A PROLETARIAN PROMETHEUS:
SOCIALISM, ETHNICITY, AND REVOLUTION
AT THE LAKEHEAD, 1900-1935

by

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Abstract

“The Proletarian Prometheus: Socialism, Ethnicity, and Revolution at the Lakehead, 1900-1935” is an analysis of the various socialist organizations operating at the Canadian Lakehead (comprised of the twin cities of Port Arthur and Fort William, Ontario, now the present-day City of Thunder Bay, and their vicinity) during the first 35 years of the twentieth century. It contends that the circumstances and actions of Lakehead labour, especially those related to ideology, ethnicity, and personality, worked simultaneously to empower and to fetter workers in their struggles against the shackles of capitalism. The twentieth-century Lakehead never lacked for a population of enthusiastic, energetic and talented left-wingers. Yet, throughout this period the movement never truly solidified and took hold. Socialist organizations, organizers and organs came and went, leaving behind them an enduring legacy, yet paradoxically the sum of their efforts was cumulatively less than the immense sacrifices and energies they had poured into them. Between 1900 and 1935, the region's working-class politics was shaped by the interaction of ideas drawn from the much larger North Atlantic socialist world with the particularities of Lakehead society and culture. International frameworks of analysis and activism were of necessity reshaped and revised in a local context in which ethnic divisions complicated and even undermined the class identities upon which so many radical dreams and ambitions rested.
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<td>AFL</td>
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<td>YCL</td>
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Labour is the modern Prometheus, bound to the rock of world-capitalism. His chains are of his own making. They will continue to enthrall him so long as Labour’s attitude toward himself is one of self-immolation and depreciation. Labour’s lack of recognition of his own power makes Labour his own enslaver.¹

In Petrozavodsk, Russia, there stands a thirty-foot tall statue of Vladimir Il’ich Lenin built by Canadians. Towering over the central square, with an eternal flame burning in remembrance of the victims of the Second World War, it is a constant reminder to the people of this vibrant Russian city of their past.² In the early 1930s, it stood as a tribute to the ideals and spirit of the October Revolution and the socialist utopia that the Finnish Canadians who built it had come to establish in what was then Soviet Karelia. Disillusioned by their lives in Canada and tired of endless persecution by Canadian authorities, thousands of Finnish Canadians left Canada in the late 1920s and early 1930s to take part in Russia’s great experiment. To them, as to many other socialists in Canada, it seemed that capitalism had finally gone bankrupt.

As intriguing as the story of Karelia is, my tale is not an examination of the Stalinist purges of the 1930s and what other historians have described as a dark period in both Russian and Canadian socialist history.³ Instead, what will unfold in this volume is the story of those socialists who remained in Canada. Many who contributed to the

¹ Industrial Pioneer (August 1923): 7.
² The stunning symbolic nature of this statue is apparent in the Gemini-nominated documentary film Letters from Karelia (NFB, 2004). The director, Kelly Saxberg, uses the statue as a starting point for her story of one Finnish communist from Port Arthur who went to Karelia and was never heard from again.
³ The literature on Canadian involvement in Soviet Karelia is quite extensive and discussed as part of Chapter 11. A more recent overview is located in Ronald Harpelle, Varpu Lindström, and Alexis Pogorelskin, eds. Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia during the Depression Era (Beaverton: Aspasia Books, 2004).
construction of Lenin’s statue were from Port Arthur and Fort William, Ontario, collectively known as the Lakehead. The construction of the tribute to Lenin was possible because of the skills honed in the coal docks, railway yards, mines, and lumber camps of Northern Ontario. Likewise, the same conviction and belief that went into the tribute to Lenin and zealous attack on capitalism it represented, had been used for over thirty years at the Lakehead to construct the many labour halls and temples that dotted the two cities and to agitate for the recognition of workers and their voice within society.

Map 1: Northwestern Ontario. The Lakehead is located in the southern region of the District of Thunder Bay.


