure. Yet, to speak of a labour movement that actively engages itself with the aim of bettering the condition of working people is to speak of something different. The 1932 Regina Manifesto of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (Farmer, Labour, Socialist) is a historical document testifying to the socialist aspirations of a large membership drawn from Canadian society.

In 1932, the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada (TLC) was not so forthcoming in its support of overt political action. In fact, labour in Canada and the United States, until the late 1930s, had a history that involved itself in party politics only (although, in the tradition of trade unionism, only one part of labour drew upon the example and philosophy of such unionists as Samual Gompers in the United States.) Also influencing the development of labour and politics were the "Lib-Lab," Independent Labour Party,

and Fabian Society traditions inherited from the British Isles). Robert Babcock explained, in his *Gompers in Canada*, that:

> in comparison to most European countries there appeared to be little class-consciousness in both Canada and the United States, but Canadian unionists seemed less fractious than Americans and more willing to co-operate with each other in the struggle for their mutual advancement. In Canada both the Knights [of Labor] and the crafts co-operated to seek redress through political action.[1]

A great deal of social legislation has been passed in North America through the efforts of organised labour. The interests of labour, and of workers generally, were increasing wages, shortening the working-day, obtaining job security, and securing compensation for injuries. But we know as well, in studying workers on the shop floor, in their homes or involved in recreational activities, there are other examples of class consciousness. Some workers involved themselves in political or social agencies within the community while others displayed patterns of behaviour "separating workers from their employers and providing a rough unity for protest and confrontation organised along lines of class."[2] In considering the formal and informal participation of workers in class politics, we see a variety of interpretations and modes of analyses.

This thesis considers the politics of workers at the grass roots. It is a study of Local 1075 of the International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW or United Autoworkers) Local 1075 in Fort William (now Thunder Bay), Ontario, during 1952-1962. The UAW was an excellent example of an industrial union displaying all the attributes of a large, militant organisation. To what extent, though, is a study of an international union representative

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[1] Robert Babcock, *Gompers in Canada: A Study in American Continentalism Before the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 14.

[2] Mark Leier, *Red Flags and Red Tape: The Making of a Labour Bureaucracy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 3.

of its entire membership? This thesis focuses upon a union local and its actions on labour and socio-political issues in the 1950s and early 1960s. Research in the history of this labour union local in Thunder Bay, now Local 1075 of the Canadian Autoworkers (CAW), illustrates such themes as the institutionalisation of a union, the bureaucratisation of union services and leadership, gender and ethnic identities on the shop floor and in union leadership, and the impact of socio-economic regional development upon Northwestern Ontario specifically and Canada more generally.

The reading, research, and writing for this project were challenges for me. Beginning a history of a union local in Thunder Bay is not a simple task. The growth of labour historiography in Canada over the past forty years offers a variety of historical methods in interpretation and analysis. My growing appreciation for labour history is best described as having been organic. I use the term, "organic," here in a holistic sense, in that my knowledge of labour and its theory has grown commensurately with my writing and research.[3] My familiarity with labour history has grown apace only with my reading and researching of it.

The union local at the Canadian Car and Foundry plant (Can-Car) has long held a special place in the history of the Lakehead. A study of Local 1075 International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW) focuses themes of historical importance in a regional and contextual setting. Thunder Bay's is a history on the periphery, a drawn-out epic of growth and decline. Thunder Bay is a city in the geographic centre of Canada but it is also in the northern hinterland of a large province. Temporally, the twin cities at the Lakehead, Fort William and Port

[3] The term, "organic," is a terrible word, but for a young student, the experience of writing a research thesis is a matter of continual learning. Still, having written a thesis, one is overwhelmed with a sense of still having only touched the smallest part of a vast body of learning. I take the word, "organic," from

Arthur, have experienced competition that spanned almost one hundred years (1880s-1970). Social, cultural, and economic forces have worked to make Thunder Bay what it is. The Can-Car plant, situated on the Kaministiquia River, is an integral part of the history of Fort William (now Thunder Bay).

The Can-Car plant is important to understanding economy and employment at the Lakehead. At times employing over one thousand people, this plant has been very important to the regional welfare of Thunder Bay. Fort William and Port Arthur had a history of competition and economic instability. Historical periods of large-scale immigration and economic growth attributed to war, an inter-war period of decline and recession in production coupled with the isolation of the Lakehead communities from Canada's large urban centres, have resulted in periodic declines in economic performance. The twin cities, both of which were established as independent municipalities in the last quarter of the nineteenth century long competed for social, cultural, and economic control of the Lakehead. The establishment of a railway-car manufacturing plant by the Canadian Car and Foundry Company in 1912 was partly a result of the inter-city rivalry that manifested itself in over ten years of intense municipal boosterism.[4]

In 1992, Gordon Burkowski published a book celebrating eighty years of the plant's operations. The book, *Can-Car: A History 1912-1992*, is an excellent survey of

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Raymond Williams' own use of the word in *Culture and Society*. It is as precise or imprecise a term as I can find to describe my experience as a Masters student.

[4] For more on the inter-city rivalry of Fort William and Port Arthur, see A.W. Rasporich, "Faction and Class in Modern Lakehead Politics," *The Lakehead University Review* 7 (Summer 1974):31-65; A.W. Rasporich, "Twin City Ethnopolitics: Urban Rivalry, Ethnic Radicalism and Assimilation in the Lakehead, 1900-1977," *Urban History Review* 18 (February 1990): 210-29; Thorold Tronrud and A.E. Epp, ed., *Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity* (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Inc, 1995); Thorold Tronrud, *The search for factories in a staple economy : Thunder Bay's manufacturing industries, 1880-1980* (Thunder Bay: Lakehead Centre for Northern Studies, [1989-91]); and Thorold Tronrud, *Guardians of Progress: Boosters and Boosterism* (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1993).

plant productivity and managerial accomplishments. The history of the plant's production is varied: it has gone from producing rail cars, to aircraft, to forest harvesting equipment, to buses, to subway and GO train cars. However, Burkowski's book lacks an exploration of workers' experiences, union development, and contextual historical analysis. A close reading of *Can-Car* does illustrate the precarious nature of the history of the plant.[5] Production has not maintained a steady pulse through the past ninety years. In a city where employment was generally unstable, the seasonal and cyclical periodisation of full, half, and low production in a plant this size has had a serious impact upon the city's labour force.

The labour force was comprised of men and, at times, women, many of whom supported not only themselves but also dependants of various sorts. Each family's need is measured in a different way: to quote an old story, "All happy families resemble one another, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."[6] The impact of seasonal and cyclical unemployment at the Lakehead has varied over the past eighty years along with the changing patterns of production at the Can-Car plant. The introduction of the United Autoworkers of America into the operation of the Fort William plant in 1952 was a part of a changing process of employment and labour organisation at the Lakehead. Within an economy favouring organisation into industrial unions, the workers of Can-Car followed a Canadian pattern of unionisation that found its expression in the community. As modes of production changed following 1945, workers increasingly looked to the large international unions of the Congress of Industrial Organisations (CIO) to achieve the gains in pay and quality of life that Canadian workers expected after the war ended.

The formation of Local 1075 UAW was a result of the economic and social

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[5] Gordon Burkowski, *Can-Car: A History, 1912-1992* (Thunder Bay: Bombardier Inc., 1995).

factors in Fort William and Canada following the war. The union local's good health in the ten years following its founding depended largely on economic, social, and cultural conditions at the Lakehead. The threat of closure of the Can-Car plant in 1958 brought the union local and the community at large together in an all-out effort to keep the Fort William plant in operation. In this respect, the plant's success, employment in the community, and the welfare of the city itself were intertwined in a movement of action. Beatrice and Sidney Webb maintained that each worker has a distinct set of interests as producer, consumer and citizen, a tripartite distinction.[7] In this instance, workers, municipal leaders, and local politicians combined their resources to fight regional and national pressures aiming to achieve corporate centralisation and the downsizing of plants taking place in the national economy in the closing years of the 1950s.[8]

Successful operation of the plant has depended in no small way upon the efforts of the union local's leadership and its rank and file. Efforts to maintain employment at the plant came to a head in 1958-1962, amidst repeated threats of plant closure, lay-offs, and short and long term unemployment, and displayed the resiliency of the union in the face of hostile company management and a national government that was unwilling (or unable) to promise aid to an isolated regional economy as it faltered in the unsteady economy of the Cold War.

One of the historical questions arising out of this experience concerns the conversion of Canada's war industry to one producing goods for a growing North American market of consumers. The Canadian Car plant in Fort William depended, from

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[6] Opening lines to Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*.

[7] Beatrice and Sidney Webb, *Industrial Democracy* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1897), 818-23.

[8] See K.J. Rea's *The Prosperous Years: The Economic History of Ontario, 1939-1975* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985) for an excellent examination of the economic recession of the late 1950s and of the Diefenbaker administration's policies to deal with it.

soon after its establishment at the Lakehead in 1912, upon the production of war material during the Great War, and from the late 1930s it depended upon the production of aircraft for its survival. Following the end of the Second World War and demobilisation of Canada's military, the production of aircraft at the Lakehead came into question. Many historians and political scientists, most notably Donald Wells, have pointed out the difficulty that Canadian industry faced in the middle 1950s as factories dealt with decreasing demand at home and abroad for defence production.[9] The episode in 1958, culminating in rumoured contracts for the A.V. Roe Arrow jet fighter, Bomarc missiles, and armoured amphibious personnel carriers, illustrates the dependence, real or otherwise, that the Fort William plant had upon defence contracts for its continued operation.

This thesis focuses on the years 1952-1962. It begins with the transformation of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) local into the UAW local at the Fort William plant, extends its analysis through the economic prosperity of the early and middle 1950s and into the turbulence and economic instability of the late 1950s, and ends with the resumption of "steady" production at the plant in 1962. The year 1962 provides a logical end-date because that year witnessed a "changing of the guard" of the local's own leadership. The following years are better left as a new chapter in the history of the union local. The workers involved in the leadership of the union local from 1952 to 1962 demonstrated remarkable skills and values in terms of leadership, integrity in work, and dedication to working-class culture on the shop floor, in the community, and in society generally.

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[9] Donald Wells, "Politics and the Economic Conversion of Military Production in Canada," *Studies in Political Economy* 27 (Autumn 1988): 95-115. The Korean War did create a demand for military goods, but the plant in Fort William felt little of this demand.

This thesis recognises Eric Hobsbawm's observation, "not just that such people should be rescued from oblivion or from what E.P. Thompson called, in his memorable phrase, 'the enormous condescension of posterity',"[10] but that the point is, rather like Hobsbawm's own, that *collectively* such men and women are major historical actors. The historical study of women and men, as they act and interact within the structure of unions, demands attention. Labour history is not only a study of structures, concepts, and themes; it is also the practical utilisation of a discipline acknowledging what Alice and Staughton Lynd's *Rank and File* asserts: "that workers made history: first, as human agents acting collectively against and within the constraints of corporate capitalism; and second, as historians themselves 'make' history - by thinking about, analysing, and interpreting the past."[11]

Those figuring in the pages of this thesis have not been forgotten nor are they the hapless victims of a condescending posterity. My informants have lived good lives in Thunder Bay, and they do not feel that they were dealt a raw deal in their working lives. I want to disassociate myself at the beginning from any ivory tower approach to the writing of labour history. I hope the respect I hold for both the study of labour and the subjects of my study will be apparent in the reading of this thesis.

Bryan Palmer observed of E.P. Thompson that, within the moving relationships of opposition and choice, Thompson looked to the past to renew the present, the better to recover possibility in the future.[12] A study in labour history is especially gratifying because it is about working people who experience joy, pain, love, and sorrow, and who

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[10] Eric Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People: Resistance, Rebellion and Jazz* (New York: The New Press, 1988), vii.

[11] John Borsos, "Building Bridges: *Rank and File* and *The Emergence of a UAW* Revisited," *Oral History Review* 20 (Spring-Fall 1992): 98.

[12] Bryan Palmer, *E.P. Thompson: Objections and Oppositions* (London: New Left Books, 1994), 10.

persevere. When things seem oppressive, it is then that we must draw from past experiences to gain strength. The labour movement, and more specifically trade and industrial unions, have proven to be a social manifestation where people act collectively to gain power over their own lives. I look to the past because the history of others bears a certain resemblance to those experiences of my own. Eric Hobsbawm described this sentiment well:

> For where we stand in regard to the past, what the relations are between the past, present and future are not only matters of vital interest to all: they are quite indispensable. We cannot help situating ourselves in the continuum of our own life, of the family and group to which we belong. We cannot help comparing past and present: that is what family photo albums or home movies are there for. We cannot help learning from it, for that is what *experience* means.[13]

It is the experience of struggles and hard-won victories that appeals to the student of history. We must re-discover the past and make it relevant; we must believe, again, that historians might 'investigate the past in the hope that it may enable their fellow men to control the future,' and we must refute the idea that history's 'educational value lies in the exercises it provides for the mind and not for what it contains.'[14]

Previously, I mentioned Thompson's exhortation "to rescue the history of workers from the condescension of posterity." Bryan Palmer goes far in describing the tradition of Thompson neither as condescension nor as the "experiential validity of aspiration."[15] Thompson's own conceptual premise translates into a penchant for objection. Students of history work within a dialogue, an ongoing discourse, which uses an historical method.

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[13] Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 24.

[14] J.H. Plumb in his introduction to a collection of essays he collected and edited, *Crisis in the Humanities* (London: Penguin Books, 1964), 9.

[15] Palmer, *E.P. Thompson*, xi. This is an interesting expression, but I think it is appropriate given Thompson's own penchant for Marxist dialectics. The relationship of theory to historical method is interpreted as an ongoing debate between scholars. One should always be open to reinterpreting the application of facts and concepts to one's work.

An understanding of employment at the Lakehead in the years following 1945 contributes to our own historical knowledge of economics, society, and culture. This study seeks to interpret the situation of workers in the Can-Car plant over a period of ten years and to consider their experiences within the changing economic and social conditions in Fort William. The union helped to condition not only the shop floor culture but also the conditions of employment at the Lakehead.

Several themes come out in reading primary documents dealing with a union local's history. Union militancy in the post-war era vacillated in both the union leadership and the rank and file of various industrial unions. The CIO's larger members, one of which was the UAW, have been the subject of many historical and social science studies of worker militancy following the Depression of the 1930s. An important work outlining the history of the UAW in Canada, Charlotte Yates' *From Plant to Politics*, examines the economic and political relations between union action and government policy from the 1930s to the 1990s.[16] This thesis examines the connection between national and international union policy and the opinions and practices of the union local. Local 1075 UAW existed within the national economic and political climate described by Yates, and worker militancy (or lack thereof) occurred within the historical context of time and circumstance. The local in Fort William deviated on occasion from the practices followed and attitudes displayed by larger unions in southern Ontario and the northeastern United States during this time. The notion of militancy has to be explored in the pages of this study.

A second significant theme for the local was the development of bureaucracy and increased institutionalisation. The concept of "institutionalisation" is useful in the

[16] Charlotte Yates, *From Plant to Politics: Autoworkers in Postwar Canada, 1936-1990* (Philadelphia:

interpretation of union leadership, the leadership's role in decision making, and its relationship to the rank and file membership. Michael Barry, in an article published by *Labour History* in 2001, presented a synthesis of the debate ongoing in the late 1980s between Australian historian Jonathan Zeitlin and his use of the traditional tools of institutional analysis and those labour historians critical of such an approach to explaining the nature of employment or the dynamics of the labour process within industry.[17] Michael Barry studied waterfront workers in New Zealand during the years of the Depression. His findings corroborated Zeitlin's criticism of "rank and filism," a concept which divides the aspirations of the rank and file from a union's leadership, and support his dissatisfaction with suggestions that trade unions and formal bargaining structures served to impede the aspirations of workers. Barry denied there was a rift between the bureaucratic policies of union officials and the militancy of their members.[18]

The division of a union membership from its leadership is difficult to define in a small union local. In its early years of development, when the union local's leadership is drawn from a small membership, the interests and practices of individuals in positions of responsibility, such as local executive, trustees, or shop stewards, are not very different from their constituents. Yates' studies, which elaborate and interpret the policies and relations of an international or district/ regional union executive and bureaucracy within a large union membership, develops concepts that demand re-evaluation. The introduction of such themes as gender, class, and ideology complicate the understanding of "structures" dividing leadership and membership even more. The interests of individuals

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Temple University Press, 1993).

[17] Michael Barry, "Institutional and Social History Interpretations of New Zealand Waterfront Industrial Relations, Depression to Early 1940s," *Labour History* 80 (May 2001): 121-23.

[18] Jonathan Zeitlin, "From Labour History to the History of Industrial Relations," *Economic History Review* 40 (1987): 165-67.

are not strictly defined by an institution's structure. Rather, the interplay of human agents acting and reacting within a historical context bring about the development of the institution: the union local.

This thesis is an attempt to find a middle ground. Mark Leier's *Red Flags and Red Tape: the Making of a Labour Bureaucracy* provides an example for methodological analysis and interpretation. It uses a case study of one labour organisation to examine the interplay between bureaucracy, class, and ideology.[19] The degree of institutionalisation or militancy of a bureaucracy has been identified by labour historians in the past fifteen years as a characteristic of unions in the post-war period. Individual workers in the Thunder Bay plant reacted to the changed climate of economic stability, depending on their own life experiences. How did individuals deal with the structure of their union? What impact upon workers in the plant did gradual changes in the union structure, such as dues check-offs, collective bargaining, retirement plans, prospects of health insurance, and severance packages, have? The 1950s and early 1960s saw real advances in industrial relations. The creation of a bureaucracy, at both the local and regional level of the UAW, facilitated the material gains of labour in the way of wages and benefits. This study explores the degree to which such gains were made in Thunder Bay and the impact that these gains had upon the aspirations and expectations of a union membership.

The union local was a structure within a national and regional economy. Though the gains made by labour in the 1950s were not insignificant, they were only one manifestation of change taking place at work and in the community. While the plant in Fort William was a place of employment for men and women for many years prior to 1952, the years following the establishment of the local were different. Membership in

[19] Leier, *Red Flags and Red Tape*, 4.

the local created a sense of belonging, and increasing numbers of workers associated themselves with the union local, as attested by the development of an agreement for a closed shop in 1953. As well, many people from outside the plant were associated with the union in varying capacities, because of their relation to workers' families in the community. Gender and ethnicity, then, demand recognition as different, but by no means lesser, themes in the development of the union. The presence or, compared to the gendered diversity of the war years, the notable absence of women on the shop floor has to be discussed as well as the contribution of women to the union in other capacities, in the community and in the women's auxiliary.

And, finally, the relation of politics and labour is explored and assessed. The concepts of labourism, socialism, and communism are important to an expanding literature on labour history. The actual discussion of each concept in and for its own sake is beyond the scope of this paper. Shaw's own attempt at a similar discussion eventually filled a book, in which he began,

> we must clear our minds that the institutions under which we live, including our legal ways of distributing income and allowing people to own things are natural, like the weather. They are not. Because they exist everywhere in our little world, we take it for granted that they have always existed and must always exist, and that they are self-acting.
>
> For Socialism is nothing but an opinion held by some people on that point. Their opinion is not necessarily better than your own opinion or anyone else's.[20]

The concept of labour does not fit into any of the neat boxes that Shaw described in 1928, but each of the different terms can be applied in varying degrees to the Canadian labour movement. Nor can it be denied that a great deal of Shaw's political conceptualising is in need of revision. The leaders and membership of Local 1075 identified themselves

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[20] George Bernard Shaw, *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism, Capitalism, Sovietism and Fascism* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1928), 37.

within a political environment that was half-way between the political and economic world of Shaw and our own. Irving Abella's *Nationalism, Communism, and the Canadian Labour Movement* does an excellent job in examining the condition of labour in the 1940s and early 1950s.[21] But since Abella completed his book, much new work has been done assessing the political and social climate in which Canadian unions lived after the war. This thesis considers the role of the union local and community at Fort William within the larger Canadian historiography.

The last aspect of a worker's employment is retirement. The question of unemployment was one that plagued the newspapers and governments at Ottawa and in every provincial capital from the end of the war through to (and beyond) the economic slowdown of the late 1950s. During the Diefenbaker administration, unemployment became less a question and more an economic fact. At the Lakehead, unemployment had always been a fact, and union leadership walked a fine line between bargaining gains and making concessions. The closing of the plant in 1959 was the first instance, in the union local's history, that job losses threatened to become permanent.

In what ways did workers cope with the threat of job loss, and what devices did the union executive use to keep the plant open? How did Fort William react to the possibilities of the plant's closing, and what municipal and regional institutions did they mobilise to hinder the plant's removal from the Lakehead? The factors connecting the Fort William Can-Car plant to its mother plant in Montreal, as well as to the national economy and politics, need to be examined and assessed. Studying the conditions threatening a plant closing, as well as the deciding factors that enabled it to continue, will

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[21] Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and the Canadian Labour Movement* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

tell us a good deal about the role of the industrial region of Thunder Bay within the larger metropolis-hinterland relationship.

In discussing workers and their "consciousness" in the face of threat or opposition, I will do so carefully. The records testify to the actions and sentiments of workers. One must be careful to follow Thompson's exhortation that workers are not to be "classes which are marshalled, sent on manoeuvres, and marched up and down whole centuries bearing so little relation to the actual people disclosed in the archives – or for that matter, in the streets around us." The early history of the union local saw many instances of dissent and disagreement of the membership over decisions made by leadership. Observations and generalisations about such concepts as bureaucratisation, membership militancy, gender, ethnicity, and employment are "the metaphorical expression of most complex, and generally involuntary, processes."[22] For working people, class consciousness is not a single "mode of expression" but a collection of different and conflicting expressions. The notion of class and identity is to be explored within the context of community at the Fort William plant. We will find that many individuals in the plant identified themselves collectively in opposition to the political, economic, and social conditions around them.

[22] E.P. Thompson, "The Peculiarities of the English," in *The Poverty of Theory and other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 294.

Chapter One

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

To turn to the issues of historical method, we need a methodology that can reconcile two premises, that labour in a capitalist system is weak in comparison to propertied interests but that labour can and does succeed in changing the material and social conditions of this capitalist society, despite formidable economic and political opposition. E.P. Thompson's quotation from Vico's *The New Science* summarises this best:

> It is true that men have themselves made this world of nations. . ., but this world without doubt has issued from a mind often diverse, at times quite contrary, and always superior to the particular ends that men had proposed to themselves; which narrow ends, made means to serve wider ends, it has always employed to preserve the human race upon this earth. Men mean to gratify their bestial lust and abandon their off-spring, and they inaugurate the chastity of marriage from which families arise. The fathers mean to exercise without restraint their paternal power over their clients, and they subject them to the civil powers from which the cities arise. The reigning orders of nobles mean to abuse their lordly freedom over the plebeians, and they are obliged to submit to the laws which establish popular liberty. The free peoples mean to shake off the yoke of their laws, and they become subject to monarchs. . .That which did all this was mind, for men did it with intelligence; it was not fate, for they did it by choice; not chance, for the results of their always so acting are perpetually the same.[23]

Read into this excerpt the history of industrial relations in the twentieth century, and we have a framework within which we can begin to make our observations. Vico's is an early example of theory in history upon which historical materialism would be built.

The premise upon which the labour movement in Canada is built, that of workers' unity and mutual interest in a capitalist society, is fraught with contradiction. One sees in one instance the manifestation of a united and militant union local, and in another a labour body divided within itself into factions supporting this policy or that. The very

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[23] Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory,' 86.

term "labour movement" is often no less ambiguous than other terms in current usage, such as "democratic society," "feminist movement," or "capitalism." The term "labour" can be criticised because of its tendency to nudge us towards "over-consensual and holistic notions."[24] Thompson described such words as "clumpish terms, which by gathering up so many activities and attributes into one common bundle may actually confuse or disguise discriminations that should be made within them."[25] Keeping this admonition in mind, there is a necessity to link the concrete with the less specific. Taking the union local as an example, we need to identify those bridges that link a small membership at the Can-Car plant with the interests of other labour bodies at the regional, provincial, national, and international levels of organisation. At the same time that commonalities are identified, differences within labour will arise. We need to place these commonalities and differences within the context of history, within the context of labour history.

I think the concept of the totality of history might do this. The concept of totality in historical interpretation poses a challenge, in some parts hopeless, and in other parts provocative. It is an old concept but I think that students new to history are being urged to consider the application of empirical analysis as difficult. Also, the emphasis upon the thematic consideration of history can exclude some forms of analysis that, in many instances, are quite important, such as the political and the economic. The concept of totality has been rejected, so it seems to the new student of history (of which I am one), along with other Marxist concepts of class, class struggle, mode of production, etc. Bryan Palmer's *Descent into Discourse: The Reification of Language and the Writing of*

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[24] E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (New York: New Press, 1991), 13.
[25] Ibid.

Social History clarifies the issues important to Marxist theory.[26] By maintaining the importance of the material, we can, as John Borsos maintains, "realize what Bryan Palmer has offered in *Descent into Discourse* as one of the promises of modern social history: to employ the methods of poststructuralists without privileging text over action, or rhetoric over reality."[27]

Eric Hobsbawm employs the term "totality" in his book, *Labouring Men,* but it is in his 1979 lecture, "Has History Made Progress?" that he describes the argument as follows:

> [The] imperialism or ecumenism of historical studies is a good thing. History is "total," to use a fashionable phrase, though even the current range is only a selection of those things which happen to interest late-twentieth-century historians. And it is an even more welcome development, insofar as it tends to turn history into what I believe it ought to be, the general framework of at least the social sciences.[28]

Is totality still useful today as a concept? Any attempt at totality in the study of history is open to the same criticism as the notion of objectivity. The application of historical method to empirical observation must seem limited and fraught with contradictions. The historical argument concerns always the "exposure of concept to evidence, or the organizing by concept."[29] If we interpret history as process and tendency, rather than as laws and rules, we see that the examination of various case studies and episodes in history helps to corroborate the concepts and systems that theory gives voice to. When I am describing the debate between law/structure and historical process, I am referring

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[26] Bryan Palmer, *Descent into Discourse: The Reification of Language and the Writing of Social History* (Philadelphia: Templeton University Press, 1990).
[27] John Borsos, "Building Bridges: *Rank and File* and *The Emergence of a UAW Local* Revisited," *Oral History Review* 20 (Spring-Fall 1992): 102.
[28] Eric Hobsbawm, "Has History Made Progress?," in his *On History* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 67.
[29] E.P. Thompson, "An Open Letter to Leszek Kolakowski," in *The Poverty of Theory and other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 387.

specifically to the arguments put forth by Thompson in response to the theories of such Marxist structuralists as Althussar, in Thompson's essay, "The Poverty of Theory."