4 For this study, I will use the term “Lakehead” to refer to a region located at the head of Lake Superior in Northwestern Ontario and defined primarily by the municipal boundaries of the former cities of Port Arthur and Fort William (present day Thunder Bay) between 1902 and 1935. Written use of the term “Lakehead” to describe the region can be located in the writings of the earliest European explorers. The name “the Lakehead” was also the preferred choice by referendum for the name of combined cities of Port Arthur and Fort William when they finally amalgamated in 1969. According to the results of the referendum, “Thunder Bay” was selected as its 15,870 votes in favour beat the split vote between “The Lakehead” with 8,377 and “Lakehead” with 15,302. See Joseph Mauro, A History of Thunder Bay (Thunder Bay: Lehto Printers, 1981), 365.
While the statue of Lenin built by Canadians may surprise people today, in the 1920s and 1930s its existence would have confirmed what local and national authorities believed about socialists at the Lakehead. As Port Arthur MP F.H Keefer argued in 1919, certain areas of the country like the Lakehead needed to be dealt with severely as they were “breeding places of revolution.”\(^5\) David Bercuson suggests that this “breeding place” could be found in Western Canada. It first flourished “in the months following World War I… when men first cut coastal fir, dug mines, or repaired railway cars and locomotives west of the Lakehead.”\(^6\) As Anthony Rasporich argues, the nature of the economic activity in the region – based on resource extraction – lent itself to widespread participation by the Lakehead labouring class in such movements as the Industrial Workers of the World, the One Big Union and the Communist Party and “marked the twin cities as distinctly western in their class orientation.”\(^7\) In fact and legend, Lakehead workers were in the midst of a revolt from 1900 to 1935, one that has placed them at the very centre of Canadian working-class and left history. How did this revolt affect the characteristics, both structural and cultural, of socialist organizations in the region?\(^8\)

\(^5\) Port Arthur News Chronicle, 1 May 1919.
\(^8\) As Eric Hobsbawm recently pointed out, the meaning of the term “Left” has changed, “particularly in recent decades.” A Left does indeed exist, he suggests, as “there is still a difference between Left and Right. A constant, however, is the Left’s ideological basis that inspires all if its manifestations. It refers back in various ways to the English Revolution, which
Why, one might also ask, should the Lakehead be used for a study of socialism? There is certainly no shortage of scholarship examining the history of the left in Canada. Most recently, Desmond Morton highlighted this in his contribution to the millennium edition of *Labour/Le Travail*. Morton suggests that the existing literature falls within two “generations” of scholarship. The studies produced by those working within the first generation were defined by a dedication to “objective” evidence. Second generation historians were similarly dedicated but also “determined to transform the field from being merely ‘a category of political economy, a problem of industrial relations, a canon of saintly working-class leaders, a chronicle of union locals, or a chronology of militant strike actions.’” They also sought to bring “labour history back from superstructure, politics, and the exceptionalism of Western Canada to regions that had been largely neglected by their predecessors: Ontario and the Maritimes.” However, as Peter Campbell’s exploration of Bill Pritchard and the Socialist Party of Canada reveals, another characteristic also marks existing studies of the early history of the Canadian left. “Historians,” Campbell suggests, “have paid too much attention to the rhetoric and too
little attention to the ideas and actions.”¹³ This study builds upon the work of second-
generation historians and, through a case study of the Lakehead, explores the actions of
individuals and organizations in the region. It reveals how their relationship with their
comrades and opponents shaped the nature and characteristics of socialism both
regionally and nationally.

My analysis reveals that the story of socialists and their organizations at the
Lakehead between 1900 and 1935 is not altogether different from how the unknown
contributor of the quotation that prefaced this introduction viewed labour. Just as the
actions of the mythical figure Prometheus caused him to be chained to a rock and have
his liver nightly picked out by the eagle Ethon, so did the circumstances and actions of
Lakehead labour, especially those related to ideology, ethnicity, and personality, work
simultaneously to empower and to fetter workers in their struggles against the shackles of
capitalism. The twentieth-century Lakehead never lacked for a population of enthusiastic,
energetic and talented left-wingers. Yet, throughout this period the movement never truly
solidified and took hold. Socialist organizations, organizers and organs came and went,
leaving behind them an enduring legacy, yet paradoxically the sum of their efforts was
cumulatively less than the immense sacrifices and energies they had poured into them.