The concept of totality has a history of its own. We see in modern historiography an attempt to come to grips with the study of history in the light of a discourse that is less dogmatic, abstract, and theoretical. Sean Scalmer's article in the Australian journal, *Labour History*, concisely describes the contrast between E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams in the 1960s and that embodied in Britain's *New Left Review*. In his article, Scalmer writes that:

> The analysis of totality accused Thompson's own work of populism. It [the *New Left Review*] insisted that Thompson's work ignored the need for abstraction, as it did the tendency of social relations to structure the world 'behind the backs' and the perceptions of workers.[30]

Thompson responded to such criticism, in this instance that of Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn, in his essay, "The Peculiarities of the English." Against the models and structures invented or elaborated by intellectuals in the 1960s, Thompson said that every historical experience is unique. He wrote that too much protestation about this calls into question, not the experience itself (which remains to be explained) but the relevance of the model against which it is judged.[31] A study in totality requires an historical analysis of great proportions, and it would consist of a study of individual episodes and experiences using historical concepts and models.

But of course, and in this Thompson was quite specific, the concepts and models (if model is, in fact, the correct way to describe something which is actually metaphorical in nature) must act upon and be acted upon by the subject or object of experience. Here

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[30] Sean Scalmer, 'Experience and Discourse: A Map of Recent Theoretical Approaches to Labour and Social History,' *Labour History* 70 (May 1996), 158.
[31] Thompson, 'The Peculiarities of the English,' 247.

again we see history as process and recognise that the idea of human agency calls for an historical interpretation recognising this: "women and men placed in actual contexts which they have not chosen, and confronted by indivertible forces, with an overwhelming immediacy of relations and duties and with only a scanty opportunity for inserting their own agency."[32]

Since the 1960s, many historians and social scientists have criticised Thompson's approach to experience and human agency through historical process. Rather than summarise Scalmer's entire accounting of the post-structural critique of Thompson's view of history, I will quote the following:

> The unveiling of the power and interest of intellectuals has entered into the historiographical debates of the present. The order and objectivity of historical explanation has increasingly been treated as a fiction, and the role of historical discourse in imposing that order has been highlighted by writers like Roland Barthes and Joan Scott. The role of historians as intellectuals who *construct* the actors that inhabit their narratives has been opened up to critical scrutiny, and the concept of a commonly accessible "experience" attacked as a damaging barrier to the examination of *difference*.[33]

I am cognisant of the difficulties of Thompson's approach. I believe that examination of historical circumstances sheds light up the material circumstances of the past. This thesis draws on Thompson's example, and a tradition existent in Canadian historiography, in its treatment of Local 1075 UAW.

The writing of Canadian labour history has changed a great deal since the 1960s. It is important to consider these changes, to examine this growth that has taken place in the past twenty-five years. A beginning point in introducing the debates surrounding the development of labour history is the renowned 1981 article by David Bercuson entitled "Through the Looking Glass of Culture: An Essay on the New Labour History and

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[32] Ibid., 279.

Working-Class Culture in Recent Canadian Historical Writing." Bercuson took issue with a dichotomy between the "new" history and the "old." He began his article with a critique of the concept of totality, and defined for us the difference he saw developing between an older history and a new one.[34]

> The new labour history is not new for the "what," but for the "how." Quite simply, the entire conceptual framework differs from other labour or social history. The studies in Kealey and Warrian, the Langdon essay, the Palmer and Kealey books, and other works of this genre are intended to be restricted but intensive studies of workers in different places and at different times which will eventually form a new synthesis of Canadian social history. The method, as Palmer describes it, involves the use of "sharp detail of limited chronology or restricted region to illustrate the human dimensions of the past." In the process, "theory is meant to inform historical inquiry and, in turn, to be informed by historical research." In the words of E.P. Thompson, the historian must "proceed from definitions to evidence and back from evidence to definitions. . ."
>
> The new labour history is usually marked by a concern with "working-class culture." It is always difficult to categorise a group of historians. Regardless of the ideological or conceptual approach they identify themselves with they are, after all, individuals. One may be more concerned with the question of culture, or view culture differently, than the next. One may be more guided by evidence, another by theory. Nevertheless, it is clear that for those in Canada who have styled themselves practitioners of the new labour history, a concern with culture is basic.[35]

The new history, said Bercuson, was characterised by a primary concern with culture. Later in his article, Bercuson went one step further in defining the new labour history, this time in the British context, that it "tends to be explicitly Marxist and is almost solely concerned with exploring the culture of the [British] working class." Bercuson's observation that, with the new labour history, "a concern with culture is basic" recalls the association we can make between the new labour history and the work of E.P. Thompson

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[33] Scalmer, "Experience and Discourse," 160.

[34] Bercuson identified some of the "older" historians in his article, amongst them H.A. Logan, *Trade Unions in Canada* (Toronto 1948); Bernard Ostry, "Conservatives, Liberals and Labour in the 1870s," *Canadian Historical Review* 41 (1960): 93-127, Paul MacEwan, *Miners and Steelworkers: Labour in Cape Breton* (Toronto 1976); and D.C. Masters, *The Winnipeg General Strike* (Toronto 1950).

[35] David Bercuson, "Through the Looking Glass of Culture: An Essay on the New Labour History and Working-Class Culture in Recent Canadian Historical Writing," *Labour/ Le Travailleur* 7 (Spring 1981): 96-97.

and Raymond Williams.[36]

It seems the new labour historians of the mid to late 1970s were interested in integrating class into historical scholarship. Joan Sangster not that long ago picked up upon the observation of Greg Kealey, "suggesting two overlapping cohorts of the 1960s and 1970s: the first doing more 'institutional' but certainly novel topics, and a second cohort, more interested in ninteenth century class formation, class, culture, and Marxism."[37] Bercuson identified one major difference between the older history and the new and that was the application of class analysis to a discipline that traditionally minimised the agency of Canadian workers in a capitalist society. But the transition in Canadian labour history, from an older to a newer history, was complex. From the Marxist perspective, Palmer reminds us that "Marxists and labour historians must not give up the battle for ideas and understandings." By the early 1990s, writing surrounding the "old" and the "new" debates in historical analysis had largely been dispelled, owing to developments in analytical and theoretical methods from a newer and different perspective. But these Canadian historians who formed the "second cohort" continue to remind us that historical materialism is still at odds with mainstream history in Canada:

> Others [practising Marxists] have chosen different polemical paths, crossing swords with the crankily mainstream demand that social history's insignificance and banality be reversed by a return to the "good old historiographic days," when books were books because they dealt with subjects prime-ministerial. Such pronouncements could leave us thinking that all is well in the now diversified and increasingly inclusive practice of historical production.[38]

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[36] For a comment on the development of history, culture, and a radical tradition, refer to Stephen Woodhams, *History in the Making: Raymond Williams, Edward Thompson and Radical Intellectuals 1936-1956* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2001).

[37] Joan Sangster, "Feminism and the Making of Canadian Working-Class History: Exploring the Past, Present and Future," *Labour/ Le Travail* 46 (Fall 2000), 130.

[38] Bryan Palmer, "Class and the Writing of History: Beyond BC," *BC Studies* 3 (Autumn 1996): 77. Palmer's article cites Michael Bliss and J.L. Granatstein in a footnote as two examples of the 'crankily mainstream.' No wonder. We might cite Granatstein's *Who Killed Canadian History?* as one example of such.

Developments in the 1980s led the debate on method and theory away from the inclusion of the institutional and cultural in Canadian history towards the consideration of histories which had been, for the most part, during the 1970s on the periphery of academe. Or, one might say, Canadian history became more inclusive in its consideration of an analytical framework.[39] The historical changes in economy and society during the 1970s had an important impact upon women and Canadian universities.[40] As such, says Joan Sangster,

> Labour and women's history did not originate, but were rejuvenated in the 1970s. This renaissance was encouraged by political and social movements of the time, as well as by the opening up of previously elite universities to a new cohort of youth, including more women, who had high ideals, and were quick to cast a critical eye on their elders.
>
> In a more optimistic political climate, thirty years ago, feminist activists, including academics, harboured hopes for a reinvigorated working-class movement, transformed by feminism and committed to a broadly based politic of liberation for oppressed peoples. An intellectual and political space was created, which, though never dominant in the academy and the community, fostered new critiques of history and society and thus also hope for a different future. Out of this climate emerged the first attempts to create a Canadian feminist working-class history.[41]

Canadian history changed through the course of the 1980s and articles in various historical journals, including the *Canadian Historical Review* and *Labour/ Le Travail,* began to commit more content to the discussion of historical topics in feminist, gender, race, class, and Native Peoples history. But one is reminded again and again, and for good reason, not to be complacent, nor to take for granted what has already been accomplished.

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[39] Veronica Strong-Boag, "Moving Beyond Tired 'Truths': Or, Let's Not Fight the Old Battles," *BC Studies* 3 (Autumn 1996), 86.

[40] A work outlining the economic changes in Ontario, and their social and political impact during the period under discussion is K.J. Rea's *The Prosperous Years: The Economic History of Ontario, 1939-1975* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

The writings of postmodernists in the past fifteen years have begun to use and interpret class, gender, race and other forms of analysis in new and creative ways. In Canadian historiography, however, the issues raised by postmodernists in recent years have thrown the study of labour, as well as that of other fields, into turmoil. Concerning class and gender, the older form of historical writing took issue initially with these two concepts in an interesting way.

> The issue of gender made its way into this context when it was introduced as evidence that class, or at least class consciousness, did not really exist. Since the working-class was fractured by different experiences based on gender, ethnicity, religion, and region, David Bercuson argued, class was obscured and a unitary class consciousness lacking.[42]

Marxists acknowledge that historical materialism and Marxist dialectics can integrate differences in gender, ethnicity, religion, and region. But within the debates in historical materalism, there are opposing views. Veronica Strong-Boag maintains that, currently,

> This growing awareness of the multiplicity, simultaneity, and fluidity of human identities and relationships does not imply a meaningless relativity. That version of postmodernism has no appeal for feminist scholars who understand that power has many faces.[43]

Mark Leier writes that development if postmodern theories in reality and historical methodology are increasingly calling into question the "primacy of class, arguing instead that we should see the interconnectedness of all forms of oppression and that history is too messy to fit into Marxism."[44] And so these criticisms repeat, in an different vein, the commentaries on Marxist materialism from twenty years ago. In her criticism of contemporary postmodern historians, Sangster writes:

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[41] Sangster, "Feminism and the Making of Canadian Working-Class History," 129.
[42] Ibid., 132.
[43] Strong-Boag, "Moving Beyond Tired Truths," 84.
[44] Leier, "Response to Professors Palmer, Strong-Boag, and McDonald," *BC Studies* 3 (Autumn 1996): 93.

> Such arguments have fostered new understandings of the power of language and narrative structure in our reconstructions of women's experience, reinforcing a healthy scepticism concerning our strategies of historical recovery. And attempts to de-centre the "unitary" subject have encouraged exploration of the many axes of identity, including sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age, and culture shaping the working-class subject. The question is: how do the multiple identities fracturing the subject of postmodern history differ from the multiple identities characterising Bercuson's construction of the working-class subject? He assumed experience did exist, but working-class consciousness and culture were not a part of it. Poststructuralist-informed histories assume experience can't be located, and again, class and class consciousness are not in sight. Do they both, ultimately, come to a similar ideological resting point? Moreover, does the emphasis on the "unlimited identities" of the subject lead us into a cul-de-sac of interpretive and political immobility, merely "hymning the virtues of schizophrenia?"[45]

We see that the discourse surrounding worker agency, class consciousness, and the role of the historian in examining labour history continues around issues unique to historiography generally. What Bercuson and Sangster have in common, though, is the belief that "Canadians should carve out an alternative project - drawing on our different political history - by exploring theory dedicated to redefining materialism, production, reproduction, and sexuality."[46]

Where Canadian labour historians stand in this growing debate depends very much on the strengths and/or weaknesses inherent in various arguments and theories, foremost among them those of Karl Marx and Michel Foucault. The next part of this chapter considers an essential element in the discourse between Marxists and postmodernists. Taken together, debates stimulated by the historical example of E.P. Thompson, by Marxists and postmodernists alike, can increase our own knowledge of history and the pursuit of Canadian labour history.

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[45] Sangster, "Feminism and the Making of Canadian Working-Class History," 159.

[46] Ibid., 165. Bercuson did not express the sentiment the same way. Prof. Bercuson wrote that 'the assumption that Canadian workers experienced an identification and a culture much like that of British workers is only assumption if it is not backed by proof. Even if Thompson is right about England, his concepts do not necessarily apply anywhere else," Bercuson, "Through the Looking Glass of Culture," 34.

Thompson's methodological emphasis in his historical work, if we take *The Making of the English Working-Class* as an example, was upon the experiential, "as experience is the start of a process that culminates in the realisation and articulation of social consciousness, in this case a common identity of class."[47] Joan Scott is critical of Thompson's use of the concept of experience, because it rests upon forming the relations of production.[48] Some historians have accused Thompson of "essentializing" history.[49] Thompson wrote in this context,

> It should not be supposed that these formulae supply an instant analytical resource to unpick the meaning of every action. . .Each. . . action took place in a specific context, was influenced by the local balance of forces, and often found its opportunity and its script from the factional divisions within ruling groups or from issues thrown up in national political discourse. This question has been discussed cogently by Nicholas Rogers in *Whigs and Cities*; he (perhaps unfairly) suspects me of "essentialist" analytical procedures.[50]

The "suspicion of 'essentialist' analytical procedures" in Thompson's work is an extension of the criticisms articulated by Scalmer. It should be evident by now that I am using E.P. Thompson as an authority in labour history methodology in my own theory; so it might do to vocalise one more criticism, this one voiced by an eminent feminist scholar, on Thompson's methods:

> In Thompson's account class is finally an identity rooted in structural relations that pre-exist politics. What this obscures is the contradictory and contested process by which class itself was conceptualized and by which diverse kinds of

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[47] Joan Scott, "Experience," in Judith Bolter and Joan Scott, ed., *Feminists Theorize the Political* (NewYork: Rutledge, 1992), 30.

[48] E.P. Thompson opposes some of the orthodox traditions in Marxist theory, one of the foremost being Stalin's theory on "Base" and "Superstructure." See Thompson, "The Poverty of Theory;" or read Thompson, "Folklore, Anthropology, and Social History," *Indian Historical Review* 3 (January 1977): 247-66 for an excellent essay on social history, culture, and the Marxist tradition.

[49] Bryan Palmer defines this term, in a notation to his *Descent into Discourse*, to mean "the insistence that class exists only when class forces are uniformly conscious of their unproblematic class place in the society and act unambiguously and persistently on the basis of that consiousness." Palmer writes that "Essentialist views of class, and the consequent rejection of class, have thus long been a part of the one-sidedness of conservative historiography and political comment." Palmer, *Descent into Discourse*, 253-54.

[50] Thompson, *Customs in Common*, 93-94.

> subject positions were assigned, felt, contested, or embraced. As a result, Thompson's brilliant history of the English working class, which set out to historicize the category of class, ends up essentializing it. The ground may seem to be displaced from structure to agency by insisting on the subjectively felt nature of experience, but the problem Thompson sought to address isn't really solved. Working-class "experience" is now the ontological foundation of working-class identity, politics, and history.[51]

Joan Scott's criticism of Thompson seems to focus upon his tendency, as a Marxist historian, to give pre-eminence to class as identity. Thompson once wrote that, "It seems that historians in the Marxist tradition who have been influenced by the Gramscian concept of hegemony have also been looking with fresh eyes at the forms of ruling class domination and control."[52] I do not think that a class-centred and materialist interpretation of experience and history need be hostile to, or exclusive of, other factors and concepts such as gender, ethnicity, or the "Other." In anticipation of Scott's reading of him, Thompson once wrote,

> If we are concerned only with becoming, then there are whole periods in history in which an entire sex has been neglected by historians, because women are rarely seen as prime agents in political, military or even economic life. If we were concerned with being [read here, *experience*] then the exclusion of women would reduce history to futility. We cannot understand the agrarian system of small cultivators without examining inheritance practices, dowry, and (where appropriate) the familial development cycle. And these practices rest, in turn, upon the obligations and reciprocities of kinship, whose maintenance and observation will often be found to be the peculiar responsibility of the women. The "economy" can only be understood within the context of a society textured in these kinds of ways; the "public" life arises out of the dense determinations of the "domestic" life.[53]

We need not believe, necessarily, that for Marxist feminists the self-imposed requirement that there be a "material" explanation for gender has limited or slowed the development

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[51] Scott, "Experience," 30.
[52] Thompson, "Folklore, Anthropology, and Social History," 254.
[53] Ibid., 251.

of new lines of analysis in our theories of gender and history. This is what Joan Scott asserts in the opening chapter of her *Gender and the Politics of History*[54]

The historian, using the concept of totality, need not consider only those "facts" which s/he deems to be pertinent to the study. Rather than call this an institutional history, or a social history, the concept of totality might facilitate an historical examination that is political, social, economic, and feminist in theory. Those historical details expressing something here in common, and something there held different, will at times be open to alternate methods of interpretation. Of course, the narration of an episode may well leave out something important, or put too much emphasis on this or that conceptual distinction. This thesis attempts to interpret a small span of years in a union local from a varied perspective. "But what seems answerable in easy ways to sociologists and political scientists often proves for historians to be a difficult, painful, complex process of reconstruction in which essential evidence is contradictory or, worse, just not available."[55] As Bryan Palmer pointed out in *Studies in Political Economy*: 'Totality is hard enough to conceive in the abstract. In the concrete empirical investigation of the past, it is destined to be an elusive ideal, something to strive for, a way of conceiving class relations in the past that must inevitably fall at least a little short of our imagined possibilities.'[56] In Canadian labour historiography the methodology varies from political, to economic, to institutional, to social forms of historical analysis. It is tempting to focus a study upon a single specific case study and to interpret the development and growth of the study in historical context.

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[54] Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 34.
[55] Bryan Palmer, "Listening to History Rather than Historians: Reflections on Working Class History," *Studies in Political Economy* 20 (Summer 1986): 77.
[56] Palmer, "Listening to History," 77.

We need an historical method that can reconcile two sets of premises. The two premises seem mutually exclusive, but an understanding of both is necessary if we are to comprehend the character of labour, the labour movement, and unions generally. The word, "movement," has a connotation of something whole, an concept that has characteristics and functions that seem dynamic and identifiable. Marxist theory identifies class and class struggle as historical concepts, and many labour historians use the idea of "labour" to convey the similarities that workers share. Yet, within the labour movement, differences exist that seem to fracture the entire structure. Postmodernists, and academics since the 1970s, have pointed to gender and ethnicity as concepts that divide workers more than they bind them together. Amidst these differences in theory, however, most Marxists and labour historians maintain that class consciousness is still relevant to historical analysis today. This chapter seeks to reconcile differences and to develop a theory and methodology that allows for differences while maintaining the importance of class as an historical concept.

The first premise is the observation accepted by some labour historians, that:

> Without the working men's continuous pressure from without, interference on the part of government in [industrial disputes] would never have taken place. But at all events, the result was not to be attained by private settlement between the working men and the capitalists. This very necessity of general political action affords the proof that in its merely economic action capital is the stronger side.[57]

In this conclusion of Marx, we see the necessity of men and women to act collectively in their class interest if they are to better their own material conditions in a capitalist society. Large-scale union organisation is one means for workers to involve themselves in opposing employers and capital, although it is not the only one. Also, the pressure

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[57] Marx, "Wages, Price and Profit," from *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970): 223.

exerted by workers upon capital, by the withdrawal of services and picketing (ie.: strike action) can provoke the intervention of government. During the 1950s and 1960s, unionisation was the most effective vehicle for groups of workers to combat employers and their capital, but Marx's premise on the strength of capital remained true. Elizabeth Fones-Wolf draws the following conclusion in assessing the conflicts between labour and capital in the United States:

> The overwhelming advantages of wealth and power business brought to its campaign to build company consciousness made labor's opposing efforts seem insignificant. Indeed, the social unionism of the CIO has been almost forgotten as historians have tended to dismiss the social consciousness and social vision of the post war labor movement. It has been too easy to read the rise of business unionism and the steady decline of organised labor back into the immediate post-war era.[58]

Fones-Wolf corroborates Marx's own belief that the outcome in the conflict between capital and workers was never a foregone conclusion. The alternative to a conclusion, we might guess, would manifest itself in a political and economic revolution. Such being the tendency in this system, is this saying that the working class ought to renounce their resistance to the power of capital and abandon their attempts at making the best of occasional chances for their temporary improvement?[59] Of course not for, on this question, we move to our second premise.

The second premise grows out of the first. In spite of the economic weakness of a labour movement, and despite divisive elements such as racism, sexism, and elitism that hampers the collective efforts of workers around the world, gains have been made in Western society that have bettered the working and living conditions of wage earners. Here, I must go from the general to the more specific. In 1867 Marx remarked on the

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[58] Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-1960* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994): 127.

current condition of class politics in Europe and made the following observation:

> A radical change in the existing relations between capital and labour is as evident and inevitable [on the Continent] as in England. At the same time, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, Mr. Wade, Vice-President of the United States, declared in public meetings that, after the abolition of slavery, a radical change of the relations of capital and of property in land is next upon the order of the day. . . These signs. . . do not signify that to-morrow a miracle will happen. They show that, within the ruling-classes themselves, a foreboding is dawning, that the present society is no solid crystal, but an organism capable of change, and is constantly changing.[60]

The political and social changes credited by Marx with altering the face of European society did not commence in the 1860s. In *The Making of the English Working Class,* E.P. Thompson saw industrial relations in England as being transformed as early as the 1780s. With gradual changes in industrial relations came the improvements in wages and quality of life that we have come to expect in Western society. In Britain, Australia, the United States, and Canada, the general condition of the working classes has improved considerably since the nineteenth century.[61] Some of the ameliorations of social life were demanded of the possessors of property and further industrial expansion was possible only by social change.[62]

These changes in living conditions have not taken place as a result of the paternal regard of government or business. Indeed, in some countries, intense industrial development was released only by social revolution.[63] James Struthers' *No Fault of their*

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[59] Marx, "Wages, Price and Profit," 225.

[60] Marx, "Preface to the First German Edition of 'Capital'," from *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970): 231.

[61] An excellent article outlining the labour historiography in Australia is Eric Fry, "Australian Labour and Labour Historiography," *Labour/ Le Travailleur* 12 (Fall 1983): 113-35. Also comparing the historical development of the Australian economy with that of Canada and the United States, see David Greaseley and Les Oxley, "A Tale of Two Dominions: Comparing the Macroeconomic Records of Australia and Canada since 1870," *Economic History Review* 51 (1998): 294-318.

[62] J.H. Plumb, "The Historians Dilemma," in Plumb, ed., *Crisis in the Humanities* (London: Penguin Book, 1964), 38.

[63] Ibid.

Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941 is an excellent historical examination of the slow and painful process of liberalisation of legislation and federal acceptance of responsibility in the realm of social welfare and provision for the unemployed.[64] The role of organised labour in this process is difficult to delineate despite the leadership of such national labour and socialist bodies as the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada (TLC) and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). As if the actual mandates and roles of labour councils and unions in Canada were not varied enough, the spectre of unemployment, worker apathy, and a conservative labour leadership make the relationship between labour and government a complicated one indeed. Yet, despite the concentrated efforts in the 1950s of such groups as the Canadian Manufacturers' Association (CMA) and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce (CCC) to oppose social reform, as well as the traditional leadership of conservative political parties in the House of Commons, Canada has developed a social conscience and social legislation that expresses it.

In an age when the services we take for granted are increasingly threatened by conservative elements in society (the new Right), it is important to reconsider the gains made by labour in the past and to reconstruct the process so that it is strengthened today. The period of this thesis, the 1950s and 1960s, was one in which the waxing strength of a small union local mirrored, to some degree, the changes in political reform taking place in the rest of Canada. It is interesting to note the degree to which workers at the Lakehead identified with the changes taking place in society, and see how they attributed these changes to a strong labour movement.

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[64] James Struthers, *No Fault of their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983).

Historians note changes in industrial relations considerably different from those related in Stuart Jamieson's study, *Industrial Relations in Canada*. Canada still has those "special problems" noted in the premise to *Industrial Relations*, namely immigration and other internal divisions in Canada's labour movement.[65] These "problems" have continued to characterise Canadian industrial relations to a varying extent, but, whereas similarities between American and Canadian labour were seen as strengths in the 1950s, today things appear very different. In 1957, Jamieson wrote that:

> A number of factors that were strong deterrents to unionism and collective bargaining in previous decades have been much less effective during and since World War II. Industrial relations legislation now prohibits employers in most industries in Canada, as in the United States, from actively opposing the organisation of trade unions and requires them to recognize and bargain with properly certified organizations. Much more adequate and comprehensive government programs for achieving economic stabilization, full employment, and social security have reduced some of the more pressing areas of poverty and low-wage competition in labor markets. These measures. . . have reduced or mitigated numerous divisive forces in Canadian life.[66]

Following the Second World War and the major post-war strikes in the late 1940s, industrial relations in Canada were characterised as good, partly because of a revitalised economy, partly because of the larger, industrialised labour force, and in large part because of the gains made by "Big Labor" in the United States. Also, the analysis of industrial disputes and Canadian labour issues was conducted differently. Mark Leier describes the writings of Jamieson and his academic contemporaries in the 1960s as those of the "industrial relations experts":

> How can we explain the militancy of the 1960s? Jamieson asked. What were the particular abuses that caused workers to go on strike and turn to more radical politics? By understanding how an interventionist state had resolved problems while maintaining a capitalist economy, industrial relations experts hoped to rub

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[65] Adolf Sturmthal, in the preface to Stuart Jamieson's *Industrial Relations in Canada* (Ithica, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1957), vi.
[66] Jamieson, *Industrial Relations*, 25.

> salve on today's sore spots. Implicit in this history was a kind of Whig analysis that saw unions and socialists as point dogs for reform. They had their place and were worthy of study precisely because we could learn how to reduce their impact on society, politics, and the economy.[67]

The writing of Canadian labour history over the span of the 1950s and 1960s was largely conducted by those with a tendency to neglect the use of class in their analysis of labour.

Class analysis, during the period under consideration, remained largely in the background. In the foreground, holds Leier, were other methods of understanding labour history, and not only of an industrial sort. A number of academics in the socialist democratic tradition were also attempting to explain issues common to labour using a political frame of analysis.

> Seeking to explain the relative success of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and the New Democratic Party (NDP). . . they painted labour's struggles as a prelude to the real battle- the creation of a social democratic government. Dorothy Steeves's biography of Ernest Winch, *The Compassionate Rebel*, fits into this category, as does R.A. Johnson's thesis on the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC), "No Compromise – No Political Trading"; Walter Young's *Anatomy of a Party*; and, to some degree, Paul Phillips's *No Power Greater*. All of this early labour history was written by those who had a professional interest in approaching the subject in a limited and presentist way. On the one hand, there were those who wanted to draw specific lessons about maintaining industrial peace; on the other hand, there was a group of politicos who looked to the past to explain and historicize their efforts in the present. For both camps [the industrial relations analysts and the political writers], class consciousness and class conflict were seen as problems to be solved rather than as areas to be understood.[68]

Leier's observation on the interests of these writers examining labour history in the 1960s are important to our understanding of the historiography. What makes an analysis of class issues especially difficult in today's circumstances, though, is the fact that many workers in the 1950s and 1960s, especially those serving in a leadership capacity, identified, sometimes intimately, with the political and industrial philosophies circulating

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[67] Mark Leier, "W[H]ITHER LABOUR HISTORY: Regionalism, Class, and the Writing of BC History," *BC Studies* 3 (Autumn 1996), 62-63.
[68] Ibid.

in the academy at the time. As we will see, the political tradition of the union leadership at Can-Car during the 1950s was largely that of the CCF. It is no coincidence that the MP for Port Arthur during the Diefenbaker era was Douglas Fisher (CCF). In the sense of this history, we see indeed that "class is a daily experience, and that it is important to study the consciousness workers actually had rather that to look for an ideal, revolutionary consciousness."[69]

If we consider class at the Can-Car plant, we find that it manifests itself in unique ways. The class struggle is apparent in the way workers choose to identify with a militant and politically active union. The language that some workers choose to express their solidarity (most notably the leadership) was one emphasising the socialism of the CCF. Local 1075 displays few characteristics that we might come to expect from a militant Communist union of the 1940s. When the rank and file of the local enunciated their displeasure with the union leadership's party politics, they were using a political language that was conservative, not radical.

Jamieson's analysis of Canadian labour in the 1950s no longer held true thirty years later. In 1984, Leo Panitch and Donald Swartz wrote:

> It is one of the greater ironies of the present conjuncture that just as the Canadian state finally moved in the 1980s to guarantee formally liberal democratic freedoms in an indigenous constitution, so has it simultaneously moved towards foreclosing those aspects of liberal democracy that specifically pertain to workers' freedoms.[70]

The balance shifted in the relations between Canadian labour, government, and business. Panitch and Swartz wrote their article at the time when federal and provincial

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[69] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 12.

[70] Panitch and Swartz, "Towards Permanent Exceptionalism: Coercion and Consent in Canadian Industrial Relations," *Labour/ Le Travail* 13 (Spring 1984): 134.

governments in Canada began to rely upon coercion and back-to-work legislation as a means of bypassing the rights of workers to negotiate their own work contracts.

Rather than generalise about the condition of Canadian labour going into the new millennium, this thesis examines the development of a small bargaining unit in the 1950s in the economic and social condition of its time. It contributes to an understanding of labour and Canadian society in the 1950s so that we might better compare and contrast the changes in labour and society with today.

The changes in the condition of Canadian labour were great in the years following 1950. The standard of living for most Canadians was improved in the 1950s and 1960s and the labour movement contributed to such changes. But it would be incorrect to generalise the 1950s as "golden years" for Canadian labour. In the United States, labour in the 1950s improved the working conditions of those who were white and male. Pamela Sugiman describes the southern Ontario auto industry in the years just prior to 1950: "Since the beginnings of the industry, white men have dominated the auto-manufacturing workforce. Anyone who was not white and male was in the minority, different, an intruder, treated as unequal."[71] Employers and employees perpetuated such unequal treatment of workers. Racial prejudice conditioned the process of job hiring, workplace segregation, and restriction of wages, skills training, and job promotion. In the United States Kevin Boyle notes that,

> In the immediate postwar years the CIO swung to the right. First, it purged its communist members, who had been the foremost advocates of black rights within the labor movement. The unionists who then assumed control of the CIO - the UAW's Walter Reuther and the United Steel Workers' David McDonald, for example - centralized and bureaucratized union power, in the process undermining the local militancy that had been the mainstay of black activism.[72]

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[71] Pamela Sugiman, "Privilege and Oppression: The Configuration of Race, Gender, and Class in Southern Ontario Auto Plants, 1939 to 1949," *Labour/Le Travail* 47 (Spring 2001): 85.

[72] Kevin Boyle, " 'There Are No Union Sorrows that the Union Can't Heal': The Struggle for Racial

The generalised observation of Jamieson, that Canadian and American industrial relations shared a great deal, here shows through; one has only to read Irving Abella's *Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour: the CIO, the Communist Party and the Canadian Congress of Labour, 1935-1956* to see this.[73] Boyle argues that, despite their rhetorical commitment to racial equality, Reuther, McDonald, and their fellow CIO officers generally accepted, rather than confronted, traditional shop floor and community racial standards.[74] There can be no doubt that such policies of industrial union leadership impacted upon smaller bargaining units throughout the United States and Canada: this thesis is mindful of the union local in such a context.

The impact of race, in relation to men and women of colour, in Canadian manufacturing industry during the 1950s was similar to what it was in the United States. Pamela Sugiman finds that,

> In spite of the scant numbers of black men in the plants, auto manufacturers drew on widespread cultural beliefs about race and gender, and exploited and reinforced the structural inequalities that working-class blacks faced in wartime southern Ontario. Employers manipulated these beliefs in hiring workers, allocating them to jobs reserved to women, and establishing the terms of their employment. In doing so, management was central to the construction of difference among workers - a notable achievement given the striking social homogeneity of the workforce as a whole.[75]

Equality in the United Automobile Workers, 1940-1960," *Labor History* (1996): 6. It must be noted that the purges of the late 1940s and early 1950s took place under terrific political pressure from "outside" the American labor movement.

[73] Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour: the CIO, the Communist Party and the Canadian Congress of Labour, 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973). For more on the commonalities between American and Canadian labour in this context, see also Irving Abella and others in Robert Preston, ed., *The Influence of the United States on Canadian Development: Eleven Case Studies* (Durham, N.C.:Duke University Press, 1972).

[74] Boyle, "Union Sorrows," 7.

[75] Sugiman, "Privilege and Oppresion," 86.

Sugiman qualifies her examination of the UAW in Canada with the statement that, given that developments within Canada departed significantly from those in the U.S., her findings are not generalizable across national boundaries.[76] This observation can be further refined in its application to manufacturing in a northern Ontario community. That women and men of colour were less abundant at the Lakehead in the years following 1950, compared to southern Ontario, does not make the consideration of race and class relations less important. In point of fact, in a part of Canada where an indigenous First Nations population is becoming ever more prominent in the Lakehead community, questions of race might become very important. The general nature of employment at the Lakehead is beyond the scope of this thesis, but one might ask what effect the exclusion of First Nations people from the workforce at Can-Car had upon the workers employed there.

An excellent study by Thomas Dunk examines the construction of racial and ethnic characteristics in Thunder Bay as powerful symbols in the myths which the "Boys," these working men in his case study adopted to explain their own and others' places in a perceived set of power relations.[77] The perceived differences in "race" were culturally constructed, but the differences among social groups were developed and exaggerated in an economic and social context separating the work and living spaces of different cultural groups. Categories such as "white" and "Indian," relates Dunk, were formed on different principles than categories such as "Italian" and "English." One referred principally to physical characteristics, whereas the other was based upon country

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[76] Ibid., 87.

[77] Thomas Dunk, *It's a Working Man's Town: Male Working-Class Culture* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994): 101.

of origin and culture.[78] In the Can-Car plant, the differences in identifying principles between the one ("Indian") and the other ("white") was obvious. Aside from the physical differences between the Indian and the European as they were seen in the community, there were also boundaries encouraged by past hiring policies of company management: the Indian remained outside the plant, the European was within it.

Focusing on the Can-Car plant's working culture, we see the fact that issues pertaining to race were peripheral to workers' identity. What was more relevant were those differences arising out of ethnicity, differences between English and Scottish, Italian and Ukrainian, for these were the prominent cultural groups in the workforce at the plant. For many workers at the plant, their views on the "Indian" population at the Lakehead were formed, not through intimate contact at work or by complicated intellectual theory, but rather through alienation.

> For many white people in Thunder Bay and in northwestern Ontario as a whole, the most important racial and ethnic distinction today is between whites and Indians. The Indian is perceived as an inferior other against whom whites define themselves. The Indian is also a powerful symbol in the whites' understanding of their relationship to other whites, especially those in the metropolis located in the southern part of the province. The Indian thus plays a symbolic role in two sets of relationships, one between local whites and local Natives, and the other between local whites and other whites.[79]

Dunk focuses an important distinction. The concept of alienation or, as one anthropologist said, the "marginalization" of workers is not only represented in white workers' identity in contrast to that of the Native. Margins, here, are not a geographic, descriptive location. Nor is the term used in describing those margins as areas of deviance from social norms. Anthropologist Anna Tsing writes rather, that the concept of the "marginal" is an analytic placement that makes evident both the constraining and

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[78] Ibid., 103.
[79] Ibid.

oppressive quality of cultural exclusion and the creative potential of rearticulating, enlivening, and rearranging the very social categories that peripheralize a group's existence.[80] Historians such as Joan Scott have used Tsing's concept of the marginal in their own historical writing, especially in their consideration of the concepts of race, gender, and sexuality. Does the concept of the "marginal" extend to a political or economic analysis of labour at the Lakehead? Have historians used other means and terminology to describe the antagonism that develops out of the social and economic processes arising from production and consumption in a Canadian economy?

The concept of metropolis and hinterland, here expressed in the cultural terms of white and Indian, play themselves out socially and economically when we compare labour issues specific to the Lakehead with those arising in Windsor, Hamilton, or Toronto. Here I speak of relations between political and labour representatives in the Thunder Bay region, as they may or may not have felt that issues and concerns relevant to northwestern Ontario were being voiced in the south, where union and government decisions were generally made. "The white male working class in northwestern Ontario is quite aware of its place in the social relations of production and actively expresses resistance to its subordinate position in various symbolic ways."[81] It is not surprising, therefore, that the historical relations between Natives and whites at Thunder Bay have been, since 1950, formed as a part of this symbolic resistance to its subordinate position: in many ways, white workers at the Lakehead have viewed First Nations as having a stronger position in society, regarding the central government, than they themselves have.

Speaking of white workers and power brings us to the next theoretical hurdle, that of class and gender. Women played two roles in the community of workers. As Pamela

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[80] Anna Lowenhapt Tsing, "From the Margins," *Cultural Anthropology* 9 (September 1994): 279.

Sugiman observed, women worked in industry in roles prescribed to them by men; women's activism at the Can-Car plant was in part also linked to their kinship roles as wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters of working men. As Linda Kealey concludes of women not directly involved in wage labour, by "boosting" the union label, joining auxiliaries, and participating in workers co-operatives, working-class women acted within their roles as consumers rather than producers.[82] It would be false for me to write, as Joan Scott believes some labour historians do, out of a kind of popular-front mentality, and place gender (along with race) on a list of variables that I acknowledge as important but do not take the time to study.[83] Women formed a large proportion of the workforce in the plant during the Second World War. Unfortunately, women were removed almost entirely from the workforce in the late months of 1944 and through 1945. With the focus of this thesis on the local after 1952, the role of women in the plant's workforce is correspondingly restricted. Future research should be directed towards the process by which women were introduced back into the production lines at the Can-Car plant. We must remember that women were employed in the plant's offices in a secretarial capacity and that further study of the plant might include an analysis of Local 81 of the Office Employees International Union.

This thesis examines the impact of women upon the union local, in some cases as members of the workforce, but more often as part of a family unit, or more directly as members of the union local's Ladies' Auxiliary. Joy Parr, in her *Domestic* Goods, observed that, "Both men and women acquired goods and services their households needed and found worth and well being for themselves and their families in activities

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[81] Dunk, *It's a Working Man's Town*, 153.

[82] Linda Kealey, *Enlisting Women for the Cause: Women, Labour, and the Left in Canada, 1890-1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

beyond the market, both inside and outside the home."[84] Theory in gender facilitates a discourse where men and women, their respective identities and their interdependencies, can be considered and compared. A discussion of women in the Can-Car workforce of the 1950s is problematic on the surface because of the workforce's composition. Compared to the war years, when women made up over one-third of the plant's employees, by the early 1950s there were fewer women on the shop floor than one could count on the fingers of one hand.[85] Correspondingly, the union's membership in Fort William during the 1950s and 1960s had almost no women in it.

By examining the role of the family in union activities, or the union in family activities, one can begin to see the complexity in positioning the shop floor, the union, and men on one side of the formation of working class identity, and women and family on the other. This dichotomy, between men and women, work and family, is false, or incomplete. The discourse between union Local and Ladies' Auxiliary, the effect of the one on men, and the other, on women, is too one-sided. What was the impact of the union, or the Ladies' Auxiliary, upon women? In portraying the mobilisation of workers' wives in union efforts as morale boosting, or fund-raising, or recruiting, did union officers give any thought as to what such an organisation would mean in the lives of the women; or, was their only concern how the women's group could benefit the union? Paula Pfeffer raises these questions in her own research and concludes that, unbeknownst to the union leadership, the women's organisation took on meaning in the lives of its

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[83] Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 55.

[84] Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990): 3.

[85] For further readings on women, the Can-Car plant, and war work, see Helen Smith and Pamela Wakewich, " 'Beauty and the Helldivers': Representing Women's Work and Identities in a Warplant Newspaper," *Labour/Le Travail* 44 (Fall 1999): 71-107.

members.[86] Such examples of collective identity might take us back to theories on class. We will discuss the theme of gender in the fifth chapter of this thesis. We should remain mindful of the scepticism of Joan Scott about such an examination, but I do not think it is wrong to think that the Ladies' Auxiliary illustrates the collective identity of a small body of women.

A brief comment on oral history is in order. The value of oral testament in the writing of history is obvious, but the means or methods in oral history are something else entirely. John Borsos, in his article "Building Bridges," elaborates on the Lynds' concept of doing "oral history from below." Borsos believes Alice and Staughton Lynd's *Rank and File: Personal Histories of Working-Class Organizers* is an excellent example of American working-class history that has been neglected by historians. Their explicit intent, he says, was to get beyond a situation in which one group of people experience history (the workers) and another group of people (professional historians) interpret the experience for them.[87] Borsos' contention is that "for all the impact the work of the Lynds had on the development of oral history as a research method, they have been less influential in the field for which they were most centrally rooted - American working-class history."[88] I do not question the veracity of this statement here, and I will look at what the Lynds' oral history may offer for the examination of a union local.

The Lynds' *Rank and File* was written at a time (in 1973) when "a new restlessness [was] evident in wildcat strikes, in rank-and-file rejection of contracts, in

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[86] Paula Pfeffer, "The Women Behind the Union: Halena Wilson, Rosina Tucker, and the Ladies' Auxiliary to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters," *Labor History* 36 (Fall 1995): 558.
[87] John Borsos, "Building Bridges: *Rank and File* and *The Emergence of a UAW Local* Revisited," *Oral History Review* 20 (Spring-Fall 1992): 98.
[88] Ibid., 97.

demands for humanizing work and for a pollution- and hazard-free work situation."[89] The Lynds used their concept of "rank and file" to differentiate the workers on the job from those workers who made up the paid union leadership. Rank-and-file activity, they explained,

> usually means people on the job taking whatever action they think is necessary, doing something for themselves rather than waiting for someone else to do it for them. It means people acting on their own, based on their own common experience. . . Rank-and-file activity may be directed against an intolerable employer or an unresponsive union bureaucracy. At best they are concerned with material benefits for their own members, not with the welfare of working people everywhere. At worst they [the large unions] have become a new kind of company union, financially independent of the rank and file because the company deducts union dues from the worker's pay check (dues check-off) and politically all-powerful because the contract takes away from rank and filers the right to strike (no-strike clause). This is the situation that makes some union men and women say that they have two enemies, the company and their union leadership.[90]

The Lynds' use of oral testimony was not directed against union leadership, but they did write their book at a time when "too many industrial unions [had] become bureaucratic closed corporations, like the craft unions of the old AFL."[91] They believed that most labour history was created neither by famous leaders nor by faceless masses in crisis situations. The resources they had recourse to, therefore, were not limited to contemporary documents of union bureaucracy. They used recordings of conducted interviews, personal memoirs, speeches, and leaflets.

The distinction between the oral testimony of the rank and file and the more traditional materials produced by the union bureaucracy is not accurate, nor simple. The very concept of "rank and file" over-simplifies the complex relationship between the paid and non-paid union leadership. Union executives, especially at the local union level

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[89] Alice and Staughton Lynd, ed., *Rank and File: Personal Histories by Working-Class Organizers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981): 2.
[90] Ibid., 3.

of administration, are unpaid and generally representative of their shop floor constituents. Union leadership is directly recruited from long-time workers, in their capacity to serve as members of the local executive, as shop stewards, trustees, or respected tradesmen. Oral testimony can serve to clarify these distinctions, to point to differences, and to alter opinions from those apparent in the written records of the union local.[92]

Peter Friedlander's *The Emergence of a UAW Local* includes an excellent introductory essay entitled "Theory, Method, and Oral History." Friedlander used oral history because of the nature of the questions he sought to answer in his study. The limitations imposed by the evidence had little significance: not only was the information needed unavailable except in the form of the memories of participants; but information could be developed through critical dialogue.[93] The Lynds also believed that oral history could facilitate a varied number of experiences, that 'their accounts [would] throw light on what has been experienced or may be experienced with variations by a much larger number of people.'[94]

Oral history can point to difference, in that every individual can interpret the causes of, and the effects arising from, that event differently, but questions also emerge about the structure and reliability of memory and about the nature of the interview process itself. Friedlander describes the difficulties in that history as a discipline has its own language, its canon of interpretation, its collection of problems occupying the

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[91] Ibid.

[92] The written records I mention here take on a variety of forms, but for the most part consist of: local executive and committee reports and minutes, union local papers, collective agreements, personal and official correspondence, international union newspapers and leaflets, local newspapers, municipal government council minutes, municipal Chamber of Commerce records, Provincial Parliament and Federal House of Commons records (Hansard), and the federal publication *Labour Gazette*.

[93] Peter Friedlander, *The Emergence of a UAW Local, 1936-1939: A Study in Class and Culture* (Pitsburgh: University of Pitsburgh Press, 1975): xii.

[94] Lynds, *Rank and File*, 6.

forefront of contemporary inquiry.[95] The importance of augmenting the information we can gather on the local from the memories of individuals, helps us to understand the various influences which played in the union local's internal development. As Friedlander remarks in the closing sentences of his Introduction,

> It seems impossible to arrive at any understanding of the political and organizational struggles within the leadership of the UAW without establishing a solid foundation of several studies of key locals. . . the examination of a small local does shed a considerable amount of light on these broader questions.[96]

This thesis attempts to clarify the concepts of class and class struggle as they appear in the study of a small union local. Charles Lipton wrote, in 1967, that "records of efforts by Canadian working people to improve their conditions go back to the 18th century."[97] He went on to explain that as capitalist industry grew, the wage-earning class or working class emerged. Lipton's is an excellent example of class and class consciousness used aggressively.[98] Local 1075 provides examples of class struggle and close analysis that suggests the existence of class consciousness. Bryan Palmer explained that:

> If we could stop the clock of history at some point in the mid-nineteenth century and take an aerial photograph of an entire nation's social relations, we would see many things, some of them quite unfocused. But dotting the landscape would be the inert presence of class, measured out in concentrations in factories, mills, mines, docks, fields, and construction sites, visible to the trained eye in neighborhoods, families, and taverns, drawn most heavily in the urban centers, but spreading throughout the countryside as well. Swirling around this presence of class would be a myriad of struggles, in which contending voices shouted and whispered for improved work conditions, higher wages, familial needs, political

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[95] Friedlander, *The Emergence of a UAW Local*, xxi.

[96] Ibid., xxxiii.

[97] Charles Lipton, *The Trade Union Movement of Canada, 1827-1959* (Toronto: New Canada Publications, 1967), 1.

[98] Lipton's book can be read as an apologetics for an autonomous Canadian labour movement. He used the concept of "class-collaboration" to show a neglected aspect of the U.S. trade union movement: "not its labour and union side, but its business union, craft, class-collaboration side: caused by the ability of U.S. big business to grant, from its super-profits, concessions to sections of the U.S. workers, and thus create among them a privileged strata." Ibid., 134.

> rights, social recognition, a grog allowance, or a piece of park. Barely heard and visible in only a few locales would be class consciousness itself, and there would be some moments in time when it would be silenced and obliterated altogether.[99]

The history of Local 1075 UAW provides occasions where the whispers of class struggle sound, when members asserted themselves in struggles for better wages, an improved working environment, more fringe benefits, and real job security.

[99]Palmer, *Descent into Discourse,* 140

Chapter Two

THE YEARS PRECEDING THE LOCAL, 1930-1952

In 1952 the workers at the Can-Car plant made the transition from a craft union to an industrial union. The decision was not a foregone conclusion nor was it taken lightly by workers who were still members of the craft union, the International Association of Machinists (IAM). The transition from one union to another was an important one for plant workers, and it said much about the change in politics, economy, and social relations taking place in Canada following the Second World War.

Such changes in the relations of Canadian society began well before the conclusion of the war. For many Canadians, the most significant changes took place in their place of work. Since the 1930s, organised labour in the United States had experienced changes in the social and political structures of international unionism. The relationship between the Canadian Trades and Labor Congress (TLC) and the American Federation of Labor (AFL) was formally established in 1886 but these groups grew along distinct lines.[100] In Canadian industries owned by corporations in the United States, as was true of the automotive industry, labour organisation crossed national boundaries. The movement into Canada in the late 1930s of unions of the Congress of Industrial Organisations (CIO), and its ensuing combination with the All-Canadian Congress of Labour (ACCL), served to highlight the tensions in industry and production between skilled and unskilled workers, those who felt represented by organised labour and those who were not. These industrial unions rejected AFL policies eschewing organisation of

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[100] John Crispo, *International Unionism: A Study in Canadian-American Relations* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Company, 1967): 97. Crispo's book is an excellent analysis of the historical and contemporary relations in and between industrial unions and the Canadian labour movement up until the early 1960s. Taken in context with the roughly contemporaneous writing of Stuart Jamieson's *Industrial Relations in Canada*, we have two authoritative sources not only for the industrial and labour relations of the time but also for the academy's interpretation of it.

unskilled workers and insisted on an aggressive organisational campaign amongst industrial workers.[101] Given that these changes in the structures of organised labour were taking place long before the 1950s, how did they impact Canadian industry in the 1940s and early 1950s, and in what ways did these changes effect Canadian workers?

International Unionism and Canadian Industry, 1930-1945

For most Canadian workers the Depression that began in 1929 was a trying period. Until the late 1930s, workers were mostly pre-occupied with trying to survive: "with the collapse of the Canadian economy thousands of men and women were thrown onto the streets, without jobs, without money, without savings, and, worst of all, without hope."[102] In Thunder Bay, the reduction of jobs in manufacturing in Fort William started as early as 1921 when the plant stopped the production of boxcars and minesweepers it had begun in 1914.[103] In the absence of employment, the Can-Car plant in Fort William was not the site for organising resistance against the employer. Rather, the company's strategy during the Depression was to sell the plant. Responsibility for maintaining the investment went to a few security guards and a boiler room crew directed by a superintendent.[104]

The changing character of labour organisation must be considered in the larger Canadian context if we are to understand why later changes in work took place in the Fort William plant. While employment in the Fort William manufacturing industries was at a low, industry in North America was undergoing a transformation in union organisation.

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[101] Irving Abella, *The Canadian Labour Movement, 1902-1960* (Ottawa: The Canadian Historical Association, 1978), 18.
[102] Ibid., 17.
[103] Burkowski, *Can-Car: A History, 1912-1992*, 19.
[104] Ibid., 23.

Much of the union organisation at the Lakehead in the 1930s occurred in the primary resource industries, such as the Bushworkers' union or the Lumber Workers' Union based at Onion Lake.[105] The organisation of the Workers' Unity League was directed towards these workers during the Depression years and a great deal has been written by northwestern Ontario scholars concerning these developments. A.W. Rasporich writes:

> Few modern Canadian cities, with the exception of Winnipeg, have had a more radical political history during the First World War and Depression years. Equally few, Calgary and Vancouver perhaps excluded, have participated as broadly in the variety of political movements thrown up by the twentieth century. . . Ideological cleavages representative of class conflict, and factional tensions reflective of a fragmented political sociology were thus the two central features of Lakehead politics in the twentieth century.[106]

These politics have been described as radical, or as politics of discontent. These industries involved in the extraction of primary resources from the region of northwestern Ontario contributed to the hinterland-metropolis relationship of the region.[107] The consideration of northwestern Ontario as a distinct hinterland of the south is relevant to the consideration of society and politics at the Lakehead.

G.R. Weller asserted a quarter century ago that very little attention had been paid to "the effect that hinterland status has on the internal politics of such regions."[108] In terms of labour and employment, the politics of work was two-fold. The first element was what Weller calls the Economics of Extraction. The politics of northwestern Ontario

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[105] A.W. Rasporich, 'Faction and Class in Modern Lakehead Politics,' *Lakehead University Review* 7 (Summer 1974), 45.

[106] Ibid., 33.

[107] G.R. Weller points out that a great deal has been written about Canada's position as a hinterland of the United States, or of hinterland provinces and their corresponding relations to the metropolitan centre of Canada. Examples of these works are: H.A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956); D.G. Creighton, *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence 1763-1850* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1937); and J.M.S. Careless, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism and Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review* 35 (1954): 1-21. Careless summarizes the interpretations of the others.

[108] G.R. Weller, "Hinterland Politics: The Case of Northwestern Ontario," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 10 (December 1977): 731.

were, Weller says, "moulded by its economic base- not only by the economic base as it actually exists but also by that which some feel should have existed or should exist in the future."[109] The large-scale extraction of primary resources such as timber and precious metals led to the great expectations of Thunder Bay's becoming "the Chicago of Canada."[110] The Lakehead's geographic position at the head of Lake Superior contributed in the nineteenth century to residents' expectations that the region might develop like its neighbour to the west, Winnipeg. But the ports of Fort William and Port Arthur, despite their being terminal rail links, did not develop on the scale envisaged by early municipal boosters. Ultimately, the hinterland turned to extracting 'fundamental economic and social change or, failing that, as many concessions as possible from the metropolis.'[111]

We can expand upon the concept of region by using it to augment our knowledge of the growth of trade unions and political labour parties. Greg Patmore, writing on Australian labour history, points out that focusing on institutions ignores 'how the great majority of the working classes lived and worked, and what they thought and shows little interest in functional regional history, which includes histories of a town or city and its hinterland.' He believes that regional or local history may challenge "orthodox discussion' of 'how class consciousness and politics worked in a specific setting."[112] Examination of institutions, including unions and governments, in the context of region enhances our understanding of history.