During the first 35 years of the twentieth century, the region’s working-class politics was
shaped by the interaction of ideas drawn from the much larger North Atlantic socialist
world with the particularities of Lakehead society and culture. International frameworks
of analysis and activism were of necessity reshaped and revised in a local context in
which ethnic divisions complicated and even undermined the class identities upon which

¹³ Peter Campbell, “‘Making Socialists’: Bill Pritchard, the Socialist Party of Canada, and the
Third International,” Labour/Le Travail 30 (Fall 1992): 47.
so many radical dreams and ambitions rested.

The Lakehead’s economic opportunities (both real and anticipated) drew workers to the region during the first decades of the twentieth century. Located on the north shore of Lake Superior, many believed it had the potential, like many regions of Canada at the turn of the twentieth century, for unlimited economic success. As the Port Arthur Daily-News suggested in 1906: “the assets of Canada are stupendous, the country reeks with underdeveloped riches, agricultural soil, minerals, water power, navigable lakes and rivers, a healthy invigorating climate, in fact, everything that makes a country great, waiting only for capital and energy of a man to develop it.”14

From the heyday of Fort William as the inland headquarters of the North West Company to the brink of the depression in 1929, the Lakehead was seen as a region of untapped and limitless resources, and capable of fueling continuous progress and development.15 The twin cities of Port Arthur and Fort William acted as a metropole for a resource-rich hinterland. The two cities were also viewed as the hub of the Canadian nation, having become the central railway and shipping point for the transshipment of the West’s staple products “in exchange for the manufacturing goods of the metropolitan centres” in the East.16

15 The literature dealing with the region’s role in the fur trade is mountainous. For overviews, see Jean Morrison, Superior Rendezvous Place: Fort William in the Canadian Fur Trade (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2001) and Morrison, ed. Lake Superior to Rainy Lake, Three Centuries of Fur Trade History: A Collection of Writings (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 2003).
The first industry to take advantage of this new means of transportation was mining. While not established until 1868, it attracted many businesses, investors and immigrants to the area and had a profound effect on the region’s future. The silver boom resulted in the establishment and growth of Fort William’s sister city, Prince Arthur’s Landing (later Port Arthur) and the development of infrastructure which included things such as town halls, churches representing various denominations, schools, and an inter-urban street car system.

It was a small isolated region distant from the country’s major centres of population. Yet, the Lakehead was also, thanks to the railway and the mining boom, a prime destination for capital investment and for immigrants. Prince Arthur’s Landing came to symbolize “the freedom, adventure, mystery and wealth of frontier America, the dime store novel Deadwood, Dodge or Carson City of Canada… the village was described as the focal point of a mineral-rich region with unlimited potential.” Even following the collapse of the market for silver in the 1880s, with the CPR as the only significant object of development in the region, potential still existed. In addition to assisting immigrants to settle in the western part of Canada, the CPR also acted as a conduit by which ‘settlers’ could transport their goods back to the Eastern markets.

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19 Mauro, A History of Thunder Bay, 104.
20 Ibid., 86.
most prominent of these goods became wheat before 1913 and lumber after 1920. The Lakehead, as the central terminus for Canada, benefited immensely from the accompanying national expansion. Its fortunes increased with every bushel or cord transshipped. 21

The wheat that flowed through the Lakehead was integral to the prosperity of the west, the feeding of millions in Europe during the war of 1914, and the nourishment of the United Kingdom afterwards. 22 The wood cut from the region assisted in building the cities of central Canada during the industrial boom. The shipment of grain, wood, and other resources also precipitated the creation of a shipbuilding industry. Despite being over 1,000 kilometers from the ocean, the Western Dry-dock in Fort William became the largest of its kind in Canada. Its existence epitomized the influence and reinforced the optimism that the railway industry had on those in living in the region. 23

The emergence of the Lakehead as a major transshipment point in Canada and a demand for both skilled and unskilled labor in the region led to its emergence as a destination for immigrant workers. 24 Population statistics by country of origin reveal that the Lakehead, in many respects, developed along quite different lines than the rest of