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[109] Ibid., 732.
[110] Thorold Tronrud, *Guardians of Progress: Boosters and Boosterism* (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1993), 10.
[111] Weller, "Hinterland Politics," 738.
[112] Greg Patmore, "Working Lives in Regional Australia: Labour History and Local History," *Labour History* 78 (May 2000), 1.

Understanding the politics of metropolis and hinterland illustrates the relationships of regions and sub regions in Canada. At the Lakehead, the politics of the extraction of primary resources dates to before the twentieth century. It is not difficult to follow the relationship further and see that there were efforts by the metropolis to extract as many of the resources of the hinterland as cheaply as possible without having to allow any fundamental change in the metropolis-hinterland relationship. Out of the economic relations between northern and southern Ontario grew the expectations of investors, residents, and workers as to what the relationship should be. The relations between the radical workers' unions of the 1930s and the primary resource industry in and around Thunder Bay are not within the scope of this thesis, but it is important to identify a radical tradition as an important part of employment in the north.[113] Though production did not commence again at the Can-Car plant until 1930, the changes taking place in both northern and southern Ontario would have a profound impact upon workers during and after the Second World War.

The most important thing to note about the hinterland-metropolis relationship in the context of Ontario is that many of the historical changes taking place in Toronto had implications for the Lakehead. Labour organisation in the United States changed considerably when the Committee for Industrial Organization broke with the American Federation of Labor in 1936 over the issue of "dual unionism." The problem with dual unionism was that it conflicted with the belief of many "international union leaders [who] became convinced of the necessity of [first] consolidating labour forces throughout the North American continent" in a unitary labour organisation.[114] The effect of this break

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[113] See Ian Radforth's *Bushworkers and Bosses* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), specifically his chapter "Bushworkers in Struggle, 1919-1935," 107-33.
[114] Babcock, *Gompers in Canada*, 73.

for the Canadian Trades and Labor Congress was not immediate but, by 1939, the differences in philosophy between craft unionism and industrial unionism was strong enough that the TLC expelled the industrial unions and split the unity of labour in southern Ontario and Canada generally.

The history of international unionism in Canada, the relations connecting Canada with the United States economically, has been long and strong:

> International unionism represents only one of many long-standing Canadian-American associations and is certainly not the most significant. Much more important, for example, has been the corporate link between the two countries.[115]

The United Autoworkers took advantage of increased production in the late 1930s to organise the manufacturing industries of southern Ontario. The large automotive plants in Windsor, Oshawa, Toronto, and Hamilton employed great numbers of workers and, in the late 1930s and 1940s, the auto industry in Ontario witnessed the organisation of the larger part of its workers under the aegis of the UAW.

The Canadian plants of the three American automotive manufacturers, Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler, were the first sites of organisation for the UAW. These assembly plants employed large numbers of people and were centrally located in the industrial centres of southern Ontario: "Captivated by the glamour, the excitement, and particularly by the success of the CIO, Canadian workers desperately begged it [the CIO] to come to Canada."[116] Most of the recruiting by the CIO in Canada in the early years was accomplished with Canadian resources. The appeal of the large industrial union lay in its ability to grow quickly and make considerable gains for its members. Unions such as the UAW appeared in industries which had been regarded by the craft unions as unorganisable. As Abella has observed:

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[115] Crispo, *International Unionism*, 1.

> The CIO had clearly revolutionalized Canadian labour; it had created a powerful, aggressive and most important, viable, industrial union movement. It had, in effect, organized not only the unorganized, but, as well, those thought to be unorganizable.[117]

The idea of organising the unskilled was not new since other Canadian labour bodies had attempted this, including the Knights of Labor, the One Big Union, and the Workers' Unity League. However, the CIO was the first labour body to issue out of the United States to achieve success in organising and maintaining a large membership.

Considering the nature of manufacturing in Ontario, and the organisation of that industry's workers, southern Ontario exerted tremendous economic and political influence upon other regions in Canada. The relations of metropolis and hinterland cannot be limited geographically or in time, we see connections between the United States and Canada, between southern and northern Ontario, and between southern Ontario and other regions in Canada. The anticipation of war in the late 1930s created a demand for production in many of Canada's industries, including manufacturing. These changes in the Canadian economy brought about the commencement of aircraft production at the Can-Car plant. According to Gordon Burkowski, 'Canadian Car and Foundry received its initial order for 40 aircraft on December 5, 1938.'[118] The increase in production brought increased opportunities in employment, and the workforce at Can-Car began to grow from roughly a dozen during the 1930s to its wartime peak of almost 5,000 workers.[119]

The Nature of Employment

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[116] Abella, *The Canadian Labour Movement*, 18.
[117] Ibid., 19.
[118] Burkowski, *Can-Car: A History*, 54.
[119] Ibid., 60.

Many people were thankful for the employment that war brought. In the words of one labour historian, "Instead of a shortage of jobs, there was now a shortage of labour. Naturally, . . . the young single unemployed of the 1930s were the first to enlist in the armed services. But everyone who wanted to could work."[120] In co-operation with local school officials, the Can-Car management arranged for the training of Fort William's young men and former students at the Fort William Vocational School.[121] The demand for the Hurricane aeroplane, first for use in Great Britain and later in the United States, ensured a steady and increasing supply of wartime contracts for the plant. The increasing demand for skilled and unskilled workers led to the hiring of women. "In keeping with national and international trends, [Can-Car hired] as many as 2,707 women at the peak of war production (40 per cent of the total 6,760 employees)."[122] The vast demand for production of the Canadian war effort had a great impact on the lives of men and women. The employment of women in areas of industry believed, prior to the war, to be the preserve of men grew thanks to the necessities of war.

The changes in employment patterns at the Can-Car were different from those of the earlier years of production. During the First World War, the majority of employees at the Can-Car plant had been men. As well, the production involved, first, in the manufacture of the boxcars so sorely needed to transport grain for the war effort and, later, in the building of twelve minesweepers for the French navy was different from building warplanes.[123] Much of the work was done out of doors, it required a degree of strength and skill in working steel, and the types of construction, production of boxcars and ships, were industries historically performed by skilled tradesmen. Production

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[120] Abella, *The Canadian Labour Movement*, 20.
[121] Burkowski, *Can-Car: A History*, 58.
[122] Smith and Wakewich, "Beauty and the Helldivers", 72.

during the Great War required a manpower of roughly 1,500, whereas employment in the Second World War required a workforce of almost 7,000. Compared to the years 1914-1918, the Second World War had a profound impact on workers on the shop floor.

These changes in the Can-Car plant workforce were in keeping with national and international employment trends. Industrial unions across Canada and the United States took advantage of huge increases in the national workforce by organising workers on a massive scale and using the opportunity of the war to demand changes from employers and government. While voicing support for Canada's war effort, unions pushed for recognition by employers of the workers' right to organise:

> Aside from the Communists, there was strong support within the labour movement for the war. But this was coupled with an equally strong feeling that this time labour's contributions would have to be recognized.[124]

The efforts of unions, despite opposition from business and in government, succeeded in winning from the federal government the famous order-in-council, P.C. 1003. This cabinet order would become the "foundation of industrial relations in Canada in the post-war period as province after province adopted its provisions in their own labour legislation."[125]

Conditions were not uniformly favourable to labour organisations across the country. The effects of the improvement in legislation and general working conditions are impossible to measure in any general way.[126] For women, the effect of the war's end was the cessation of their employment: "the plant dismissed all but 3 female plant floor

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[123] Burkowski, *Can-Car: A History*, 10.

[124] Abella, *The Canadian Labour Movement*, 20.

[125] Ibid., 21.

[126] Helen Smith and Pamela Wakewich point to Pamela Sugiman's *Labour's Dilemma* as an example of a local study illustrating the impossibility of presenting a single wartime work experience common to all women. This thesis also takes it for granted that workers' experiences are very difficult to surmise in the quickly changing conditions of wartime, but I think it would be safe to say that many women were very disillusioned with the gains made by labour when the war ended. There were some who would have been

workers at the war's end."[127] Although government propaganda and the popular media had suggested that women worked through the war years to advance the Allied war effort, historical studies suggest that many women sought wages and benefits by participating in the manufacturing industries. Though the majority of women entering the industrial workforce in 1943 may have believed this, many single women anticipated leaving the workforce at the end of the war in order to pursue marriage and the promises of domesticity.[128] But work brought benefits: "not withstanding the perception that their incomes were merely supplementary, most women made valuable economic contributions to the family household. In fact, financial necessity was the overriding reason they entered auto employment."[129] Those women married to soldiers fighting overseas were able to supplement the pay their husbands sent home.

The management of Canada's leading industries understood that the employment of women during the war was a temporary affair. The war itself did not do much to change the popular image of women in industry: the propaganda of business and government continued, during the war, to propagate the image of women and femininity. Pamela Sugiman writes that, "in confining women to specific jobs in the plants, in regarding them as temporary labour, and in presenting their employment as a patriotic mission, employers never fully relinquished the image of women as secondary wage earners, undeserving of full rights in the workplace."[130] The workplace segregation of the sexes, as well as the separation of women and men on early union seniority lists, served to continue the division of labour in the workplaces and in the unions of the

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happy to continue their employment augmenting the family wage.

[127] Burkowski, *Can-Car: A History*, 90.

[128] Pamela Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma: The Gender Politics of Auto Workers in Canada, 1937-1979* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 70.

[129] Ibid.

1940s. Material conditions in employment could only serve to ensure that change at the war's end was minimal:

> Whether focusing primarily upon the propaganda or the lived experiences, [a] revisionist scholarship largely concludes that women's participation in war work did not radically change the social value placed upon women in the labour force either during or at the end of the war; in fact there was a renewed vigour in the post-war era to reinforce the middle-class ideal of the breadwinning husband and housekeeping wife.[131]

Following a slowdown in war production at the end of 1944, few Canadians were surprised to find that working women were the first to be laid off in anticipation of the war's end and the return home of Canada's soldiers. That thousands of Canadian women had come to enjoy work outside the home, or depended upon the resulting income to support themselves and their dependents, was of little concern to management or government.

Despite the relegation of women to supportive roles in industry, unions and workers made real gains during the war in the form of job security, union recognition, wage increases, and work benefits. Following the war, the patriarchal notion of the "family-wage" re-emerged, and the search for respectability by such institutions as the CCL and TLC led to a withdrawal of support for issues important to women.[132] In its place, such documents as the "Official Program for Social Security of the UAW-CIO in Canada" (1946) seemed to assume "that women would win the peace by marrying the men for whom the 'Official Program' proposed wall-to-wall job security and wage protection."[133] All of this came at the cost of massive lay-offs of the thousands of women employed in various sectors of the manufacturing industries. Unions were forced to push

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[130] Ibid., 26.

[131] Smith and Wakewich, "Beauty and the Helldivers," 73.

[132] Alvin Finkel, "Trade Unions and the Welfare State in Canada, 1945-1990," in Cy Gonick, ed., *Labour Gains, Labour Pains: 50 Years of PC 1003* (Winnipeg: Society for Socialist Studies, 1995), 62.

Canadian employers and provincial governments to accept the labour movement's call for wage and work conditions that enabled men to support their families. Unorganised workers, in turn, would come to expect the same gains as those made by the membership of unions in Canada.

What impact did these gains, made by various industrial unions but specifically in the larger industries of southern Ontario, have upon Canadian workers in general? One of the most important factors influencing Canadian members of the industrial unions were the conditions of employment of American workers in the automobile and manufacturing industries of the northeastern United States, namely increased wages and the attainment of job security:

> There are a number of reasons why Canadian workers found themselves members of international unions. Not the least of these were the lack of viable domestic alternatives and the advantages which the established American unions held out for their prospective members, whether located north or south of the border.[134]

The appeal of the militant industrial unions in the late 1940s was great for many workers in Ontario. The Can-Car plant in Thunder Bay had been organised as bargaining unit #719 of the International Association of Machinists at the beginning of the war. H.A. Logan explained, in his *Trade Unions in Canada: Their Development and Functioning*, that:

> With the change to a war footing the proportions [for the IAM's recruiting] changed entirely. While membership in the shops increased, this amounted to little in comparison. The greatest gains were in aircraft and shipbuilding. Aircraft construction was given to the IAM by the AFL in 1933 in complete jurisdiction and though challenged by others was reaffirmed later. Two big locals in Vancouver signed contracts with Boeing Aircraft and with the government shipyard in 1940. Vickers Nordheim and Fairchilds were signed in Montreal, Victory Aircraft in Malton, Ont., and Canadian Car and Foundry at Fort William,

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[133] Ibid., 63.

[134] Crispo, *International Unionism*, 11.

Ont., and Amherst, N.S.[135]

The Fort William plant was organised as part of a large campaign by the IAM in the early years of the war. Workers at the plant in Thunder Bay could clearly not share the gains the UAW achieved for its members in the 1940s, but the membership of IAM Lodge #719 was appreciative of what their own union had done. It is quite possible that, following the war, workers began to question the future of the plant under a union that had organised the local in a plant manufacturing aircraft. Prior to the formation of Local 1075 UAW, however, employees had twice attempted to leave the IAM and form a new bargaining unit:

> By the start of the 1950s, workers had become considerably more assertive. This was reflected in a move to replace the relatively docile IAM with the [UAW]. In the first vote on the issue, taken in 1947, the UAW was just a handful of cards shy of forcing a representation vote. The Company, which was not eager to deal with a union with UAW's reputation for militancy, signed its most favourable contract ever with the IAM in 1949; but the deal was not enough to keep 70 % of the workforce from voting in the Auto Workers in 1952.[136]

The first attempts failed and it was not until the fall of 1951 that members had enough support to convert the shop floor to UAW jurisdiction. The switch occurred despite an IAM contract which made provision for: a) the organisation of all employees of the Fort William plant except salaried employees, police guards, watchmen, and gatemen; b) a voluntary check-off procedure (which should have strengthened the union leadership's ability to cope with its financial responsibilities); c) a forty-four hour workweek; and d) a considerable improvement in rates of pay.[137]

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[135] H.A. Logan, *Trade Unions in Canada: Their Development and Functioning* (Toronto: MacMillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1948), 132.
[136] Burkowski, *Can-Car: A History*, 127.
[137] "Collective Agreement between Canadian Car and Foundry Company, Limited and Lakehead Lodge

A Local Union in Transition

In the early 1950s the International Association of Machinists and the United Autoworkers of America were members of rival labour organisations, with the UAW a major participant in the Congress of Industrial Organizations. The CIO had been very active in American politics of the late 1930s and 1940s and the CIO was respected by its millions of members and feared by business and government alike. In Canada, the CIO allied itself with the All-Canadian Congress of Labour in 1939 to form the Canadian Congress of Labour. The IAM, on the other hand, was a long-standing member of the American Federation of Labor and conducted itself in Canada under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Trades and Labor Congress. The transition of the bargaining unit from the jurisdiction of one union to another would not be a smooth one. In Canada, the UAW and the IAM did not sign a non-raiding pact until the summer of 1952.[138] Any decisions prior to this date regarding a change in union jurisdiction involved hostile relations between the unions.

Following 1945, relations of the industrial and craft unions were strained as a result of the increase in job specifications arising out of war production. Such unions as the United Mine Workers of America (UMW) put forward resolutions at the 12th Annual Convention of the CCL, in 1951, for "amalgamation with the TLC and the CCCL [Canadian and Catholic Confederation of Labour] and reunion with the Communist-dominated World Federation of Trade Unions."[139] In 1952 the UAW and the IAM, reacting to increased competition between their locals in the aircraft industry, renewed and strengthened a "No-Raiding Pact" between the two unions. The two attempts at a

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No. 719, I.A.M., Fort William, 1951-1952," 3-11.

[138] *Labour Gazette* 53 (1953): 989.

[139] *Labour Gazette* 52 (1952): 1322.

change in union organisation at Can-Car prior to 1952 had been conducted in a hostile manner. By 1952, the UAW leadership in Windsor acknowledged the need for an expression of support in the Can-Car plant before they would be willing to send up an organiser to Fort William. According to the UAW-IAM pact, 'in industries such as the aircraft industry, where both the UAW and the IAM have organised a substantial number of the workers, it [is] agreed that joint committees of representatives from each union should be appointed to co-ordinate collective bargaining procedures and relationships.'[140] It is probable that because of the change in production at the plant in Fort William, from planes to buses, the IAM's jurisdiction over workers was questioned. Amidst these changes, workers voted to join the UAW in 1952.

In 1952 production at the plant had already changed from the production of aircraft (maintained throughout the war) to the manufacturing of buses. These changes in production created even greater changes in worker organisation. The years following 1952 saw the union develop policies that compared favourably with the achievements of the labour movement of the 1950s. The transition from the jurisdiction of one union to another was not a change that could, by any means, be taken for granted. Considering the great development of the UAW and the CCL-CIO unions in the 1940s, it is not surprising that workers in Thunder Bay chose to throw in their hat for a union which they perceived to be progressive, militant, and democratic. It must be emphasised that the sustained length of employment and the relatively stable job security of individual workers in the late 1940s facilitated the change from a craft to an industrial union.

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[140] *Labour Gazette* 53 (1953): 989.

Chapter Three

UNION POLITICS

Many of the gains workers made in the 1950s were won over the bargaining table. In this way, much of the political philosophy of the Local's early leadership was derived from UAW educational material. Refer to the Appendix for an excerpt from a pamphlet sent to the various Canadian locals from the Regional Office in 1961. In it are listed some of the important projects the UAW had accomplished between 1947 and 1960 (see appendix).

Political Objectives: An Analysis

At a higher level of bureaucratic development, one element in a union's leadership might be more political, in terms of community and regional affairs, than another. At the level of Local 1075, the Executive was small enough, and the leadership drawn from the membership experienced a low enough turn-over, that policy in union affairs was consistent. An example of this is that, in the decade 1952-1962, the Local had only five different presidents, and most of the incoming presidents had been vice-president to the preceding president. During this whole time, the Local enjoyed the services of the same Executive Recording Secretary.[141] The shop stewards also provided an excellent pool from which the leadership recruited new Executive members.

The relationship between the Executive and political action was close. The Bargaining Committee, also drawn from the Executive and the chief representatives of the membership (and including the International Representative), was very important in the structure of the local. The International Representative was Norman Bicknell and he

[141]This is largely the strength of the Executive minutes as a historical source. George Fawcett, Recording Secretary to Local 1075 for over 10 years, kept very good records. With Fawcett's passing in 1962, the records deteriorated considerably, owing to a rapid succession of new Secretaries, the majority of whom

was a member of the District's staff. He assisted the Local's Executive for the ten years under consideration here, and was involved in trying to organise other places of employment at the Lakehead, such as the Canadian Iron Foundry in Fort William.[142] Most of the gains made by the Local in bargaining with the company were made through the leadership of the Executive, Political Action, and Bargaining Committees.

In wages, the Local made considerable gains between its formation in 1952 and the early 1960s as examination of the Collective Agreement between the UAW and Can-Car for 1962-1965 clearly shows. To take only one example, labour classification, and compare the IAM contract with the UAW's first 1952 contract, in the IAM contract a blacksmith (a skilled tradesman) reached the top of the scale at $1.34 an hour whereas, in the UAW contract, the maximum wage was $1.56 an hour. Effective June 1959, a blacksmith could make $1.89 an hour and, by 1962, the equivalent labour classification could earn $2.12 per hour. Compare these gains with these of a labourer: 1951 contract, $1.03 per hour.; 1952 contract, $1.20; 1962 contract, $1.68.

The winning of a wage increase is political for a union's leadership, in that it is the most visible means by which the rank and file can measure the success of their union. In this respect, labour as commodity becomes one of the chief political concerns of a worker because it is the hourly wage which motivates the individual to workplace militancy. Lukacs has observed that "the objectification of their labour-power into something opposed to their total personality (a process already accomplished with the sale of that labour-power as a commodity) was made into the permanent ineluctable reality of their

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were drawn from other Executive positions. The records are of much lower quality. The weakness of the minutes, 1952-1962, is that they offer a single individual's perspective.

[142] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 9 March 1953.

daily life."[143] And the wage is very much the basis of the worker's life: it has to buy food, clothing, shelter, health care, and other essentials of life, as well as luxuries becoming available in the 1950s. We will see, in our examination of the Local Executive, the complex relationship between the *primary* interests of the rank and file membership and the political and social responsibilities accepted by the union leadership as greater concern.

As regards the 40-hour week, the Local was able to achieve this in the Collective Agreement of 1958-1960 (though every day included an extra 1/2 hour for lunch that was not paid). The IAM agreement of 1951 had called for an eight-hour day, Monday to Friday, and a half-day on Saturday of four hours, totalling a workweek of 44 hours. In overtime, the IAM agreement "paid time and a half" for the first eight hours of overtime and "doubletime" for hours beyond the first eight of overtime. The UAW agreement for 1952-1953 called for "time and a half" for the first four hours of overtime and "doubletime" thereafter. The shortening of the workweek had long been an objective of the labour movement. The UAW Local's achieving a 40-hour workweek provided its members with the working week that many labour activists had been calling for since before the turn of the century. As we see in debates within the CCL in 1952, however, the 40-hour week was still considered an arbitrary number:

> Two resolutions recommending this [a 35-hour week] were combined into a watered-down version calling only for the "progressive reduction" of the work week with no reduction in take-home pay. . . The adopted resolution justified the demand for a reduction in the work week by asserting that it would "spread employment and maintain purchasing power in the hands of the working Population."[144]

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[143]Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness* (London: Merlin Press Ltd., 1968), 90.
[144]*Labour Gazette* 53 (1953): 1446.

Interestingly, a delegate from Windsor's Local 200 UAW was one of the sponsors of the resolution for a 35-hour workweek and explained that his union "submitted the resolution as a means of giving employment to more men. Ford of Canada has been laying off men and asking us to work overtime while men are unemployed. Let them shorten the shifts and employ more men."[145] The call for a 35-hour workweek, at a time when unemployment was the number one political issue for Canadians, was criticised as a "make-work device." CCL Secretary-Treasurer Donald MacDonald pointed out that a 35-hour workweek would create 700,000 more jobs than there were workers available in Canada.[146]

The political debate over unemployment and the problem of seasonal unemployment and lay-offs made such issues important to all workers, not only the labour leadership. As will be mentioned, Local 1075's Ladies' Auxiliary involved itself in the Thunder Bay and District Labour Council's efforts to reduce unemployment at the Lakehead. Increases in wages, shortening of the work week, union efforts to develop the Guaranteed Annual Wage, and the political process of lobbying government to take greater responsibility for providing assistance for the unemployed were all strategies designed to reduce unemployment and its impact. In the early 1950s, the unemployment question was largely viewed as being solvable. The Local did what it could to implement policies at the plant and much of the work was done at the bargaining table. Bargaining and compromise at the Local reflected the fact, as Charlotte Yates has described it for the Canadian UAW in general, that "the post-war settlement was constructed intermittently and was the product of struggles between workers, union leaders and individual

[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid.

corporations."[147] At the level of the Local, Local 1075's Executive moved a resolution empowering its PAC to conduct an advertising campaign on unemployment in the local newspapers (in the form of a paid advertisement and as a letter to the editor in the Fort William *Daily-Times*) in 1954. The resolution criticised: 1) the fact that the federal "government ignored the UAW National Full Employment lobby;" and 2) the further fact that "both local MPs voted against government action to relieve unemployment at this time."[148] To convince the public of the importance of the unemployment issue, the Local leadership decided in April of 1954 to buy $100 of radio time to aid the Thunder Bay and District Labour Council in its program against unemployment.[149]

Progress on pensions was slow through the 1950s, because many unions and labour bodies were busy pushing business to take responsibility for workers' health care. Later in the decade, labour was lobbying government to initiate public health coverage. The IAM agreement of 1951 made no provision for social security nor any form of pension plan. The UAW agreement of 1952 did no better. Retired members did not achieve any significant form of company pension until a non-contributory Pension Plan was instituted on 1 January 1963. I say significant, because there was a form of pension in effect in 1954 for some UAW locals; Henry Wiesbach, Political Action Director of the CCL, criticised these early plans in a presentation to Local 1075 in 1954, for there was "discrimination between the sexes" regarding the accessibility of retired members to pensions.[150] By 1958, the Bargaining Committee was meeting with the company to

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[147] Yates, *From Plant to Politics*, 194.

[148] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 24 March 1954.

[149] Ibid., 26 April 1954.

[150] This criticism of early pension plans related to larger union locals in southern Ontario that maintained female representation in the workforce following the Second World War. This was, in no small part, another example of women's interests not being addressed in the process of bargaining between unions and management in the early postwar years.

discuss a pension plan but, because of uncertainty regarding the future of the plant, further discussion on pensions was suspended.[151] Needless to say, for the period 1952-1962, pension plans in Canada generally, and for the Local's members specifically, were poor. In a brief to the Cabinet in 1960, the Canadian Labour Congress "urged on the Government the need for 'a system of old age security in which income of the beneficiary will bear some relationship to his income before retirement.' Private pension plans did not satisfactorily fulfil this function."[152]

The Old Age Security initiated in 1952 only partially met the needs of the elderly in Ontario. Again, it must be emphasised that the Bargaining Committee until the middle 1960s was more concerned about unemployment and plant lay-offs than fringe benefits.

The understandable concern of many workers about lack of employment security and stability was of major importance in the 1950s, when there were periods of reduced production because of economic conditions in Canada and the United States. The general issue of unemployment found a focus in the plant when workers experienced lay-offs. Government began to view the issue of unemployment as part of the structural integrity of the economic system. We see evidence of this in an address by Milton Gregg, the minister of Labour, to the Canadian Manufacturers' Association (CMA) in 1951:

> We have become too complacent about this matter, that we have come to accept seasonal unemployment as a feature of the Canadian economy which is either not really very serious or about which little, if anything, can be done. If this is so, I think it is time that we seriously try to assess the effects of this problem.[153]

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[151] Ibid., 25 October 1958.
[152] *Labour Gazette* 61 (1961): 225.
[153] *Labour Gazette* 52 (1952): 900.

Unemployment in Ontario was low until 1958 when the unemployment rate rose from 3.4% the year before to 5.4%.[154] Unemployment prior to 1958 was relatively low compared to modern standards!

The issue of health benefits was closely entwined with that of pension plans. Progress in social security was made very slowly during the 1950s, but it was during this decade that much of the groundwork for the later achievement of workers' benefits was laid. The early 1950s witnessed a growing trend towards public support for a federal system of health care. In 1951 speakers at the CMA's annual meeting pointed to pension and welfare plans, as well as hospital, medical, and surgical benefits, as important issues for workers and employers. The view of one manufacturer on the subject was that

> the future appears to hold increased costs for somebody. The amount of daily hospital benefits is rising constantly because of increasing hospital charges. . . As the cost of service rises, rates under the plans will rise, and either employees will meet the increases calmly or will call upon their employers for more assistance.[155]

In 1952, the CCL interpreted the health problem in a different light than the CMA, when it passed a resolution calling for 'a proper health plan in conformity with the requests of organized labour, the Canadian Legion and other broadly representative citizen groups.'[156] This resolution called for a an insurance scheme which would provide adequate medical, surgical, optical, dental, and hospital treatment for all Canadians.

To put the national trend into perspective, the membership of the Local, as has been said before, expressed its dissatisfaction on the subject of health benefits to the local Executive in 1952, not long after the UAW local was established. Negotiations continued in the fall of 1953 and bargaining between the Local and Can-Car management was

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[154] Rea, *The Prosperous Years*, 34.
[155] *Labour Gazette* 52 (1952): 902.
[156] *Labour Gazette* 53 (1953): 1319.

stalling on the issue of Blue Cross and PSI (Physicians' Services Incorporated) premiums. On a Friday in September of 1953, the membership carried out a job action which was described as "an apparent walk-out in regards to Company negotiations. The Company went to press and called it a 'wild cat'."[157] This action provides a number of historical insights. We see that: 1) the membership felt justified in taking job action, in this case something resembling a walk-out, because of the Company's refusal to take its demands on benefits seriously; 2) the Company felt justified in refusing the demands of its employees; 3) the Company took the issue of the walk-out out of the context of the plant itself and addressed the problem in the community at large (in this case, in an article of the *Fort William Daily-Times*); 4) the membership's action was not, in this case, led by the Executive, but was accepted by the leadership as acceptable and legal.[158] Here we see what Yates described of the Canadian UAW in general: during the early to mid-1950s, "the instability of employment combined with the harsh realities of assembly line life proved a serious obstacle to stabilizing relations between auto corporations and the UAW, as it often led to spontaneous wildcats and in some cases protracted legal strikes in attempts by the union to win its demands."[159]

To summarise well what was taking place in the UAW during this period, and as has been discussed thus far, Don Wells describes the process as follows:

> Workers' gains came in the form of wage improvements and Keynesian 'welfare state' measures such as unemployment insurance, pensions, welfare, and public health-care programs. Fordism helped to provide a mass market to balance mass production, enabling large number of workers to acquire 'middle class' lifestyles.

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[157] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 23 Sept. 1953.

[158] The Executive minutes are imprecise as to the nature of this job action, but they do make clear that the International Representative to the Local, Norman Bickell, proclaimed the walk-out a legal action. In a Special meeting with membership two weeks later, he declared that "the main purpose here is to build a *fighting union.*"

[159] Yates, *From Plant to Politics*, 197.

> The "welfare state" measures reduced the volatility of business cycles: recessions triggered increases in unemployment insurance, welfare, and other state payments, hence improving consumer demand. This stimulated economic recovery and helped smooth out the 'boom and bust' peaks and troughs of business cycles. Not least in significance, this economic stabilization provided many workers with job security for the first time.[160]

The compromise described by Wells was a difficult one, and the process was far from simple. The responsibility for health care was complicated by so many other issues, including pensions, cost of living allowances, and the Guaranteed Annual Wage (GAW). In 1954, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce was still opposing the enactment of dues check-off legislation, and the legality of most forms of strike action, and "declared itself opposed to *any form* of compulsory health insurance."[161] Much of the rhetoric behind such opposition was motivated by the belief that such proposals had been "enunciated" by "President Walter Reuther of the Congress of Industrial Organizations." Capital practised the age-old criticism of international unionism, that all labour initiatives "originated outside Canada without consideration of the impact [they] would have on Canadian prices and the markets for Canadian goods."[162]

Here we see evidence of the philosophy that the rights and quality of life of workers are dependent upon the economic condition of the market and that the demands of capital must be met before the needs of workers. This philosophy was not new to Canadian industry and labour generally, but what was interesting was labour's ability, in the 1950s, to substitute a new argument for company, and then state, social assistance in responding to the old nineteenth-century assumptions underlining *laissez-faire* and liberal economic policies. What made the efforts of Canadian labour so effective was that it was

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[160] Don Wells, "The Impact of the Postwar Compromise on Canadian Unionism: The Formation of an Auto Worker Local in the 1950s," *Labour/ Le Travail* 36 (Fall 1995), 148.
[161] *Labour Gazette* 55 (1955): 162.
[162] Ibid.

able to impress upon its membership the validity of this alternate philosophy, a political philosophy that had been advocated, in part, by Canadian labour, the Communist Party earlier on, and the CCF since at least the early 1930s. Contrary to the widespread belief of business, the demand for government or business responsibility in the realm of social welfare was not an American phenomenon; its roots lay far back in a radical tradition that is not only American but also Canadian and British.[163]

As we see in the UAW pamphlet for 1961, the union was able to impress upon its members that it had gained health coverage for its workers. Indeed, by 1962 the local and the UAW had achieved the following for its membership at Can-Car: 1) standard ward hospital coverage as required by Ontario law and as provided by the Ontario Hospital Services Commission; 2) Blue Cross Supplementary Plan semi-private ward coverage, or the equivalent; and 3) Physicians' Services Inc. (Full Plan) or the equivalent. The company paid 60%, and the employees 40%, of the monthly cost of these plans.[164]

In 1962, the Local was still trying to improve the provision of health care for its members, this time by initiating an advertising campaign in the paper and pushing for public Medicare like that begun in Saskatchewan.[165] The Local had hopes that Medicare

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[163]The next chapter examines in greater detail the relationship between Canadian labour, the CCF, and Local 1075. To appreciate the rhetoric that American business threw against the liberal philosophy of American labour, are Elizabeth Fones-Wolf's *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-1960* is very insightful in interpreting what took place in the United States during this period. An interesting backdrop to understanding the development of a philosophy of social welfare and its contrast with the conservative and liberal economic traditions in Britain is Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1960). Williams' observations, as well as his method of interpretation, are important to any understanding how the values and mores of a society are contructed in a complex process that is historical and material. His consideration of historical and intellectual evidence would hold well for this study, that 'In naming these points, it is of course necessary to add at once that they are clearly very closely interrelated, and that some might be named as causes, and some as effects, were not the historical process so complex as to render a clear division impossible' (Williams, *Culture and Society*, 35).

[164]*Agreement Between Hawker Siddeley Canada Ltd. Canadian Car Fort William Division and International Union, United Automobile, Aircraft and Agricultural Implement Workers of America, 1962-1965*, 37-38.

[165]*Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 9 July 1962.

might be instituted in Ontario, and it advertised to its membership and the community at large that Morden Lazarus, Political Action Director for the Ontario Federation of Labour, who was travelling across Ontario advocating Medicare, would be the TBDLC's guest lecturer.[166]

One of the characteristics of collective bargaining in the 1950s was advocacy by the International UAW and Canadian business alike of long-term and company-wide contracts. The benefit of the long-term, company-wide contract was that it gave stability to the company-union bargaining process, and it eliminated the threat of spontaneous strike action and company lock-outs (a result of labour relations legislation). Charlotte Yates points to the dynamics of this process of bargaining as fraught with 'conflict.'[167] She observes that different companies tried to implement such contracts in complicated and inconsistent ways. As regards the UAW of the early 1950s, Yates notes that General Motors accepted the union as a 'more or less permanent motor in the workplace and therefore sought to negotiate regulations which would curb union disruption of production and stabilize union-management relations.'[168] She contrasts this with the attitude of the Ford Company of Canada, which "continued anti-union practices intended either to circumvent or avoid the union altogether."

However, Yates and Wells both characterise the "workplace compromise" of the 1950s as one based on a "Fordist" framework with "mass production based on a division of labour.'[169] Such distinctions are important if we are to understand the process of bargaining and compromise that took place at the Fort William plant. The strategies of the Company were similar to those utilised by Ford Canada in its relations with the UAW

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[166] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 10 December 1962.
[167] Yates, *From Plant to Politics*, 195.
[168] Ibid.

in southern Ontario. Capitalising upon divisions within the union, the company attempted to use the threat of plant closure, or return to a voluntary dues check-off, to turn segments of the membership against the union leadership. Local 1075, in the meantime, drew upon the collective experience and leadership of personnel at the UAW Canadian Regional Office in Windsor as well as upon their own unique experience in northwestern Ontario, to frustrate these attempts.

Collective agreements at Can-Car, then, tended to favour the long-term, maintaining the prerogatives of management to conduct its affairs as it saw fit. This was not unlike conditions in the larger automotive plants in southern Ontario, such as Windsor and Oshawa, where,

> under Taylorism, semi-skilled workers performed repetitive tasks while managers and technical staff, such as engineers, exercised a near monopoly not only over day-to-day workplace governance but also over strategic decisions concerning technological innovation, new investments, and the organization of work.[170]

Furthermore, the relations of management and union were such that 'Canadian Fordism developed into one of the weakest in the industrialized world.' While it is true that Reuther and the UAW International were encouraging the membership in Canada to appreciate the stability offered by long-term, company-wide contract, it is also true that the smaller, more regionalised locals in Canada went into the company-union bargaining relationship at a distinct disadvantage. This knowledge helps us to understand some of the problems Local 1075 experienced in its relations with the company during the later 1950s and early 1960s. In Canada,

> despite organized labour's wartime gains, Canada's Fordism reflected a balance of class forces that remained heavily lopsided in favour of capital. Under these circumstances, and unlike the more statist versions of Fordism, Canadian Fordism was built around a "Wagner model" of labour relations named after the 1935

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[169] Wells, "The Impact of the Postwar Compromise on Canadian Unionism," 147.
[170] Ibid.

> National Labour Relations Act in the U.S., known as the Wagner Act. That Act established conditions for setting collective bargaining in motion, including the right to organize independent unions, the right to strike, and the obligation to bargain in good faith. The Wagner Act did not, however, compel the employer and the union to agree on a contract. Moreover, Canada's Wagner model was even more restrictive of unions than was the U.S. model, particularly because strike rights were so limited.[171]

As we shall see in the next chapter, one of the most effective means for capital to avoid its responsibilities to its workers was to employ what unionists described as "the run-away" plant. In 1953, the Local complained that the company had a hiring policy of discriminating against local workers.[172] In September of 1953, the Company chose to stall negotiations over the issues of Blue Cross and a company pension plan and precipitated the job action we have already noted that the membership took in hopes of addressing this problem.

In June of 1954 the Local complained that the company was abrogating the grievance procedures in the collective agreement. And in August of 1954, Norman Bicknell, International Representative to the Local, reported to the Executive on behalf of the Bargaining Committee that all the difficulties the local had been experiencing on the part of the company were "a definite reflection of a considered policy on the part of the CMA. The corporations are out to use their money to fight unions, rather than grant pay increases."[173] The Local felt driven to take legal action against Can-Car. The International UAW supported the local's action by hiring E.B. Jolliffe as counsel and launching a "charge of company violation of the Labour Act."[174] This episode was not the first, nor would it be the last, in a relationship between the Local and the company that could be characterised as one of conflict. But the conflict, in this sense, was not open

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[171] Ibid., 149.
[172] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 26 Jan. 1953.
[173] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 25 Aug. 1954.

and mounting hostility. Rather, management-union relations were marked by constant and drawn-out testing of the contractual obligations of each party. It is notable also that, up to negotiation of the contract of 1962-1965, the contracts had been for no longer than two years. Such contracts could be contrasted with those at GM of Canada which, as early as 1950, agreed to the UAW's demands for a company paid pension plan, limited health care coverage, and a gradual hourly reduction in the work week, in exchange for a five-year contract.[175] The character of production in Thunder Bay which was regional and peripheral to southern Ontario, placed workers at a disadvantage as compared with the centralised bargaining processes in the UAW locals of southern Ontario.

In the UAW pamphlet for 1961, the UAW placed some emphasis on the gains made by its skilled workers during the 1947-1960 period. The skilled trades played an uncertain part in the initial policies of the UAW, considering the industrial character of its constituency. The dichotomy between the craft union and the industrial union, between the skilled worker and the unskilled or semi-skilled worker, was fraught with contradiction. From its beginning, the UAW had incorporated within its constitution provisions protecting the interests and integrity of its skilled members. Remembering that the CIO members of the 1950s were originally members of the American Federation of Labor in the 1930s, it is not strange to find that the industrial unions remained interested in extending the rights of their members and that protecting the position of the skilled or craft worker was one means of accomplishing this. This distinction of skilled worker in the context of these union locals following the war is important. Don Wells points out that, in the post-war period,

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[174]*Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 25 Aug. 1954.
[175]Yates, *From Plant to Politics*, 199.

> industrial unionism shifted from a greater emphasis on mobilizing workers through militancy and class solidarity to one which centred on bargaining multi-year contracts that guaranteed labour peace. This required workers to drop any ambitions they had for greater participation in decision-making in their workplaces and in their own unions.[176]

Without going into much detail here about the participation of workers in their respective unions, it should be noted that workers wanted greater autonomy and recognition of their skill or trade on the shop floor. The application of Taylorism in job speed-ups and the threat of automation in the workplace were visible forms of interference in what workers believed should be theirs: the shop floor. What is more, the exercise of such managerial prerogatives as factory automation to enhance production were viewed by workers as direct threats to their jobs. At best, such managerial changes as workplace automation could reduce the work employees would have to do while sustaining productivity; at the worst, automation would replace workers and leave Canada, as Walter Reuther said in 1954, in "a social and economic nightmare in which men walk idle and hungry, made idle as producers because the mechanical monsters around them cannot replace them as consumers."[177]

In light of these changes taking place in the workplace, it was important for the union to emphasise its "Protecting," "Enhancing," or "Preserving" the rights of its membership: the skilled workers. At Can-Car, such trades included the blacksmiths, the assorted shop mechanics, the jig and toolmakers, the various electricians, and similar groups. The chief effect of automation on industry would be change, very rapid change. We must understand the importance of automation in the light of changing modes of production to appreciate why the discussion of automation is so important to our consideration of skilled work in the 1950s. The best synopsis of automation was given

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[176]Wells, "The Impact of the Postwar Compromise on Canadian Unionism," 150-51.

by William Westly, of McGill University's Department of Sociology and Anthropology, in an address to the 9th Annual Industrial Relations Conference in 1956. By 1956, the effects of automation were being felt throughout Canada's manufacturing industry. The following is a description of his address:

> Unemployment, the speaker thought, would be "minimal in an expanding economy." He pointed out that "many of the industries which have been automating rather rapidly during the past few years have had little or no unemployment due to their rapid expansion." Nevertheless, it would be impossible to avoid changes to the ranks or grades of the workers, and this could be "a very serious matter to a skilled workman who has at stake years of experience which will become devalued with the advent of the new machine."
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> "Since automation, by definition, changes not only the power of the worker but his skills, it is bound to change the distribution of ranks. A few workers will be up-graded or hired to shepherd the new highly complex machines, but many others whose skills have been displaced by the changes will be forced to accept simpler jobs and lower grades."[178]

Unemployment was dependent on the character of the economy. As long as the Canadian economy was in an expansive mode, the effects of automation would be minimal. A great many unionists in the 1950s were not so sure about the expanding nature of the Canadian economy. But the effect of industrial automation upon the skilled trades seemed to be quite certain. Unions such as the UAW took the matter of automation very seriously, and this may be one of the reasons why it was so important, especially in the later 1950s and early 1960s, for unions to address this issue of the preservation of skilled workers as a class of employee.

In considering automation or the role of the skilled trades in Local 1075, a complication arises that is quite historical in nature (as most complications are). There arose in the 1950s an antagonism within the UAW itself (though not restricted to it) between the skilled and unskilled workers within its ranks. This antagonism was visible

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[177] *Labour Gazette* 55 (1955): 529.
[178] *Labour Gazette* 57 (1957): 1178.

in Local 1075, and the clash of interests between these types of workers became serious as the 1950s progressed. An article in the *Labour Gazette* for 1956 summarises the difficult straits in which the UAW found itself:

> A new departure in collective bargaining has been initiated by the UAW which will mean two sets of demands, two sets of negotiations, and two contracts - one for the skilled workers in the union and another for the unskilled workers. . . The change in policy has been forced upon the union by a bitter antagonism which has been growing within its ranks, and which if not dealt with might split the whole organization. This division is between the skilled and the unskilled workers in the union.[179]

The philosophy of the UAW International in such negotiations, with separate ones for skilled and unskilled workers, was that such bargaining "was contrary to the spirit and constitution of the union." But the changes in industry affected their skilled members. The article described what it believed the divisions were:

> Since the war cyclical layoffs have almost ceased to affect the skilled employees, but have become increasingly severe in their effects on production workers. The differential between skilled and unskilled wage rates, which was once 50 per cent, has been reduced, according to some estimates, to 35 per cent during the same period. The reduction in this differential has lessened the skilled men's pride of position as well as affecting their relative earnings, and has become a sore point with the journeymen.[180]

The antagonism here is obvious and we see that, whether real or not, skilled workers perceived their positions within the union and on the shop floor as being "at risk". We see also that the antagonism was not solely from the skilled workers. Those workers classified as unskilled noted the differential treatment they were receiving from union and management alike. The issue of skilled and unskilled workers complicates an analysis of class and illustrates that, within the union, there were interests in conflict.

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[179] Ibid., 134.

[180] *Labour Gazette* 57 (1957): 134.

Turning now to Local 1075, we can identify efforts in bargaining to secure rights and privileges for the skilled workers explicitly in the collective agreement. The contract of 1958-1960 includes a comprehensive listing and description of the Canadian Car Company Labour Classifications. Concerning the classification of employees, the contract states that:

> 62. In the event of an employee transferring to a higher rated classification, he shall be paid at least the minimum rate for the higher classification. It is understood that such transfer will not result in the reduction of an employee's wage rate in case of promotion in related work.
> 63. Nothing in the application of the terms of this Agreement shall serve to reduce the wage rates of any present employees at the time of its execution.

The collective agreement between Can-Car and the UAW did not involve separate agreements but rather included clauses pertaining to this or that specific group of classifications. In the collective agreement of 1958 a general wage increase of 2 cents per hour was to be applied to all classifications, effective 1 March 1959, but the following clause provided that, effective 1 May, there would be a further increase of 2 cents per hour for Labour Grades 11, 12, and 13 (these employees comprised the highest grades at the plant). Such negotiations achieving some gains for all members, but greater gains for a segment of its workers, caused problems in the Local. From one point of view, the gains may not have been enough; from another point of view, the wage gains for the skilled workers of the union may have been out of keeping with the principles of industrial unionism. In contrast to the collective agreement of 1958-1960, that of 1952-1953 included nothing separating the increases in wages of the skilled from the unskilled workers.

The UAW recognised the antagonism between its skilled and unskilled workers. But the Canadian Region also acknowledged that the situation in Canada was different than that of the United States. In regard to Fort William, Norman Bicknell moved as

early as 25 January 1954 to prepare the Local for the initiative launched by the UAW International, the tentative program for a "Skilled Trades Council of the UAW." He argued that "a Canadian approach was necessary, since the skilled trades category was inapplicable to the Fort William Can-Car plant."[181] Such an argument may have been based on the premise that the UAW local in Fort William was not old and that the traditions, or contractual obligations, of skilled trades did not exist in Fort William. Workers in the union, however, were not convinced by his argument. Bicknell went on to assure the membership that the establishment of a Skilled Trades Council was no threat to production workers, since

> the Skilled Trades seek no favouritism. They only request the security already gained for the Production Worker. Their major objectives are: an adequate training program, the automatic progression of wages, and the elimination of overlapping classifications.[182]

Despite the "inapplicability" of the skilled trades category to Canadian industry, skilled trades councils or committees were established in the middle 1950s by the UAW International, the UAW Canada Region, and Local 1075. As we saw in the 1958 contract, the interests of skilled workers were better addressed by the different levels of organised labour. In Local 1075, the efforts of Norman Bicknell illustrated the need to eliminate the appearance of a worker hierarchy. It was in the interests of the union to have its workers appear equal. Such is also the case if one applied the concept of class. The gradual implementation of provincial training and apprenticeship programs during the 1960s would allay, to some extent, the changes taking place in the workplace. They provided opportunities for unskilled workers to aspire to the positions occupied by the skilled trades.

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[181] *Local 1075 Regular Membership Minutes*, 25 Jan. 1954.
[182] Ibid.

> Education, the UAW pamphlet for 1961 stated, had as its goal the intention that
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> > democracy [should] spring from its [the union's] roots, rather than to have a union "managed" from above, with special attention being paid to keeping the union informed on the changing conditions in the economy and on the world scene which affect the well-being of all who work for a living. . . Area and region-wide education conferences supplement the local union activities.[183]

We recognise in this statement a number of familiar themes, that an industrial union should be "democratic"; that a union's leadership should be representative of its membership, that a local's values should stem from its "grass roots"; and that the education programs of the UAW should "supplement" initiatives begun at the level of the union local itself. We can debate here the problems that arise in the above statement, the problems and contradictions that are made visible when we read the statement in the historical context of the UAW and the 1950s.

Again, as happens so often, we must go back to what has been said before in a different context. The policies of the UAW International concerning the collective bargaining and contractual obligations of its member locals tended towards compromises between the large American companies of the automotive industry and the UAW. This compromise, in return for job security and a gradual increase of wages, called for action by union leaders to reduce the militancy of the rank and file.[184] Wells contrasts this "responsible unionism" with an earlier form of unionism in which the struggles of the militant rank and file

> were part of a broader working-class mobilization [of] the 1930s and early 1940s. These struggles against their authoritarian anti-union employer were sustained by considerable solidarity generated inside the plants and in working-class neighborhoods.[185]

By the 1950s, the compromise, also described by Yates, had significantly altered the

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[183] "Programme of the Canadian UAW," 14 Jan. 1961.

[184] Yates, *From Plant to Politics*: 194-98.

conditions in which union and management operated. The union's approach to company relations was changing:

> Between 1941 and 1961. . . this bigger labour movement was not necessarily a more activist one. This was so, in part, because the post-war phase of growth, in particular, was fostered by a framework of industrial legality which changed what unions could do. Gone was the union recognition strike, replaced by administrative procedures; gone was the sympathy strike, virtually precluded by regulation of the timing of strikes. Not quite gone, but apparently diminished in importance, was the union leader whose authority depended mainly on the ability to foster a fighting spirit in the rank and file.[186]

The words that have been used to describe the "new unionism" of the 1950s are "stability," "union security," and increased "bureaucracy." Stability in employment and union security were products of the changes that had taken place earlier, in the 1940s. Among these changes were the federal government's introduction of PC 1003 in 1944 and the Rand Formula for dues check-off in 1945. By the 1950s, the UAW was able to consolidate its position in industry and offer services to its membership, thereby necessitating an increase in union administrative personnel.

The Rand Formula and the changes taking place in Canadian unions during the 1950s were important in influencing the relations between union leadership and membership. Wells writes that the

> Rand Formula was later adopted in most union contracts in mass industry. The union's [the UAW's] new financial security, however, was won at a price. In many ways, Rand's decision required union leaders to become more responsible to employers than to their members. It weakened the ties between union leaders and members, especially because union representatives no longer collected dues from each worker. Rand also put teeth in union leaders' obligation to repudiate workers' direct action. Failure to do so could lead to the forfeiture of union dues payments. The resulting institutional separation of union leaders from their members became increasingly embedded in Canada's Wagner model. As labour

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[185]Wells, "The Impact of the Postwar Compromise on Canadian Unionism," 152.

[186]Tillotson, " 'When our membership awakens': Welfare Work and Canadian Union Activism, 1950-1965," *Labour/ Le Travail* 40 (Fall 1997): 138.

> historian Bryan Palmer has concluded, Rand "set the tone for the post-war period."[187]

In the UAW International and Canadian Region, we see a "more hierarchical, bureaucratic and legalistic unionism" arising "to replace the more militant rank and file centred, and class-oriented unionism of the 1930s and 1940s."[188]

How did these changes in union orientation affect the leadership and membership of a small, relatively newly-established union local such as Local 1075? Such a question, in the context of changing union administration and bureaucracy, is an important one. In terms of education, the problems involved in the changing strategies of union leadership become apparent. As we saw in the excerpt from the UAW pamphlet for 1961, the UAW used the rhetoric of "union democracy," "springing from its roots," and "education" to *supplement* "the local union activities." The use of the term "rhetoric" to describe the language of UAW leadership is, in this sense, ironic. In a way, the language of the union reflected not the reality, but the ideal, of the union's operation. Unionists in the 1950s, I would argue, were aware of these changes in the administration of the UAW. Leaders at the level of the local were especially aware of what the UAW should be, in contrast to what it actually was.

The process of "educating" the membership was an important priority for the local union. Being a "grass roots democratic union" was not only an ideal for the local union, it was an ideal that could become a reality. What is less obvious as one considers the higher administrative chain, is that the union leadership was drawn from the ranks of the membership. One can see, in reading the Union's minutes, a worker becomes a shop steward, a shop steward becomes a committeeman, a committeeman becomes a member

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[187] Wells, "The Impact of the Postwar Compromise on Canadian Unionism," 150.
[188] Ibid.

of the Local Executive, and the Executive member is recruited to become a member of the UAW Regional organisation.[189] Education made the recruiting of leaders possible. By educating its membership, young and old alike, in "changing conditions in the economy and on the world scene which affect the well-being of all who work for a living," the union Local could hope to create a body of labour activists who were involved in various facets of the union and of the Fort William community in general.

Initiatives in education could come from one of two directions: from the Local's leadership and membership or as part of an educational program co-ordinated by the Regional UAW or local and regional labour bodies. This is necessarily a simplification of the complex of relations between the Local and other labour organisations. But the responsibility lay mainly with the Local and its leaders to involve themselves, or not involve themselves in educational programs that came their way. And, of course, many of the decisions made by the Local Executive in the early days were made under the direction of the International Representative, Norman Bicknell. As early as June of 1952, four months following the local's founding, the Local Executive was planning educational seminars for members on parliamentary procedure, local arbitration procedures, collective bargaining, and public speaking.[190] These were general topics the Executive believed were necessary to build what it had set for itself a few months before, a "virile union, dedicated to the welfare of the workers which it represents, and assuming its democratic responsibilities as a significant force for social progress in the community at large."[191] In April 1953 the Executive was evaluating the educational value of

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[189]Two members of the Local's Executive were promoted to the UAW Regional Office during the time of this study: Frank Fairchild was recruited to the UAW Regional Staff in 1960, and Alf Johnston followed him in 1963. Both were president of the Local at the time of their promotion.