22 The importance of wheat exports was such that at the time of the stock market crash in 1929, the cities of Port Arthur and Fort William were the biggest grain handling ports in the world. See Muirhead, “Evolution,” 90-92.
Ontario. In fact, as sociologist Chris Southcott has contended, “Northwestern Ontario does not fit into the image of Ontario that is produced by most studies of regional inequalities in Canada.”\(^{25}\) The province’s six northern districts were, Morris Zaslow writes, “virtually unsettled in 1871” by Europeans. The completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway and its branches meant rapid growth in the region. From 1901 to 1911, it registered “the second largest percentage increase in population in all regions of Canada east of the Manitoba border.”\(^{26}\) By 1921, it “experienced a period of further growth that carried their total population to 218,777 in 1911 to 267,388 a decade later.”\(^{27}\) In 1900, the population of Port Arthur was 3,214 and Fort William 3,997. By 1911, the combined population of both cities was in excess of 27,000.\(^{28}\) Together, they constituted Ontario’s fifth-largest city.\(^{29}\) At the same time, the region accounted for barely 9% of Ontario’s total population. The Lakehead thus combined the attributes of very rapid urban and industrial development with a sharp sense of isolation and marginality within the province.

Although the rest of Ontario “in 1921 was predominantly of British extraction (78 per cent) … in the northern district the British percentage fell to a bare 51 per cent.”\(^{30}\) Studies on the Lakehead reveal those of British and French descent “peaked” in 1901 at

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\(^{29}\) Thorold J. Tronrud, “Building and Industrial City,” in *Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity*, 106.

\(^{30}\) Zaslow, *Opening of the Canadian North*, 192.
78.5% and gradually declined over the next three decades. “Of the 65 Canadian cities, with over 10,000 population, listed in the 1911 census, Fort William and Port Arthur show the two greatest percentages of ‘foreign born.”\(^{31}\) Even in 1921, after some immigrants had left the region, the “British” still only made up 62.2% of the region’s population. This further declined to 54.8% by 1931.\(^{32}\) As the work of Chris Southcott has suggested, the Lakehead was “the most ethnically diverse community in Ontario,” in no small part because of the nature of the regional economy. “Diverse groups of non-British immigrants arrived in the area in response to a need,” Southcott contends, “for cheap, unskilled immigrant migrant labour.”\(^{33}\) This included the world’s second largest Finnish socialist diaspora in the early twentieth century (see Table 1).\(^{34}\)

The demographics of the region, according to Anthony Rasporich, led to “ethnic exclusion and factionalism” throughout the region.\(^{35}\) Many local elites led a crusade to uphold Anglo-Saxon Protestant values and ideals believing them to be threatened.\(^{36}\) As Jean Morrison has described, the working class at the Lakehead was “neither a homogeneous or static mass, but rather represented a multiplicity of sub-groupings

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\(^{31}\) MacDonald, “Protestant Reaction,” 18.


\(^{35}\) Rasporich, “Twin City Ethnopolitics,” 213-215

\(^{36}\) Margaret Frenette and Patricia Jasen, “Community through Culture,” in *Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity*, 146-147.
sometimes paralleling, sometimes overlapping one another. The skilled, the native-born and the immigrant, the English and the non-English-speaking, the organized and the unorganized, the religious and the non-religious, together with socialists of various hues and supporters of old-line parties, all made up the working class.”

What follows then is clearly also a study of region. I demonstrate that by paying close attention to region, in this case the Lakehead, we can grasp much more persuasively and subtly the ways in which the socialist project evolved during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Located near the geographic centre of Canada and a central point in east-west communication, the cities of Port Arthur and Fort William were storm centres in Canadian working class history. In them, “eastern” and “western” socialists, trade unionists and mainstream liberals fought, and frequently influenced, each other. The Lakehead thus interestingly complicates one of the major narratives of Canadian history – that of western exceptionalism – by raising up the example of a region that was,

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37 Morrison, “Community and Conflict,” 2.
38 I realize, as Margaret E. Johnston has argued, that “whatever set of criteria is used, the delineation of regions is complex: it requires careful consideration of important defining features and an understanding of their interaction and influences upon each other.” See Margaret E. Johnston, “The Provincial Norths and Geographic Study,” in Geographic Perspectives on the Provincial Norths, ed. Margaret E. Johnston (Thunder Bay and Toronto: Lakehead University Centre for Northern Studies and Copp Clark Longman, 1994), 2.
39 Despite what I consider the important role of the Lakehead in the history of the nation, I fully realise that there is a very real possibility that critics will consider this study too regional in focus. Such an attitude, typically, is derived, although often in an implicit way, from an underlying belief in a derivative of the basic components of the “Laurentian School” of thought, namely that everything outside of Central Canada (often expressed as a hinterland) is regional. I am referring here of course to the Laurentian School, for which see Harold Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History (rev. of 1930s ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962) and Donald Creighton, The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence 1760-1850 (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1937).
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Source: Southcott, "Ethnicity and Community in Thunder Bay," 17