[190]*Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 24 June 1952.

[191]*Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 23 March 1952.

conventions and regional conferences compared to local methods of education, such as leaflets, papers, brochures, and local seminars. It was decided at this meeting to direct the greater part of its educational funds towards "Local Union Activities."[192]

The advantage of local educational activities, in the context of the Fort William plant, were many. As the 1950s progressed, the UAW Canadian Region directed more and more funds into educational initiatives demanding a greater degree of union centralisation. An example was the Canadian UAW Council's setting-up of a Canadian UAW Education Centre near Port Elgin in 1957. The distances involved in travelling to Port Elgin diminished the usefulness of such a centre for the majority of workers in Thunder Bay. Efforts in 1962 to set up a CLC Labour College, in conjunction with McGill University, met with a lack of interest when the Local was asked by UAW Region if it would contribute nominees to fill the UAW's slate of college applicants.[193] For the majority of workers in Fort William, the feasibility of partaking in the educational undertakings of the union or labour movement in southern Ontario was limited.

This, by no means, dampened the efforts of unionists in Thunder Bay to educate themselves and their co-workers in unionism. The union Executive provided access for their fellow workers to many publications relevant to political activity. Through the 1950s the local's leadership brought in to their offices the federal Parliament's Hansard, the *Labour Gazette*, the *UAW's Ammunition* newspaper, and publications from the OFL and the CCL (later, the CLC). The UAW propaganda sheet provided in this chapter is an accurate presentation of information the membership was given during the period under consideration.

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[192]*Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 6 April 1953.

[193]*Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 23 April 1962. The UAW International initially sponsored four applicants each year for the CLC Labour College.

Chapter Four

THE LOCAL EXECUTIVE

This book contains the Permanent Record of the Minutes
Of the Executive and General Meetings of Local 1075 UAW-CIO.
As such, it is more than a mere record of proceedings,
But may be regarded in future as an authentic history of the growth
And development of a virile union,
Dedicated to the welfare of the workers which it represents,
And assuming its democratic responsibilities as a significant force
For social progress in the community at large.

Signed, George Fawcett, Recording Secretary.

These words stand on the front page of Local 1075's first bound collection of the minutes of the Executive and General Meetings. They were penned in March 1952 prior to Fawcett's recording of the minutes of the Local's founding meeting. The meeting had been announced a few days before throughout the plant and in Fort William's local paper. The workers at the Can-Car plant would vote upon union affiliation. The question concerning union affiliation was not a new one for the one thousand skilled and unskilled workers at the plant. In the years leading up to 1952 the issue had been brought up several times, by petitions and in the sharing of opinions on the shop floor. Should the bargaining unit representing workers at the plant remain affiliated to a craft union, or should it join one of the new industrial unions? In this instance the vote went overwhelmingly in favour of becoming a local of the United Autoworkers of America.

Local 1075 UAW developed a strong presence in the communities of Fort William and Port Arthur during the 1950s. As well, the Local created institutions and programs that facilitated communication and interaction among its membership, its leadership, and the community. The early and mid-1950s were times of rapid economic

development in Ontario and Canada. The transition of the plant from a wartime economy to an economy driven by consumer needs allowed the maintenance of a workforce averaging 900 to 1, 000 people. One of the central means of facilitating change in the union, and the methods of conducting union affairs, was the union Local's Executive.

Much has been written on the role of union leadership and Executive committees in the affairs of unions and their membership. As well, there are studies emphasising the relationships between high-ranking union officials in national and international affairs, union leadership at local levels, and the rank and file membership. Much of this work deals, however, with union locals that had very large memberships. Studies of the UAW itself, with work by Charlotte Yates and Pamela Sugiman figuring large, have examined issues of union, company and government politics, ethnicity and gender in Canada. But, necessarily, most work has been conducted at a national or regional level (regional here meaning the larger locals centred in the manufacturing centres of southern Ontario.) This chapter will contribute to this growing body of literature by providing a case study of a small local in an isolated community. It is hoped that the similarities and differences appearing in the study will advance understanding of the complex relations between unions, locals, and the membership at large.

In examining the union leadership, certain questions need to be asked: what were the interests of the leadership, and how did these interests correspond with those of the membership? But rather than gauge the relative success, or lack of success, of the leadership in regards to the membership they sought to represent, we might ask questions of a different sort. Mark Leier writes,

> in assessing the labour leadership, we need to ask if other ends might have been pursued, if other strategies might have been more effective, or how successful these leaders were, not in getting any agreement but in getting the best possible

> agreement. We might also ask how their actions and results compared with the dreams and agendas of the workers they claimed to speak for.[194]

In consideration of theories on bureaucratisation and the institutionalisation of unions, the political and theoretical differences separating a union bureaucracy from its membership will vary, depending on the historical contexts of time and place. On a macro level, Charlotte Yates' study of the Canadian Region of the UAW indicates a growing tendency towards accommodation and corporate compliance by the national and international leadership during the 1950s and 1960s. On a macro level, the UAW in Canada grew out of the militant tradition of the American industrial unions of the late 1930s. The 1940s was a decade of tremendous growth in membership of both the industrial and trade unions in Canada. With the promulgation of PC 1003 and the right of unions to represent workers in Canada entrenched in federal law, the future of organised labour seemed assured.

The preceding chapter shows the connection between the rapid growth and entrenchment of industrial unions in Canada. It indicates possible reasons why the workers in the Can-Car plant opted in the early 1950s for the leadership of the UAW as opposed to the craft union establishment in the plant previously, the IAM. The image put forward by the UAW during its decade of growth in the 1940s was one of militancy with a tradition of democracy empowering workers. The reality for the union at large, however, was one of increasing regulation and bureaucracy at the highest levels of administration.

The Local in Fort William, though, was new to the structure of the Regional and International UAW. Those very factors that made the UAW so appealing to workers

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[194] Mark Leier, "Which Side Are They On? Thinking About the Labour Bureaucracy," *Labour/ Le Travail* 37 (Spring 1996): 284.

during the 1940s drew the workers of Can-Car, and some of the existing leadership of the old union, to it. The changes in practices of leadership in regional and international labour politics were not necessarily those of the Local leadership. It is difficult to delineate the various structures of a union, between those elements characterising the leadership and of the membership, and it is even more so in regards to an examination at the level of the local. Some of the personalities figuring large in the workings of the union local do not typify the traits of 'a leader' at all. We must get away from Walter Reuther and the large international union, and focus on workers fulfilling a limited leadership position and having no ambition to work in any greater capacity.

The term, "leadership," in the context of the union Local of the 1950s and 1960s, included men and women in various capacities as shop stewards, committeemen, and executive. In this union Local, women played a very small role in the conduct of union affairs (there was only one woman working on the shop floor during the period under consideration.) It is obvious, then, that the union leadership was male dominated and that issues in relating to the interests of women would arise only in the context of their being wives, mothers, and daughters. As we will see in the next chapter, women did play some role in the development of union policy and conduct, but it was largely peripheral to the shop floor, and most of the relations between the women and men of the union involved the women as wives, mothers, and daughters and would largely have been reproduced in the home or in the community. It would rarely have spilled over into the politics of work or union affairs.

The initial members of the Local Executive were largely drawn from those men who led the drive, in 1950 and 1951, to associate the workers of the plant with the UAW. Karl Steeve was a leading proponent of association with the UAW. He was Chairman of

the Negotiation Committee for Lodge 719 IAM in their negotiations with the Canadian Car and Foundry Company in the early months of 1951.[195] Steeve became the first president of Local 1075 UAW in April 1952. Other early members of the local Executive were, for the most part, older workers, most of whom retired from Can-Car in the following ten years.

By the late 1950s the leadership of the Local had changed substantially. New members of the various committees and the Executive itself were drawn from a growing cadre of younger workers. The majority of the leadership had worked at the plant during the war and continued their service to the company in the years following. As well, many of the workers during the 1950s had initially been drawn to the plant during the war-years and had received their training at various schools throughout the area, an important facility having been the technical school at Port Arthur Collegiate Institute.

In examining the composition of the union local's leadership in the years following 1952, several questions arise: Did the Local draw into its cadre of leaders any men who had been in the Canadian armed forces preceding the demobilisation of 1945-1946? Did the leadership distinguish itself from the bulk of the union membership, using existing dichotomies between skilled and unskilled workers? Were there any elements within the union leadership that drew upon existing traditions of Canadian socialism, trade unionism, or labourism, in their union activities?

The demobilisation of the Canadian armed forces had a limited impact upon the plant's workforce. While political rhetoric abounded in the years following 1944 about the need for women working in manufacturing to leave the labour force in order to open

[195] The members of the negotiating committees for the collective contract, 1951-1952, between Can-Car and Lodge 719 IAM, were for the company: R.E. Henderson, Division Works Manager; George Walsh, Industrial Relations Manager; and J.T. Asquith, Vice-President and General Manager; for the union: Karl Steeve, Chairman; R.M. Maxwell, E.B. Kempton, William Parsons, K. Gibson, W.G. Will, and A.E. Knox.

jobs for returning war veterans, the situation in the Fort William plant involved a downscaling of the existing labour force, with the return of only a few veterans. Alf Johnston, a young worker beginning his employment at the plant in 1940, recalls that he was one of the few workers to have volunteered for active war duty. He returned to work at the plant in 1946, supported the transition from the IAM to the UAW in 1951 and 1952, became involved in union work as a steward, and served as a committeeman and then vice-president of the union Local in the late months of 1958. Recalls Johnston, virtually none of the leadership of the union during the post-war years, excepting himself, had served in the armed forces during the war.

The role of existing dichotomies, between skilled and unskilled workers, has already been discussed above. Can-Car did not have a workforce with a great deal of seniority and, considering that most of the work force at the plant during the 1950s began working there just before the war, issues relating to skilled and unskilled labour were minor.

The tradition of labourism, worker militantism, or socialism is a difficult subject to analyse and examine in detail when generalising about workers and union leaders. Different individuals held to different sets of belief, depending on their own personal past lives and their correspondingly personal socio-economic contexts. Joseph Schumpeter, in his important book, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, describes the state of ideology in the United States, thus:

> Another revival is less easy to explain- the Marxian revival in the United States. This phenomenon is so interesting because until the twenties there was no Marxian strain of importance in either the American labor movement or in the thought of the American intellectual. What Marxism there was always had been superficial, insignificant and without standing.

The ability to conceptualise traditions of socialism and labour/ trade unionism and to associate them to this or that geographic or political region is something that is not so easy to do today. Schumpeter was able further to say, pertaining to socialist thought generally, that, "Outside of Russia, therefore, the American phenomenon stands alone."[196] The American phenomenon, Schumpeter believed, could be placed outside or separate from the familiar examples of Russian Communism, German Social Democracy, British Labourism, or social democracy in Canada.

The Canadian traditions pertaining to the labour movement are not so simple to delineate. The "American phenomenon" itself has been shown, time and again since the 1950s, to be a complex of labour movements within the United States of America. Indeed, in examining the labour movement in Canada, the union Local in Thunder Bay, and the differences between leaders and rank and file, we must remember the very complexity of those concepts under discussion. Such considerations involve the historian as well, and to cite Schumpeter,

> One's views about what classes [or labour structures] are and about what calls them into existence do not uniquely determine what the *interests* of those classes are and how each class will act on what "it" – its leaders for instance or the rank and file – considers or feels, in the long run or in the short, erroneously or correctly, to be its interest or interests. The problem of group interest is full of thorns and pitfalls of its own, quite irrespective of the nature of the groups under study.[197]

The character of unionism in Thunder Bay in the 1950s is open to some generalisation. But the values of the few leaders examined in this analysis can only be inferred in a most general way as those of the membership. In the case of Local 1075, however, the political traditions expressed by the leadership do not seem exceptional.

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[196] Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1947), 4.
[197] Ibid., 14, in citation.

An earlier work on labour at the Lakehead, Jean Morrison's *Community and Conflict*, examined the internal workings of trade unions and radical parties. Morrison treated "these institutions as important, though not the sole expressions of working class activity." She discussed the "reactions to labour unrest and industrial conflict from within the working class and from without, and the effect of these reactions on community relationships."[198] Morrison cited E.P. Thompson in her own introduction and, in this way, created some continuity between the methodology of *Community and Conflict* and that of this thesis. The historical context of her study, 1903-1913, though, is quite different from that of the 1950s. That much is obvious. The nature of employment, the role of manufacturing in Fort William, the influence of the two world wars, and the development of organised labour in the region, had changed the attitudes of many workers between the turn of the century and the 1950s profoundly.

The activities of the radical Finns in Thunder Bay in the earlier part of the century are important in understanding the traditions of labour at the Lakehead. Joan Sangster describes the Women's Labor League of the 1920s, and the prominent role Finnish women played in it, to emphasise the "the ethnic strengths of the Communist Party" in Canada.[199] The appeal of early radical politics to ethnic communities in northern of Ontario is significant. Early studies of the region's labour history have in common an emphasis on a politics which is both radical and militant. Morrison, in an article on the working class, observed in relation to a growing body of literature on the north-west of Ontario, that "the drain of Northern Ontario's immense wealth to southern Ontario and beyond through the exploitation of its natural resources is a theme common to [this

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[198] Jean Morrison, "Community and Conflict: A Study of the Working Class and its Relationships at the Canadian Lakehead," *1903-1913* (unpublished M.A. thesis, Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, 1974), ii.
[199] Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1989), 26-53.

literature]. Each has something to say about the producers of all that wealth and about their experiences as workers in the mines and mills, on the railways, and in the bush camps of northern Ontario."[200] Thus, the themes of ethnicity, the nature of the mode of production, and the nature of the resources extracted early developed a tradition unique to the region at the Lakehead.

In the 1950s the tradition of unionism in Ontario was generally of a different sort, and the political culture of many unionists in northern Ontario, working in industries other than primary extraction, can be characterised as less radical. Indeed, the term 'labourism' could well be used to describe the philosophy of some of the leadership of the early local. Having initially been members, or potential members, of the International Association of Machinists, many workers at the Can-Car plant would have identified with the traditions and policies inherent in the Canadian trade unionism that developed out of the Depression years of the 1930s. The conservatism of the craft union tradition has been noted in many studies on craft and industrial unionism in Canada. In fact, many unionists during the late 1930s and the 1940s came to prefer the militant identified with the actions of the CIO and CCL unions of the United States and Canada.

The unionists in Fort William came increasingly to compare, not the political or economic relationships of northern with southern Ontario, but rather the relations of workers at the Lakehead with workers in other locals, and the ability of their own plant, embodied in the management of Canadian Car, to compete with other manufacturing centres in Canada and the United States for production contracts. An effective means of describing how the attitudes of workers and their relations to production changed from the earlier part of the century might be to compare workers in their economic and social

[200] Jean Morrison, "The Working Class in Northern Ontario," *Labour/ Le Travailleur* 7 (Spring 1981), 151.

context of the 1950s to that observed for workers roughly forty years before.

Considering Morrison's study of workers at the Lakehead, 1903-1913, we see that:

> though 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.[201]

The class conflict characterising the early years of the twentieth century, in the south of Ontario as well as the north, stands in contrast with the affluent years of the early and middle 1950s. Bryan Palmer describes the 1950s as a decade of "coming together." Generalisations regarding manufacturing in the province of Ontario can be applied to manufacturing at the Lakehead.

> The 1950s marked a point of departure for Canadian labour, as the strains and tensions of the post-war upheaval dissipated in years of relative prosperity. This decade marked the supposed "end of ideology," an appearance conditioned, in part, by the crushing of the communist presence within the trade union movement, and managerial adoption of "human relations" orientations to the perennial "labour problem." Strikes were less common than they were throughout the 1940s and were more often successful in winning wage, condition, and benefit agreements. Survival and defence of basic rights were no longer as central as they were in the 1930s and 1940s. The organized working class appeared to have reached a new plateau of authority and power, and union membership stabilized. . .
>
> Labour's relative effectiveness throughout the 1950s, and the widening parameters of union demands, which increasingly reflected concern over

[201] Morrison, *Community and Conflict*, 4.

> automation, job security, and company-financed benefits, drew some hostile fire from capital and the state, especially during the closing years of the decade, as the economy dipped into recession.[202]

It was in this climate of relative economic prosperity that workers in the 1950s combined work and union politics. The leadership of the union Local Executive tended to dissociate itself from the radical politics of the 1930s as well as from the anti-communist struggles that characterised the later years of the 1940s in many of the CIO industrial unions. Rather, the union leaders in Fort William supported the tradition of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. This was in keeping with the fact that Charles Millard, Donald McDonald, and A.R. Mosher are names associated with the larger industrial unions of the 1940s, the communist purges of the CCL Canadian and International unions, and the open endorsement by CCL unions of the CCF federal and provincial parties.

The Local Executive identified itself in the 1950s with the CCF and George Fawcett, Recording Secretary of the Local from 1952 to 1962, served as recording-secretary for the provincial CCF riding association in Fort William. George Fawcett was strong in his political beliefs and he wrote to the local newspaper proclaiming the virtues of being a socialist. In a debate with an American tourist in "Letters to the Editor," Fawcett proclaimed:

> I am a Socialist. In your country I would be looked upon with suspicion, perhaps persecuted, despite the fact that your country produced one of the greatest Socialists of all time in the person of Eugene Victor Debbs. In Canada, I am respected, even by die-hard Conservatives. You see, I am a CANADIAN Socialist, and this, to me, is also something very special.[203]

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[202] Bryan Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980* (Toronto: Butterworth and Co., 1983), 252.
[203] *Fort William Daily-Times,* 2 July 1960.

Fawcett considered himself to be a Canadian socialist. Fawcett believed that the Local could be instrumental in addressing issues of class in society. He regularly addressed letters to the editor from the early 1950s until his death in January 1963. Fawcett was an example of a union leader devoted to his Local. He definitely identified himself with the class interests of his union and fellow workers and the language he used was of class struggle. Various Executive leaders during the years 1952-1965 espoused similar convictions and laboured to maintain the Local's support for the provincial and federal CCF. Karl Steeve, first president of the local, supported Fawcett's appeals to the Executive to support the CCF officially with donations of money and campaigning for membership. Later union leaders, such as Frank Fairchild, president during 1958-1960, and Alf Johnston, president 1960-1963, were receptive to George Burt's instructions to foster greater co-operation between the union Local and the provincial CCF (George Burt was Director of the Canadian Region UAW).

One of the first actions of the union Executive was to set up a Political Action Committee to involve the union in the politics of the nation, the province, and the municipality. George Fawcett chaired the first Political Action Committee, and Fawcett was very influential in the early years of the union in involving the union local with the CCF. One of the first actions of the PAC, on 12 January 1953, was to endorse the CCF federal candidate for Fort William in the federal election of that year.[204] On 24 June 1953, Fawcett moved that the Local endorse William Johnston, CCF candidate for the federal riding of Fort William, as a suitable candidate to represent organised labour in Thunder Bay. A later meeting of the Executive, in July, accepted the motion that the

[204] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 12 Jan. 1953.

Local give one hundred dollars to "support the CCL-CCF program via radio" in Fort William.

The Local's leadership interpreted the responsibility of the union to encourage political activity as requiring support of the CCF. The debates about the union's support for the CCF at the Lakehead occurred mostly in the early years of the union local, 1952-1955. As has been established in other histories of the CCF, most notably Walter Young's polemical *The Anatomy of a Party: The national CCF, 1932-1961*, began its withdrawal from the politics of the CCF in the early 1950s.[205] The Local, though, had only just begun to get involved in the CCF. The late 1950s were characterised by an economic depression, and the battle to save the plant from closing, beginning in the fall of 1958. From that point, until the end of 1961, the union Local focused most of its energies upon campaigning for the continuance of plant production in Fort William. The fact that the leadership of the union openly supported the CCF until 1958 with the Local's funds testifies to the fact that the leadership held the CCF to be acting in the interests of Canada's workers.

It is misleading, though, to believe that the Local's leadership or membership were unanimous in supporting a political party representing "labour." Discontent arose on the shop floor not long after the open endorsement of the CCF candidate by the Executive in the summer of 1953. At a general meeting in August, members initiated "some discussion on the $100 spent for political action, several members not agreeing with the executive."[206] Some members argued that "politics was an issue for the individual," and that the greater part of the membership should not have to pay for the

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[205] Walter Young, *The Anatomy of a Party: The National CCF, 1932-1962* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969).
[206] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 26 Aug. 1953.

political predilections of a few notables. It is interesting to note that, in this instance, no one attempted to put the issue of political affiliation to the vote at a general membership meeting. The rank and file were told by the Executive, most likely by Fawcett himself, that the CCL and the Canadian Region of the UAW had openly endorsed CCF candidates. It was not until the fall of 1953 that Arthur Schultz, the International UAW's PAC Director, came to the Lakehead to confirm to the membership what the relationship of the local to the CCF would be. Schultz told "the local it is eligible to send a delegate to the CCF convention." In a message to the Executive, Schultz confided that the sending of a delegate would "give the PAC [of the local] some chance to put over their arguments (to the membership) for closer union-CCF co-operation." Finally, Schultz outlined to the membership that "the local is not an affiliate of the CCF, but that its members were urged to get involved in the CCF riding [association]."[207]

We see here attempts by the Local's Executive and the union leadership to define the relationship of the union Local to regional, provincial, and national politics. Relations between the CCF and the CCL or UAW were complex. In terms of the Local, questions pertaining to support, both verbal and monetary, were very important in the attempt to be collective, and at the same time, autonomous in its decision-making. However, the issue over political affiliation did not die so easily. In December of 1953, a significant proportion of the membership put forward a signed petition, with a motion, "requesting equal donations to all political parties."[208] This motion was defeated, and a visit in January 1954, by Donald MacDonald, Ontario leader of the CCF (and Secretary of the CCL), to the Local and the Fort William riding was, in a sense, the symbolic death

[207] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 13 Oct. 1953.
[208] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 7 Dec. 1953.

of this issue. It was not to be raised again, at least not as the record indicates, until the issue of affiliation to the New Party arose in 1960.

To cement ties to the Party, the Local's leadership referred members to the example set by union officials and party leaders. George Burt wrote the Executive recommending endorsement of the CCF; and in April 1954, David Milne, vice-president of the Local, and Norman Bicknell affirmed their support of the CCF to the rank and file, claiming that "they backed up Labour proposals in every instance." Such statements were backed up by referring "doubtful members to Hansard [the record of the debates in the House of Commons]."[209] By 1958, the local was conducting "CCF Support Votes" at its regular membership meetings to confirm continued support of the party.[210]

Discussion of the "New Party" began at the Local in February 1960. Talk surrounding the restructuring of the national CCF had been circulating since the federal election in 1958, an election that saw the Diefenbaker-led Conservatives achieve a sweeping majority, and the CCF sitting with a disappointing few seats. Interestingly, Douglas Fisher, one of the younger members of Parliament, had been elected for the CCF from the neighbouring riding of Port Arthur. In August 1961, Recording-Secretary George Fawcett attended the founding convention of the NDP and reported to the Local the great potential for a "reinvigorated relationship between the NDP and the labour movement."[211]

The development of party affiliation for the Local 1075 was a gradual process. Behind the principle of party affiliation was the philosophy of political action and the underlying need for the labour movement and, more concretely, individual labour

[209] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 26 April 1954.
[210] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 26 Feb. 1958.
[211] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 23 Aug. 1961.

organisations to affiliate with, openly endorse, and monetarily support a socialist political party that addressed the needs of workers. Throughout the period 1952-1962, issues such as unemployment, old-age pensions, health and medical coverage, and job security were put forward by various labour bodies as important and addressed by the CCF in Parliament.[212]

The leadership of the Local worked for its membership in a number of ways. Directing its interests in political matters was obviously one way of furthering the interests of labour. Getting involved in municipal politics was another. Another method of assessing the achievement of a Local's leadership is to examine it under duress, such as during a strike action or an external threat to the workers' employment. Such an episode arose in the autumn of 1958 when the Canadian economy went into recession.[213] Workers later referred to the incident as "the Plant Closure." The "Plant Closure" involved the near closing of production at the Can-Car plant in Fort William in 1958 and 1959. How did the Local's leadership handle this crisis and its threat of job loss? What methods or strategies were employed in the handling of the problem? What factors were identified as the causes of the problem, and what did the union hope to do to combat them?

Again, the Plant Closure was a significant event that would hold the imagination of workers for years afterwards. Placing it within an historical context, we see that the problems in a marginal, or peripheral economy, such as that of Thunder Bay, places a great deal of stress upon the secondary sectors of production and manufacturing. Prior to 1950 production at the plant in Fort William had mainly focused upon the manufacturing

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[212] Note the absence of equal opportunity employment, universal day-care, and maternal leaves of absence. These issues were brought to the attention of the union local, via CLC pamphlets and late 1950s copies of *Labour Gazette*. Discussion amongst the local's executive, though, was minimal.

[213] James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario, 1920-1970* (Toronto: Ontario Historical

of war goods. The geographic location of Thunder Bay far from southern Ontario but relatively close to the markets of Winnipeg to the west and Duluth to the south, placed the plant in a favourable position. With the economic boom of the early 1950s, the plant was able to maintain an operation employing some 900 personnel building buses.

It needs to be stated here that the Canadian Car and Foundry Division was owned and operated by A.V. Roe (Ltd.) Canada. More significantly, the Fort William plant had a "sister" plant in Montreal. In 1958, economic conditions in Canada were not good, and the Diefenbaker administration began closing a considerable part of the country's military production. Most important, perhaps, for A.V. Roe was the cancellation, in 1958, of the project to supply the British and American airforces with a multi-purpose jet interceptor, the Avro Arrow. To make matters worse for A.V. Roe, the Montreal Can-Car plant had been massively overhauled in the middle 1950s at a cost of millions of dollars, to service the (then) expanding market for railway box-cars.

By 1958, however, the market for jet interceptors and boxcars had largely disappeared. The development of the Russian Inter-continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) had reduced the dependence of NATO upon interceptors as a significant deterrent to Russian bombers, and Premier Frost's government's massive expenditures on Ontario's infrastructure involved enlarged and improved highways and encouraged the transition in bulk shipping from railways to trucks.[214] In 1957 and 1958 the Local petitioned the provincial government and the City of Toronto, claiming that the Toronto Transit Corporation (TTC) was making large purchases of buses from the United States

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Studies Series, 1994), 185.

[214] The rail strike of 1952 contributed to the transition from rail transportation, as did the development of, deep-water sea-ways and overland pipelines. For a complete discussion, see Rea's *The Prosperous Years*, 56-81.

instead of buying Canadian. The reaction the Local received from the TTC was quite negative:

> In reply to the suggestion of Local 1075, United Automobile Workers, Fort William, that the TTC buy Canadian rather than American buses, a TTC union delegate declared that the Canadian buses were unsatisfactory. He expected TTC employees would go on strike if they were asked to drive the buses made in Fort William.'[215]

The Local was disappointed with the response it received in 1957 and early 1958 concerning its objections to the actions of the TTC. The citation listed above is ironic considering that the objection to the Local came not from the company but rather from the TTC union. Obviously, other interests than those of class came into play in this instance. It was amidst these difficulties, in the late summer of 1958, that the union Local learned "that the Montreal plant is preparing for Fort William equipment."[216]

Word of this change in operations came from the office employees of Can-Car, Local 81 of the Office Employees International Union, who "mistakenly" came across communications between the managements of the Fort William and Montreal plants on August 25, 1958. The response of the leadership of the two union locals was to form a Joint Planning Committee and to develop a strategy to counter the company's plans. This became an example of workers of the plant combining their class interests to face the challenge posed by the threat of the plant's closing. The two had not maintained communications prior to 1958. The company management did not officially confirm rumours about a change in operations until September 27. The issue of the plant's closing would not be resolved until the early months of 1962.

The threat of a plant closure played itself out in many theatres and extended through the years 1958 to 1962. Not only did it involve the union Local and the plant

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[215] *The Canadian Forum*, Aug. 1958, 101.

management, but it also drew in a host of interests that saw the plant's closing as a very important issue in the Fort William community. These included: the Fort William and Port Arthur City Councils, the Fort William and Port Arthur Chambers of Commerce, the Northwestern Ontario Development Association, and the Members of Parliament for Fort William, Hubert Badanai (Liberal), and for Port Arthur, Douglas Fisher (CCF). Efforts to keep the plant in Fort William culminated in a major conference in Ottawa in January 1960, involving the leaders of the union, the mayors of Fort William and Port Arthur, the MPs for Fort William and Port Arthur and various representatives of the Lakehead community, to meet with various federal cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister himself. Until 1961, rumours emanating from the Prime Minister's Office suggested that a contract would be assigned to Can-Car for the production of the "Bobcat," a vehicle intended to serve in the military as an all-terrain amphibious armoured personnel carrier. An "Editorial" in the *Daily-Times* for 1 February 1961 still expressed hope for a military contract of some sort:

> In an impressive contribution to the budget debate in the House of Commons, Hubert Badanai [Liberal MP for Fort William] presented, among others, two proposals for government action which carry special interest for the people of the twin cities at the head of the lakes and for Northwestern Ontario generally. The Fort William member pleaded for the rebuilding of Canada's merchant marine, and for the manufacture of the Bobcat, the amphibious vehicle which could be produced in the Fort William plant of the Canadian Car Company.[217]

The results of the "Ottawa trip" proved to be disappointing. The trip was reported to the union membership as having determined:

1) That the Bobcat contract would not be forthcoming.
2) That Can-Car was reluctant to find bids to contracts for the Fort William plant, and that the company "was neglecting a Production Sharing Office in Chicago," according to Minister of Defense Production O'Hurley.

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[216] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 25 Aug. 1958.
[217] *Fort William Daily-Times*, 1 Feb. 1961.

3) That Diefenbaker told Parliament that he "doesn't want to interfere with Free Enterprise."[218]

The UAW International stepped up pressure on the company itself by petitioning A.V. Roe's head office in Toronto.[219] The International met with the top management of A.V. Roe and representatives of the Frost government in Toronto. By December 1958, the UAW had forced the company to recognise the need to give notice of closure, and it received word on December 10 that the plant would close in 1959. The meeting, in December 1958, between the UAW and Can-Car, found the following:

1) The Company had not been intending to announce the plant closure until well after Christmas.
2) That Harwood (General Manager of Can-Car) said the move was to centralize production in Montreal and be closer to markets and resources.
3) That the conversion of the Montreal plant was a mistake.
4) That the Company intended to sell the Fort William plant.
5) George Burt stated that 'there was no hope outside of the Federal Government.
6) That the plant would stay open to June 1959.[220]

The reaction of the union local to these findings was to petition all levels of government, to present a fifteen minute broadcast on local television, and to hold a public meeting early in the New Year.[221]

The "Ottawa Trip" discussed above was the culmination of a great deal of work by the union Local leadership and the many individuals and organisations in the community listed earlier. Ultimately, the efforts to maintain production at the Lakehead succeeded, and by 1962 A.V. Roe had committed to keeping the plant in operation. Efforts to keep the plant open were ongoing through the years 1958 to 1962 and the local newspaper *The Fort William Daily-Times* displayed a continual interest in the plant's

[218] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 6 Feb. 1961.
[219] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 10 Dec. 1958.
[220] Ibid.

survival. It was with great joy that the paper proclaimed on 12 May 1961 that "Local Canadian Car Plant Producing Tree Farmer":

> Fort William Canadian Car officially took the wraps off its latest innovation Thursday afternoon with the unveiling of the Garrett Tree Farmer, an economy tractor specially designed for woods operations.[222]

The collective efforts of the community of Fort William compelled the company to maintain production at the plant for a while longer (actually, it operates to this day). The endeavour, though, created conflict within the ranks of the leadership and the membership of the local. Turmoil and discontent were all too evident in the leadership and the rank and file during the period 1958-1962. The president of the local going into the crisis, David Milne, was requested on 22 September 1958, two weeks after rumours of the plant's closing began to circulate, by the "executive, stewards, and various committees, to resign."[223] Milne, who was not without his supporters, refused to resign, and conflict ensued between various members of the leadership over who should lead the Local in the turbulent times ahead. Ultimately, Milne referred the issue to George Burt, Canadian Director, and it was resolved to hold a vote of confidence in October 1958, which did not occur. To save face, Milne resigned on October 9 at a general meeting, noting in reflection to the members that 'we must forget the past and look to our future.'[224] Milne was succeeded by Frank Fairchild, his vice-president. The union Local minutes suggest that Milne was removed from office because of his quiet nature, a characteristic not deemed suitable in the emergency the leadership believed to be at hand.

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[221] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 14 Dec. 1958.
[222] *Fort William Daily-Times*, 12 May 1961.
[223] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 22 Sept. 1958.
[224] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 9 Oct. 1958.

One of the means to resolve the problem of the plant's closing, put forward by Can-Car in early 1960, was to begin the production of mobile homes (pre-fabricated homes). It was suggested that contracts for mobile homes could help the plant. The *Fort William Daily-Times* explained that "the same deal which produced fancier and sleeker aircraft for the air lines (government backing for defence plus mass production methods) is the key which may move the Fort William plant into the new domestic field."[225] The newspaper favoured the company's strategy in relying upon "government backing" to keep the Fort William plant in production. But issues surrounding changes in job specifications, and the hiring of outside contractors, served to break the union local into opposing camps with some for, and others against the mobile home contracts. However, the survival of the plant was assured when, one month following the tree farmer announcement, the *Daily-Times* declared that the "Canadian Car Company announced in Montreal today it has been awarded a federal government contract for construction of 345 mobile homes, worth $3,360,000. Current company plans call for 121 of the units to be manufactured at Fort William plant."[226]

The period 1958 to 1962 was one of turmoil for the union. While the community of Fort William was uniting its efforts to keep the plant open, members within the union chose this period to display their discontent. The four-year-long effort to ensure that Can-Car remained in Fort William displayed a complex reality of class and class struggle. While the union managed to co-ordinate its efforts with other elements in the community, thereby appealing to interests besides those of class, there were workers who chose to neglect their class interests. In February 1961 some members of the union attempted to

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[225] *Fort William Daily-Times,* 11 May 1960.
[226] *Fort William Daily-Times,* 22 June 1961.

avoid paying union dues and the Company supported their action.[227] These members took advantage of the uncertainty surrounding the plant's future and used company support to defy their union. Amidst the instability of the times, the company began the use of "Time-Study" as a psychological 'speed-up weapon,' an example of Taylorism popular in the 1950s and 1960s. A final showdown, illustrating the division in the Local, occurred in an incident in June 1962 when some members of the union complained to management that the union office in the plant had a coffee pot, accessible only to the union leadership, and the Company unilaterally removed the coffee-pot from the union's offices. The Executive, angered by this action, declared that it would do some "sleuthing to find out who the members were."[228] The Executive and General Meeting minutes for 1958 to 1962 displayed ongoing tensions within the ranks of the membership.

The overall impression the union leadership gave was one of positive action. They sought to involve themselves not only in union affairs but also in community concerns. They were proponents of ties with the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and they sought to extend their links in Fort William and Port Arthur. Some leaders sought election as school trustees or city aldermen and sat upon various committees and organisations. Two notable union leaders, Frank Fairchild in 1960 and Alf Johnston in 1963, went on to work for the Canadian Regional UAW as District Directors and Educational Directors. Both individuals had begun their employment at the Can-Car in Fort William, and both maintained close ties with the union Local when they went on to other responsibilities in the UAW.

The efforts of the union and the community to save the plant in Fort William illustrate the collective interests of the community in conflict with economic interests in

[227] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 6 Feb. 1961.

southern Ontario and beyond. During the plant's closing, the company used the rhetoric of "centralisation" to justify the moving of Fort William's equipment to the Can-Car plant in Montreal. The community of Fort William interpreted continued production at the plant as a great victory. To close, here is an editorial appearing in the *Fort William Daily-Times* in July 1961, that illustrates the community's determination to keep the plant open:

PRESSURE NEEDED

> Citizens will recall the efforts made at several levels to maintain the Fort William plant of Canadian Car as a place of employment for local people. Members of the union at the plant were joined by the city council and other civic organizations in promoting pressure to the end that manufacturing should not be discontinued. Resolutions were passed; letters written. Deputations were sent to Ottawa to confer with government departments which had the power to keep the plant open.
>
> Such activity should be recalled, because there is no room for doubt that the recent orders for mobile homes, and new orders for airplane parts are definitely dividends from the extreme interest the community showed in the situation. If everybody had sat back at the time of the crisis, doing nothing, saying nothing, the work would not be coming to Fort William at this time.
>
> Only by concerted, energetic campaigning on the part of all interested civic organizations will Ottawa be impressed by the need eventually [to recognize the economic needs of the Lakehead].[229]

This editorial is a wonderful example of the combined efforts of the Fort William community to keep the plant open. The Local played a large role in these efforts. It also shows how the class interests of the union were augmented by elements of Fort William's business and political community to co-ordinate efforts and meet the challenge posed by big business in southern Ontario and Montreal. The continuation of employment at the plant was a great victory not only for the union Local but also for the community at large.

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[228] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 25 June 1962.
[229] *Fort William Daily-Times*, 28 July 1961.

Chapter Five

THE COMMITTEES

The first ten years following the formation of Local 1075 UAW were important in the development of traits peculiar to the industrial union. The transition into an industrial union of the 1950s was marked by an increase in services to the membership of the local. The Canadian Regional Office in Windsor attached a International Representative to the Local to help it in its early development; and the Local's leadership found itself able to implement programs and initiatives from some of the larger locals in the south of Ontario, such as a Political Action Committee, a Ladies' Auxiliary, and a Retirees Club. The union Local witnessed the emergence of a leadership, drawn from workers living in Fort William, which guided its membership into political action, and the strong central leadership of George Burt's administration offered the local leadership opportunities to involve themselves in national and international initiatives as well.

The importance of these initiatives can be better understood when we consider that "such institutions start by controlling economic relations between men and go on to permeate all human relations."[230] This chapter examines three significant institutions that developed over the course of the first years after 1952 and considers the development of these institutions at the level of the union Local. The three are: the Ladies' Auxiliary, the Political Action Committee (PAC), and the Retirees Club. What was the importance of the formation and development of these three institutions? What did the members or leadership of these various institutions hope to contribute to their union? Did these institutions have the support of the Local, and how did such support manifest itself?

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[230] Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, 48.

Studying these three organisations enables us to achieve better understanding of what the Local achieved as it worked for its membership. Except for the Executive and the PAC, the leadership of the four institutions was independent and autonomous of each other. The institutions changed leadership regularly over the span of the 1950s and, as the leadership of a particular institution changed, so did the demands and expectations of the institution. To go back to Lukacs for a moment, it is important to study the impact that, collectively, men and women had by examining human relations within the framework of institutions.[231]

The Political Action Committee

The Political Action Committee (PAC) was an important instrument of the industrial union and one of the early distinguishing characteristics of the UAW.[232] Gad Horowitz wrote that, "In the United States, organized socialism is dead; in Canada socialism, though far from national power, is a significant political force and the official 'political arm' of the labour movement."[233] These concepts, the political arm and the labour movement, are important in understanding what the Political Action Committee did. The PAC was an important instrument for the furtherance of class interests.

For the union local, political action is an extension of national and international economic and social issues. The purpose of this analysis is not to focus on the Local

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[231] Methodologically, the preference for studying institutions in this way are many. Most of the written records collected in the local's files are records of committee minutes. In the context of today, considering the brief nature of contemporary records, this is not a bad thing. Fortunately, the records of various institutions, such as the Ladies' Auxiliary and the Local Executive, prior to 1965, are very detailed.

[232] The UAW constitution itself required every union local to have a standing committee on political action. One short pamphlet, written by someone from Regional headquarters, and dated 1960, states the following for the membership: "The UAW regards political action as the everyday housekeeping job of democracy and is forever urging its members and locals to be politically active - in keeping with the direct relationship it sees *between the ballot-box and the bread-box*." This grassroots rhetoric is characteristic of much that was written for the union membership regarding political action in the 1950s.

itself to any significant degree: rather, the PAC, at the local level, acted as an instrument for education and action. Many of the directives given to the PAC came from the Local's Executive, which received most of its information from the union International, from the District, or from local, regional, and national labour bodies.[234] The PAC was not as important a committee, as the Bargaining Committee was, but the PAC represented the capacity of industrial unions to take political action. The concepts of socialism, politics, and labour need to be considered and so we must shift our focus from the local itself to regional and national politics. Only in this way can we understand why it was important that PACs existed and how it was that politics was mediated at the local level.

Horowitz's analysis refers to the politics of conservatism, liberalism, and socialism, because these political concepts were very important to activists in the 1950s and 1960s. Irving Abella's *Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour: the CIO, the Communist Party and the Canadian Congress of Labour, 1935-1956* focuses the politics of labour and government at the time of the Local's formation and development.[235] But the political conditions of the 1950s demanded that unions and labour to become politically involved. Industrial unions, such as the UAW and the United Steelworkers of America, had political action committees long before the 1950s. The industrial unions were known for their militancy and their willingness to become involved in a more radical type of politics.

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[233] Gad Horowitz, *Canadian Labour in Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 3.

[234] The PAC was a committee of the Local Executive and its members, to a large degree, were active on the Executive as well.

[235] Abella's book brings us up to the point of merger of the TLC and CCL in 1956, to form the Canadian Labour Congress. For Canadian labour at the time, the strengthened labour body only lessened slightly the perceived threat of communism to the labour movement and Canadian politics generally. See Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour: the CIO, the Communist Party and the Canadian Congress of Labour, 1935-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

Mark Leier has characterised the early bureaucratic development of the labour council, in this instance, the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, as possessing a political program he described as labourism:

> Labourism was a class-conscious doctrine, based on a labour theory of value, but neither the conception of class nor the labour theory of value were constructed along strict socialist lines. . . In this picture of society, divided into parasites and producers, capitalism was not necessarily viewed as bad.[236]

A political program acknowledging the different roles that individuals played in the mode of production did not describe the political platform of the UAW in Canada. Yet, it cannot be said to be unrepresentative of the thinking of many workers in Canada during the 1950s. When dealing with the politics of the UAW International itself, before and after the involvement of district and local union leaders, the definitions and political aims of these concepts change. The UAW did not hold to the traditions of Gomperism, as the earlier trade unions had, in which unions refused to subscribe to any political ideology or, more importantly, to any political party. To identify the politics of an institution, in this case the International UAW, the Canadian Region, or the Local itself, one must identify the politics of the leadership, which consisted of individuals with differing loyalties and degrees of commitment.

Before the 1950s, the UAW was taking the stand that political action and political education were very important.[237] Many labour leaders reacted to the recent growth in

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[236] Leier, *Red Flags and Red Tape*, 92-93.

[237] The actual form which this politics was to take was, by the 1950s, fairly clear. Abella suggests that George Burt and, to a larger degree, the caucus of Walter Reuther had come to grips with the communist question before the middle of the 1940s. It was not until the mid-1950s that the UAW could really be said "to have gotten its house in order." For further reading, refer to Kevin Boyle, 'There Are No Union Sorrows that the Union Can't Heal: The Struggle for Racial Equality in the United Automobile Workers, 1940-1960,' *Labor History* (1996): 5-23; and Daniel Nelson, "How the UAW Grew," *Labour History* (1995): 5-24. An excellent article that examines communism in the light of workers' militancy in the 1950s and in the context of Canadian labour, is Shirly Tillotson, " 'When our membership awakens': Welfare Work and Canadian Union Activism, 1950-1965," *Labour/ Le Travail* 40 (Fall 1997): 137-69.

union membership with a mixture of awe and concern. They believed what one Canadian academic has noticed:

> Too many of the new union members had joined without informing themselves about unionism. Consequently, they lacked "union consciousness"; that is, they did not understand that the labour movement was a co-operative enterprise, a democratic body of workers whose effectiveness depended on shared responsibility, inspired by an understanding of unionism's larger meanings, the membership tended to play the union like a slot machine - dues in, higher wages out (maybe).[238]

Correspondence among labour leaders emphasised the need to maintain worker militancy. Of course, militancy by the 1950s was increasingly defined within bureaucratic and legislative controls. Militancy advocating illegal wildcat strikes and plant slowdowns was becoming rare, as any reading of the Local's records and correspondence make very clear. But one notable activist of Local 1075 believed, from the Local's inception in 1952, that the role it could play in the community was important, political, and social: "This social function [the local's first membership dance, named "The UAW Victory Dance," in 1952] heralded the establishment of the UAW-CIO in the labour picture at the Lakehead as a force for progress, not only in the plant of Canadian Car, but in the entire community. Something new had been added, and it was here to stay."[239] For this labour activist, the arrival of the UAW in Fort William was to be not only a workplace innovation but also a progressive reality changing the values and mores of the community. It was also a means for the class interests of Fort William's workers to express itself in the community. He believed that the UAW gave something to the community that had been lacking before its arrival.

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[238] Tillotson, "When our membership awakens," 137.

[239] *Local 1075 Executive Minutes*, 20 May 1952. The speaker in this instance is George Fawcett.

The Political Action Committee took on a peculiar character in the industrial union in the 1950s. For the union Local, this difference was a part of its character and developed into its fabric.

> The UAW's strategy in dealing with government did change in this period [1950-1957]. However, strikes, which until 1949 had been a major part of UAW strategy to pressure governments, were abandoned as a means of gaining political leverage with governments. Lobbying replaced this more militant strategy in UAW dealings with the federal government.[240]

The PAC became an organ to involve the Local's membership in local, regional, and national politics. The Local became, soon after its founding, a firm supporter of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation; it began to lobby municipal government in the interests of its membership; the Local actively, and in some occasions financially, supported labour candidates for municipal office, such as alderman, or school board trustee. Despite opposition to some of these positions, the Local Executive made it its' responsibility to convince the membership that they should be politically aware. It did this with the support of the Regional Office and with resolutions from labour organisations such as the CCL (and later, the CLC).

From its very inception, Norman Bicknell, International Representative to the Local, urged the new Executive to form a PAC and involve the workers in local and national politics. The activism of the 1950s, observes Tillotson, represented

> the attempt to democratize the basis of their [labour bureaucrats] institutional power. This democratization project, admittedly, was limited by its intolerance of the communist political minority. But activism could be and was promoted in ways that accommodated the large range of political opinion on the socialist left and liberal centre of Canadian life in the 1950s.[241]

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[240] Charlotte Yates, "From Plant to Politics: the Canadian UAW, 1936-1984," (PhD thesis in Political Science, Carleton, 1988), 221.
[241] Tillotson, "When our membership awakens," 141.

In terms of the Local itself, the language of politics, recorded quite faithfully in the Executive minutes, was pro-action.[242] The language used by the Executive borrowed heavily from the CCL, identifying the interests of the plant's workers with the Canadian labour movement and, in some instances, with international labour. In a way, the political initiatives were sent from International and District headquarters to the Local to be interpreted and carried out as the Local saw fit.

Charlotte Yates characterises the politics of the early 1950s as having been mostly between the UAW and the respective companies. She maintains that, during the years 1950 and 1957, "the state in Canada played a minimal role in developing a compromise between capital and labour . . .This lack of involvement by governments meant that the hammering out of a compromise between corporations and organized labour took place in the sphere of private production."[243] As has been mentioned before, the first strike action taken by the local occurred in 1955. Comparing the first UAW contract with Can-Car with larger manufactories in southern Ontario, however, we see that the Fort William plant did not fall far short.

The Ladies' Auxiliary[244]

The examination of the Ladies' Auxiliary opens up some interesting themes for discussion. Of course, the first that comes to mind is the issue of gender. As was

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[242] As stated, the minutes of the Executive and General meetings are free of resolutions against communist, or suspected communist, agitators. In a way, I think that leaders and membership alike tried to keep this 'witch-hunt' type of politics out of the union and, most important, off the shop floor. Politics, as such, was open to discussion, and the strong sympathies of some few of the local's leadership were instrumental in the union's adopting resolutions in support of the local, provincial, and federal CCF. In its support of the CCF, the UAW in Canada was very "socialist" minded. Not all the membership agreed with this.

[243] Yates, "From Plant to Politics," 195.

[244] The work done, to date, on union ladies' auxiliaries is very scant. Much of the work done to date seems to have been focused on women involved in waged-labour themselves, rather than upon those involved indirectly through marriage to a union spouse. The importance of mothers, wives, and daughters

mentioned in the chapter preceding, the number of women employed in the plant after 1945 was negligible, at least, on the shop floor. The activities of the Auxiliary allow us to see how women were perceived as being involved in the process of production. As well, the Auxiliary's records enable us to consider how the women conceived of themselves in this process. The Auxiliary was made up, for the most part, of women married to union leaders. We see that the relationship was:

> based on the family form that currently predominates in advanced capitalism; that is, a breadwinner husband and a relatively dependent wife. . . For full-time housewives, dependence on the husband's wages is absolute. As a result, in families with a male breadwinner, the wife has a vested interest in his wages.[245]

This examination allows us to consider which women involved themselves actively in the union's struggles, how they thought their work could best be conducted, and what impression the union Local had of the Auxiliary's activities.

How was the Auxiliary first established? Ladies' Auxiliary #320 of Local 1075 was founded on February 10, 1954, largely through the good offices of the Local's International Representative, Norman Bicknell, and the president of the Local, Karl Steeve. The minutes of the first meeting record how, "Bro. Karl Steeve opened the meeting and thanked the ladies for their attendance, and outlined the organisational efforts of himself in getting the Auxiliary going and read a letter from Catherine Gelles expressing her regrets in being unable to attend."[246] Catherine Gelles headed the Ladies' Auxiliaries for Canada District UAW. A Russell Paul spoke next on what an Auxiliary could do to help the local union, and Bicknell spoke to the women on the connection between the union and the Auxiliary.

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in the support of their union men, though, has never been questioned.

[245] Meg Luxton, "From Ladies' Auxiliaries to Wives' Committees," in Linda Briskin and Lynda Yanz, eds., *Union Sisters: Women in the Labour Movement* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1983), 334.

[246] *Ladies' Auxiliary General Meeting Minutes,* 10 Feb. 1954.

From the beginning, then, we see that the Ladies' Auxiliary was an initiative of the male leadership of the union Local. This finding is corroborated in large part by the findings of Paula Pfeffer when she states that the male leadership of a union initially prescribed the roles of a ladies' auxiliary.[247] An auxiliary could do a number of things: support the union local during a strike, raise funds for special activities, maintaining the morale of union workers in their home. In the case of the Ladies' Auxiliary of Local 1075, the first president was the Local President's wife. It would not be difficult to see that one way or another, the Auxiliary was perceived as a support, but subordinate to, the union Local's Executive. In part, such a role of subordination to the union was caused, as Meg Luxton has observed, by the structure of the union:

> The [industrial] union movement's relationship to wives of union members is further complicated by the structure of the union. Unions are designed to be collective defence organizations of the paid workers in a given work situation. The existence of the union requires a basic autonomy from any outside influence. As a result, there is no structure for including others who are not part of that work situation and non-union members have no place in the union.[248]

In this regard, the union Executive did assume that the Auxiliary would operate under the union leadership's control. The initial money granted to the Auxiliary by the Local was to cover all the expenses of setting it up and provide an extra $100 for miscellaneous expenses. The money in cash was placed, on the recommendation of the Local's Executive, at the Bank of Montreal "in trust in the name of the Auxiliary."[249] Signing authority was reserved for the Local Executive. This money was placed in trust for the Auxiliary instead of being given to the Auxiliary's own leadership to dispose of. At a

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[247] Pfeffer, Paula, "The Women Behind the Union: Halena Wilson, Rosina Tucker, and the Ladies' Auxiliary to the B rotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters," *Labor History* 36 (Fall 1995), 557.
[248] Luxton, "From Ladies' Auxiliaries to Wives' Committees," 335.
[249] *Ladies' Auxiliary General Meeting Minutes,* 10 Feb. 1954.

meeting a little later, it was reported that the account had been changed by the Local Executive from a trust fund to one in the name of the Auxiliary.[250]

One of the actions of the Local's Executive the Ladies' Auxiliary least appreciated was the creation of an advisory committee for the Auxiliary. On 26 May 1955, the secretary of the Auxiliary

> was instructed to write to the Local 1075 saying that we had just learned that an advisory committee has been appointed to help us and we had never been notified of this by Local 1075. If we could have formal notice of this and the names of the men appointed we would be glad to meet with them.[251]

The advisory committee was a nominal body, which would have included, chiefly, Norman Bicknell of the central UAW office. This incident, in a small way, shows how two institutions, the Auxiliary and the Local Executive, could come into conflict on issues of autonomy. For the most part, though, the ladies accepted their role as a support network operating in the interests of the union.

The autonomy of the Auxiliary was not the only issue creating conflict and differences of opinion. Strike action tended to strain relations between the two organisations the most. One woman recalls the 1955 strike at the plant, which lasted from May 16 to 29, and the stress it caused in relations, not only between the Auxiliary and the Local, but also between husbands and wives.[252] The threat of lost income, the resulting inability to feed children, and the fear of job loss, caused many women to question the militancy of their husbands in that strike. What is more, in years when many women thought that they had never had it so good for their families, they believed that what the union was asking of the company was unreasonable.[253]

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[250] *Ladies' Auxiliary General Meeting Minutes,* 15 Feb. 1954.
[251] *Ladies' Auxiliary General Meeting Minutes,* 26 May 1955.
[252] Interview with Betty Steeve.
[253] Ibid.

Despite such differences, there were many things the Auxiliary could do for the union. One of the first actions of the Auxiliary was to take over the cleaning of the Local's main office. The Auxiliary believed it could save the Local money while doing the work itself in return for a small monthly contribution of $15.00 to the Auxiliary's coffers. The ability to generate an income allowed the Auxiliary to do a number of things. The most obvious was to support the union in terms of entertainment and refreshment. But an income generated by the Auxiliary would allow it to become independent of financial contributions from the Local. The Auxiliary's leadership anticipated a growth like that of some of the larger ones in southern Ontario, such as Ladies' Auxiliary #233 of Local 600 UAW.[254]

The generation of income increased the services the Auxiliary could provide to the union. The ladies offered to provide sandwiches and drinks at general membership meetings, take charge of setting up and running recreational dances for the membership, and serve coffee and snacks to other union institutions, such as the "Old Timers' Club."[255] Such opportunities to perform services provided these women with a chance to fulfil traditional functions as supporters of the local union.

But, of course, the Auxiliary was not only to provide domestic services for the male-dominated union Local. Betty Steeve, founding member and first president of the Ladies Auxiliary, recalls that a second and equally important function of the Auxiliary was to provide support for the women themselves.[256] Here we have corroboration of what Paula Pfeffer referred to in her study: "the women's organization took on meaning

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[254] *Ladies' Auxiliary General Meeting Minutes,* 15 March 1954.
[255] *Ladies' Auxiliary General Meeting Minutes,* 22 March 1956.
[256] Interview with Betty Steeve.

in the lives of the women themselves."[257] The Auxiliary took on a role as an educational organisatioin, it involved itself in community issues, and it tried to develop an interest in labour and women's issues in Ontario and Canada generally.

From the beginning, the Auxiliary carried on a regular correspondence with Catherine Gelles in Windsor. The national office provided opportunities for the women in Fort William to involve themselves in the larger organisation of the National Ladies' Auxiliary for the UAW-CIO in Canada. Again, even at the national level, much of the correspondence the women of Local 1075 received was in the form of exhortations to support the strike actions of various UAW locals throughout the country with monetary assistance.[258] The women were also sent films and publications from Windsor, such as a film about Windsor's Local 200 UAW, to learn what the UAW was doing in Canada.

Besides supporting the union in this way, through the contribution of money or other resources, and the receiving of educational materials, the National Office encouraged the women to involve themselves politically. At their first meeting they decided to advertise their meetings in the "Club Events" of the *Fort William Daily-Times* as well as on CKPR radio on "Chapples Parade of Events."[259] The Auxiliary was sometimes invited to send delegates to labour bodies to confer on important and contemporary issues, such as the Thunder Bay and District Labour Council's call to discuss "the Unemployment Question" in 1954. Often the National Office urged the Auxiliary to send delegates to the UAW's own Womens' Conferences but the Local

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[257] Pfeffer, "The Women Behind the Union," 558.

[258] An example was a call for support of the striking brothers of Local 833 UAW. Because the Auxiliary generally consisted of a very small, but dedicated, membership, its funds were limited. In this instance, the Auxiliary was unable to contribute to Local 833. *Ladies' Auxiliary General Meeting Minutes,* 14 Sept. 1954.

[259] *Ladies' Auxiliary General Meeting Minutes,* 10 Feb. 1954.

rarely had the resources to send its women members to meetings in southern Ontario or to become active in politics in this way.[260]

The Auxiliary passed many resolutions of its own, such as one sent to Fort William City Hall to protest the "private enterprise ownership of a proposed gas line."[261] The women believed that it was in their interest, as well as their responsibility, to involve themselves in causes which they thought important to their community. This was significant in explaining why the leadership of the Auxiliary thought it important to endorse candidates for various municipal positions:

> Russell Paul, M. Chicoli, R. Raussel were running for alderman, it was stated, and William Talbot for Board of Education. These men are members of our Local Union or Thunder Bay District Labour Council and the Sisters were asked to remember these names and to vote for them in the coming city election.[262]

The issue here is not that the initiative for political involvement came from the Auxiliary. In each of these circumstances, the Auxiliary derived its information, directly or indirectly, from various municipal institutions or from the Local's PAC. But it is important to note that many women used the Auxiliary as a means to involve themselves in the affairs of the community around them.

One cannot say, though, that the Auxiliary spoke for the majority of the women of Local 1075 UAW. The significant members of the Auxiliary were very capable women but it may not be coincidental that they were, in the main, the wives of the Local's Executive members. The names of the Auxiliary leadership, as well as the regular membership, between 1954 and 1958, closely mirrored the leadership of the Local itself.

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[260] Some women managed to attend national conferences if they could have them coincide with their own family holidays in southern Ontario. One of the perennial problems for delegates from Thunder Bay, in all spheres of the local's leadership and institutions, was lack of representation in national and international conferences because of Fort William's geographic isolation from southern Ontario and the northeastern United States.

[261] *Ladies' Auxiliary General Meeting Minutes,* 28 Oct. 1954.

[262] Ibid.

This is not surprising. But the Auxiliary always had to deal with a membership that was, at the core, small and dependable. The Auxiliary was, then, a very small group of dedicated women, mostly married to men who were equally dedicated to the union cause, but it was their hope to have the Auxiliary appeal to a greater number of mothers, wives, and daughters of the members of Local 1075.

The Auxiliary had to recruit its membership, and it did this varying effect. Initially, notices in the newspaper, on radio, and on the shop bulletin board sufficed to bring women to the meetings, but it soon became evident that this was not enough. The Auxiliary attempted to appeal to a greater number of women by offering activities such as bake sales, a bingo, a card party, and occasional door prizes at membership meetings. The Auxiliary sent delegations to union membership meetings to encourage the men to convince their wives, mothers and sisters to come out to the Auxiliary meetings.[263] The membership of the Auxiliary during the 1950s averaged between seven and forty, with many of the meetings being attended by between five and fifteen women. This was very small considering that the union represented more almost one thousand men at the plant.

It has been hinted at before that the women of the Auxiliary constructed something more for themselves than the union leadership had anticipated. The leaders of the Auxiliary identified themselves as workers' wives. The language recorded in the Auxiliary's minutes suggested a genuine class consciousness because these women knew that they lived on limited budgets and they believed that their husbands' "hard-earned money" was eroded by the selfishness of corporate and local businesses. Issues concerning the purchase of household goods, the maintenance of newly purchased items, the ongoing buying of groceries and children's clothes, were all important to the women

[263] *Ladies' Auxiliary General Meeting Minutes,* 24 Sept. 1954.

of the Auxiliary.[264] They thought that women should be knowledgeable consumers, and they believed it was their responsibility to ensure that community businesses did not take advantage of customers by artificially inflating the prices of various commodities. The Auxiliary operated during the 1950s like a consumers' association. This might sound like a "bourgeois" activity but it is important to realise that these women felt themselves to be acting in the interests of women with small incomes (as wives of working men). The actions directed by the women took two forms: general boycotts on direction and in solidarity with the union Local because a business was anti-union or ran an open shop; and a boycott directed and conducted by the women themselves. The latter tended to be smaller and occurred in reaction to prices which they believed to be unjustified and hurtful to the small consumer in Fort William. The items at issue were most often foodstuffs, kitchen goods, articles of clothing, and women's hygiene products.[265]

Before concluding this discussion of the Auxiliary, it should be noted again that the women involved themselves in community politics and issues. In 1957 the women wrote C.B. Devlin, General Manager of Can-Car, and George Picknell of Great Lakes Paper "asking for permission to make a tour of said plants at their convenience."[266] They wanted to acquaint themselves with the workings of the plants and show that women were a visible force, not only to their men folk but also to management. By 1957 the Auxiliary was regularly sending representatives to the Thunder Bay and District Labour Council and members were proudly present at the first meeting of the TBDLC in 1956.[267] The women were proud to think that they too were involved in the bringing together of

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[264] For an excellent survey of the development of consumerism in Canada in the 1950s and the concept of woman as "homemaker" and "chief consumer of household goods," see Joy Parr's *Domestic Goods: the Material, the Moral and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).
[265] Interview with Betty Steeve.
[266] *Ladies' Auxiliary General Meeting Minutes,* 24 Jan. 1957.

Canada's two largest labour organisations. The role of the Auxiliary, in these respects and those noted earlier, was very important. With the gradual changes in employment taking place through the 1960s and 1970s, the women of Local 1075 had less and less time to dedicate to their Ladies' Auxiliary. The Auxiliary operated in fits and starts.

By the late 1960s the Auxiliary was no longer in existence. One regret that Betty Steeve expresses about the late 1960s and 1970s was that "the new working woman had less and less time for her Auxiliary, until the work that the Auxiliary did could no longer be conducted."[268] Betty asks now if the work the Auxiliary did for its union has ever been replaced. And well may she ask. The dissolution of the Auxiliary was part of a larger national trend in economics and the women's liberation movement. A further study might be conducted to find how women involved themselves in the union affairs of Local 1075 after the late 1960s. Luxton observed in 1983 that,

> Many ladies' auxiliaries have declined in membership and in activities over the last decade; some have even dissolved. However, a new organizational form has emerged that reflects the service-politics tension in new ways and is closely linked to the women's liberation movement. Usually referred to as "wives' committees," these are remarkably different from ladies' auxiliaries. Like traditional auxiliaries, their membership is comprised of women who are married to trade union members, and their activities are oriented to supporting the struggles of predominantly male trade unions. However, in sharp contrast with the auxiliaries, these committees prioritize the autonomy of the wives' committees, including the right to control funds and make political decisions apart from the union.[269]

Future work may point to women becoming active in the union through direct employment in the plant, beginning to take place in the late 1960s, and through involvement in the labour movement at the Lakehead.

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[267] *Ladies' Auxiliary General Meeting Minutes,* 28 Feb. 1957.

[268] Interview with Betty Steeve.

[269] Luxton, "From Ladies' Auxiliaries to Wives' Committees," 337.

"The Old Timers Club"

The Retired Workers' Chapter Local 1075 UAW-CIO began later than the Ladies' Auxiliary, but it has a much longer history and still continues. The Retired Workers' Chapter first met on the afternoon of 29 December 1957, with five participating members.[270] It met under the aegis of the union Local's President and Vice-President, respectively David Milne and Frank Fairchild. The purpose of the committee, the original minutes state, was, "to help retired members keep their standard of living as high as possible."[271] We shall consider how the Retired Workers' Chapter began to involve itself in the affairs of the Local, the issues and concerns the Chapter chose to address, and the changing ways in which retired workers construed their rights and responsibilities in the community and society generally.

The Retired Workers' Chapter was not the only association of elderly workers at the plant. There was also the tradition of the "Quarter Century Club" at the plant. Gordon Burkowski writes of the Quarter Century Club that:

> Quarter Century Clubs were a part of Canadian Car and Foundry long before a club was started at the Lakehead. At the Company's plants in Southern Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia, the first chapters were formed in 1943. Among the first members were employees whose date of hire was earlier than the founding of Car Car [not the one in Fort William, but that of the one in Nova Scotia] itself back in 1909. . . In the early 1960s, Fort William's turn finally came to celebrate its own pioneers - and to look back to the days 25 years earlier when a handful of workers began to build airplanes at the Lakehead. The first Organizational Meeting of the Quarter Century Club in Fort William was held on March 20, 1964. Over the next 18 months, the first 55 presentations were made of the traditional quarter-century engraved wrist-watches.[272]

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[270] The initial tally of retired members which the Retired Workers' "committee" believed they had under their care was 32. *Retired Workers Chapter General Meeting Minutes*, 29 Dec. 1957. The chapter originally affiliated not only to the UAW but also to the United Senior Citizens of Ontario (USCO).
[271] Ibid.
[272] Burkowski, *Can-Car: A History*, 111.

The Quarter Century Club had about it the pomp and ceremony of early trade union rituals. We find in the above citation a tradition that extends well into the past. But, if we were to attempt to fit it into the notion of what we hold a club to be, we would find it fails on more than one account. The Quarter Century Club, instituted at the plant in 1964, expressed the new Human Resources philosophy that was taking hold of industry. This club did not have a continuous function nor did it operate in the form of a bureaucracy or institution. It arose out of the trade union tradition, but those senior workers inducted into it did not earn any rights or responsibilities as a result. This club was restricted to "a lot of fanfare" and "the sharing of stories."[273]

What early form of organisation was there in the plant that looked after the rights of workers no longer employed at the plant? The early records of the Local Executive do make reference to an "Old Timers' Club." Again, the function of the Club was largely informal, and it operated as a meeting of retired workers gathering to discuss issues relevant to themselves. Formally, as early as 1952, the Club corresponded with the Local on important issues such as the payment of pensions. Issues affecting the retired workers collectively could be referred to the union Executive to be brought up with management at their earliest convenience. The membership would initially have been small. The plant, having been closed down until1937, would have had few men qualified to retire on any sort of company plan. By the 1950s though, conditions in the workplace had changed enough to make collective action on the part of retired workers more and more necessary. Elderly workers were also beginning to realise that they had class interests, as retired workers, that required action and that their needs would not be met except through some sort of association.

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[273] Ibid., 112.

We have mentioned already the 1951 collective agreement between Canadian Car and Foundry and IAM Lodge 719, which excluded retired workers from the scope of the agreement. By 1958 contracts between the company and the UAW included provisions for social security in the form of standard hospital coverage, a Blue Cross supplementary plan, and a Physician's Services Plan, for which the company paid 60% and the individual worker 40%.[274] By 1965, the Collective Agreement in article 49 provided a non-contributory Pension Plan instituted 1 January 1963.[275]

The fight for benefits for the worker, including those provided for the retirees, either by company or government, was a long one. In 1952, the Canadian Manufacturing Association was dedicating study and resources to the question of pension and welfare plans. As it was recorded in the *Labour Gazette*, "because of the introduction of welfare plans into the Canadian scene, and because it requires many to explore new paths, it is appropriate to give some consideration to welfare plans at present in operation."[276] In 1953, the CMA surveyed employers on "The Older Worker Problem" and received some suggestions: decrease of wages; revision of company pension plans, or the decision not to place older workers on the plan; and having a government pension at age 65.[277] In the early 1950s, the CCL itself did not table great reforms in pension plans because of the emphasis the Congress placed at their conferences on health insurance; at the most, the CCL called for a pension plan of $65 at age 65, although debate continued as to whether or not there should be a means test before one collected it. The debates surrounding the means test went back to Canada's first national old age pension scheme which was

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[274] *Agreement Between Canadian Car Company Ltd. and International Union United Automobile, Aircraft and Agriculture Implement Workers of America, 1958-1960*, 43.
[275] *Agreement, 1965-1968*, 26.
[276] *Labour Gazette* 53 (1953) 902.
[277] *Labour Gazette* 54 (1954) 979.

inaugurated by the Mackenzie King administration in 1927. Pension entitlement was made universal for all those aged seventy and over in 1951.[278]

Amidst such social reform ideas, retired workers began to petition their union to remember retired workers when the bargaining committee met with company officials. It was with exactly such interests in mind that the Retired Workers' Chapter was founded in 1957. At their second meeting the retirees set themselves the following goals: that retired members sit on the Local's Election and Entertainment Committees; that retired members take a more active part in community service; that retired members prepare for retirement those members about to retire from the plant; and that retired workers be represented on the Community Chest, the Red Cross, and the Hospital Board.[279] The Chapter also lobbied to obtain occasional employment for retired workers around the plant and as parking meter Commissioners in Fort William.

Retired workers also wanted to organise their own dinners, have their own guest speakers, and speak on contemporary issues important to them. Whenever the Local Executive lobbied the City of Fort William, the Retirees wanted to be there to ensure that their request for free, or reduced-fare, municipal bus passes for seniors was heard. Frank Fairchild, President of the Local in the late 1950s, urged the retirees to become active in those issues important to them. The Local itself created a per capita tax of one cent, on union dues, to set up a retired members program.

The initial impetus for the Retired Workers' Chapter came from the union Local's leadership in the person of Fairchild. He helped to elect the Chapter's Executive, recruit its membership, and give it a program. In 1957, the UAW International had decided 'to get all retired members into one large group embracing members who are retired from all

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[278] Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence*, 75.

unions.'[280] The Retired Workers' Chapter of Local 1075 began modestly but responded to the changing economic and social circumstances of the 1950s. Indeed, the slow gains for retired workers in the 1950s grew out of the economic uncertainty of the late 1940s. James Struthers accurately encapsulates this as follows:

> Across the province, throughout the late 1940s, a combination of unanticipated prosperity, the deepening impact of the Cold war, and the resulting collapse of a wartime political climate favourable to social democracy eroded support for further experimentation with social planning and social security as an 'era of austerity' gave way to an era of unprecedented affluence "corrosive of the social solidarity that had inspired the austerity welfare state." By the decade's end, according to one analyst of this era, "most Ontarians were in no mood. . . to create a socialist heaven on earth, especially one directed by bureaucrats. They wished only to drive their new cars down one of Ontario's many new expressways, or mow their suburban lawns." Or as CCF leader Donald MacDonald put it, "Everybody just wanted to relax. The normal apathy of the electorate vis-à-vis politics became even more pronounced with relatively good times."[281]

By the 1960s, a large number of personnel were retiring from the plant and bringing with them the expectations that had been developed through negotiation at the bargaining table and through government legislation. Significant increases in pensions, on the part of the federal government, were not to take place again until 1962.[282] Such developments led to a larger and more visible membership, making it necessary for labour organisations to take the needs of their retired members seriously.

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[279] *Retired Workers Chapter General Meeting Minutes*, 5 Jan. 1958.
[280] *Retired Workers Chapter General Meeting Minutes*, 10 May 1958.
[281] Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence*, 141.

CONCLUSION

The initial ten years of Local 1075 UAW were divided into an early period of six years of steady development in politics and awareness followed by a period, 1958-1962, of economic uncertainty. The change of workers at Can-Car from the jurisdiction of the IAM to the UAW in 1952 was part of a larger historical process mirroring changes in industry in Canada during the 1940s. Most of the 1950s witnessed the development of a fairly militant and politically aware organisation. The workers at the plant witnessed not only an increase in wages and the obtaining of job security, but also the introduction of the closed shop, and the dues check-off (the dues check-off was not initiated in the plant until 1953).

Coupled with progressive increases in wages and benefits, the union members were introduced to the militant union Executive, the Political Action Committee, the Retirees Club, and a Ladies' Auxiliary. The support network developed for the union's membership during the 1950s was instrumental in providing not only male workers but also women and the retired with the opportunity to participate actively in the politics of the Canadian labour movement.

This thesis sought in its first chapter to develop a theoretical framework in which the history of labour was interpreted through a tradition that is Canadian and Marxist. An examination of the union Local displayed the characteristics of class and class struggle. A sense of the exploitation inherent in the mode of production in Thunder Bay may well have been one of the elements that contributed to the transfer of the union local into the UAW in 1952. The political and militant character of the UAW in the 1940s was appealing to a workforce in Fort William that wished to become directly involved in the

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[282] Ibid., 204.

changes taking place in Canadian industry. Can-Car's actions against the UAW in the 1950s made visible the conflicting interests in the community and on the shop floor.

The second chapter sought to outline the reasons why industrial unionism appealed to so many Canadian workers in the 1940s and how this might have influenced workers in Fort William in the early 1950s. The transition of the Local from the IAM to the UAW was a gradual one. Between 1945 and 1952 the plant had gone through considerable change. Not only had women been almost entirely eliminated from the workforce in 1945 but workers in 1952 saw production in the plant change from aircraft to buses. Reasons were suggested why the change to the UAW was so appealing. Chapter Three outlined the political and economic objectives of the UAW and the gains the international union sought for its constituency. Local 1075 did well for its members, compared with the achievements of the UAW generally.

Chapters Four and Five outlined the formation and activities of four important union organisations: the Local Executive, the Political Action Committee, the Ladies' Auxiliary, and the Retired Workers' Chapter. These four organisations were not just important to the union Local for what they did but also because they would come to represent the interests of different constituencies, such as retired workers and workers' wives.

Concerning class and class struggle, evidence suggests that conflict took place in the ranks of the union local as well as outside of it. It is difficult to gauge how the workers of Can-Car would have fared if they had continued under the leadership of the IAM. The crisis of 1958-1962 suggested that employment at the plant came very close to being terminated. The Local was instrumental in the efforts of the workers and the Fort William community to keep the plant open. They petitioned not only government but

also various community organisations in the effort to mobilise support. One is tempted to say that Local 1075 UAW is one reason why the Fort William plant continues to employ 900 personnel to this day. The crisis of 1958 was not the last crisis at the plant by any means! Hopefully, in the future, more research may be done to comprehend the importance of organised labour in maintaining "work for workers" in Thunder Bay. The class interests of workers in Fort William become apparent when the fight for continued employment is made such an important issue. It is wrong to suggest that workers identified continually with their union and their fellow workers in the ongoing fight against capital. It would be silly to suggest, though, that in 1958 when workers discovered (against the company's wishes) that their jobs would soon be terminated that that crisis did not create class consciousness. The historical fact remains that the plant continued operations past 1962 and the efforts of the workers and their leaders are largely to thank for that fact. This thesis does not suggest that the Can-Car Company may not have come to regret its failure to close the plant but it does maintain that, had it not been for the workers and the Fort William community, the Fort William plant would not be in operation today. That is the reality of class struggle and the achievement of workers in a small manufacturing town.

Appendix 1

PROGRAM OF THE CANADIAN UAW[283]
THE PRESENT (1947-1960)

Wages: Post-war gains and fringe benefits have lifted the standard of living of UAW members to an all-time high.

40-Hour Week: The UAW led the way in Canada from 48 or more hours per week to the 40-hour-week. Some plants had it much earlier, but many now forget that it was not until the 5-year agreement in 1950 that the 44-hour-week was progressively reduced to 40 hours at General Motors. Dozens of feeder plants also cut down, under steady UAW pressure, to the 40-hour week - with no loss in take-home pay.

Statutory Holidays: The Canadian UAW, which began with four paid statutory holidays, then six, finally nailed down in this period eight and more paid statutory holidays.

Pensions: Taken for granted now but almost beyond belief for all but a few when the Canadian UAW went to the mat with management in 1950 for the UAW-negotiated non-contributory (by the worker), vested, funded and jointly-administered pensions which have already aided several thousand Canadian workers to enter retirement with at least a minimum standard of decency and respect. Benefits in many cases have been lifted beyond the $100-a-month mark after 30 years at age 65. Disability pensions provide even greater benefits at earlier retirement age.

Health Benefits: The Canadian UAW was the first union to negotiate fully-paid medical-hospital-surgical coverage for workers and their dependants - in the 112-day Ford strike in 1954-1955. Weekly sickness and accident benefits compensate workers for lost time - up to $55 and higher for 26 weeks. In at least one contract, even drugs are prepaid.

Annual Improvement Factor: The long-term agreements had many protections built into them. One of the foremost was the annual age increase. When the second 'improvement factor' contract was worked out in 1955-1956, the UAW negotiated the same automatic (6 cent) increases in Canada that its U.S. members got.

Company-Wide Contracts: Just as workers in individual plants found it advantageous to form local unions, so did locals covering workers in separate plants of the same employer find it to their advantage to unite their forces in company-wide agreements. Thus, in 1953, the Windsor, St. Catherines, London and Toronto plants of General Motors signed a 'Master Agreement', joined by the Oshawa local in 1956. The Ford locals in Windsor, Oakville and Etobicoke won a 'Provincial Agreement' in their 1954-1955 strike. Massey-Ferguson workers in Toronto, Brantford and Woodstock negotiated their first 'Master Agreement' in

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[283] This educational pamphlet was prepared for a Canadian Region Conference focused on the fact that "all major contracts in the automobile and agricultural implement industries, in both Canada and the United States, come up for renewal in 1961." Local 1075 and Can-Car were not a part of this "Master Agreement" or industry-wide bargaining process at this stage, because of the problems the Local and the plant were experiencing regarding the future of the plant. Many of the gains made by the UAW, described here in some detail, had already been achieved by Local 1075.

1954. A number of smaller plants - Duplate, Ontario Steel, etc. - also have such contracts.

Skilled Trades: From the modest beginning of a few cents more per hour for skilled workers in the early post-war contracts, the UAW moved in the 1947-1960 period contracts. Recognition of the trades marked the winning of one of the longest and most difficult struggles the union has had at the bargaining table. Today the UAW stands first in its protections for its skilled trades members, including their constitutional right to direct representation at the bargaining table and to separate ratification.

Retired Workers: In most major UAW centres, the union has established Retired Workers programmes to ensure the continuing interest and participation in the affairs of the union by many hundreds of members now on pension, and going on pension. In addition to membership rights, the pensioners are encouraged to set up their own organization for recreational, educational and political action activities.

Education: Right from its inception, the UAW has given high priority to the promotion among its members of education in the purposes, aims and programmes of the UAW specifically, and the labour movement generally. Its goal has always been to have democracy spring from its roots, rather than to have a union 'managed' from above, with special attention being paid to keeping the union informed on the changing conditions in the economy and on the world scene which affect the well-being of all who work for a living. The Canadian UAW has a full-time education director on the Canadian Regional Staff, and education committees operating at the local union level. Area and region-wide education conferences supplement the local union activities.

Canadian UAW Council: Democratically elected delegates representing the UAW's more than 65 000 Canadian members meet every three months to recommend policy for the Canadian Region. The Council, comprised of about 135 delegates, is the springboard for many of the union's main efforts on the legislative fronts, such as resolutions and delegations to the provincial and federal Parliaments. It has also developed a 'Strike Assistance Fund' which supplements aid to UAW strikes in Canada. In 1957, the Canadian UAW Council purchased 12 1/2 acres on the Lake Huron shore near Port Elgin and opened a Canadian UAW Education Centre which has since been developed to become the outstanding labour education centre in all of Canada. It serves as a vacation spot for members and their families, as well.

PAC: Political Action, like education, is a 'must' in the UAW, with every local union being required by the constitution to have a standing committee on political action. The UAW regards political action as "the everyday housekeeping job of democracy" and is forever urging its members and locals to be politically active - in keeping with the direct relationship it sees between the ballot-box and the bread-box.

Union Shop: The union progressed in the 1950s from the Rand Formula it has won so dramatically in its early days to the full union shop. Workers covered by the contract were now required to join the union as a condition of employment.

S.U.B., Severance Pay: It was known as G.A.W. (Guaranteed Annual Wage) during the preparatory part of the union's drive to ease the load of layoffs, but at the bargaining table it came out SUB, (Supplemental Unemployment Benefit). Either

set of letters, the UAW pioneered the way. A measure of severance pay was added.

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