1. Includes combined statistics from Fort Arthur and Fort William 1901-61.
2. Includes English, Scottish, Irish, Welsh and Manx.
3. Includes Danes, Swedes, Norwegians and Icelandics.
4. Includes Finnish in 1901 and 1911.
5. Austro-Hungarians, with a population of 2,340 in 1911, includes Ukrainians.
6. The 1981 Census differs from previous ones in that ethnicity was no longer exclusively determined by paternal lineage.
simultaneously, western and eastern. Similarly, the Lakehead’s political, economic, and historic linkages to Minnesota and the mid-western United States ensured that political and ideological fermentations to the south influenced many decisions to the north. In many respects, the Lakehead defies attempts to situate it within the canonical series of events that has been used to describe the progression of Canada from colony to nation, or, more appropriately, what Ian McKay has most recently described as a process of liberal order.  

This regional approach to working class and left history is not new. It has shaped the writing of such history since the late 1970s. As Gregory Kealey has argued, “none can deny the importance of regional differences for an understanding of Canadian working-class history.” Bryan Palmer, likewise, has addressed the value of focusing on local situations as a means through which the historian can better understand the greater phenomenon. In the premiere edition of Labour/Le Travailleur, for example, Palmer argues that “for the historian who will probe local sources with diligence and imagination the potential and promise of a richer history slowly unfolds. Then, and only then, will the many … whose social and cultural legacy to the modern world has yet to be explored or exploited, come to occupy the place in our history, which they so clearly deserved.”

More recently, the work of Ian McKay illustrates not only the validity of such an approach, but in the case of Colin McKay, demonstrates the rich body of material available that was previously unknown to historians.\textsuperscript{43}

For the most part, the existing historiography on Canadian socialism is trapped within either western-exceptionalist or pan-Canadian models. The first overemphasizes the peculiarity and centrality of the West, particularly British Columbia, which is taken to be an “industrial frontier” generating aberrant political patterns. The second disregards regional variations altogether, attributing to Canada as a whole patterns of proletarian politics that were actually unevenly developed across the country.\textsuperscript{44} The twin cities, which were neither “eastern” nor “western,” and culturally and economically unusual within Canada, generated patterns of socialism related to but distinct from those documented in other areas. The ‘regional’ approach to Lakehead socialism requires both the application of general models of socialist development and a rigorous and skeptical appraisal of their purchase on regional patterns. Among the most crucial of these patterns were those woven by patterns of ethnic identification.

Historian Brent F. Scollie, for example, suggests that “[the Lakehead], geographically and historically, is linked to both east and west… it does not fit into any

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{43} See Ian McKay’s collection of writings by Colin McKay in \textit{For a Working-Class Culture in Canada: A Selection of Colin McKay’s Writings on Sociology and Political Economy, 1897-1939} (St. John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1996).

\textsuperscript{44} A. Ross McCormack, for example, has argued that socialism was initially a western phenomenon because of that region’s “exceptional attributes.” He suggests that as a result “Canadian Socialism came of age in British Columbia. In the first years of the twentieth century, fledgling socialist organizations emerged across the country, but BC became the dynamic centre of the movement.” See McCormack, 18.
\end{footnotesize}
of the historical models, Western Canadian or Ontarian. Western historians stop at the
Manitoba border; Ontario historians necessarily concentrate on the populated south with
the odd excursion into the near North of Georgian Bay, Sudbury and Cobalt. Thunder
Bay District is terra incognita to most Canadians, remote and out of mind." Similarly,
Anthony Rasporich has argued, “in what is perhaps the most-isolated political region
along the mainline of the Canadian settlement, it is tempting to make liberal-frontierist
assumptions about the unique forest-born democracy, or in Marxian terms, about
northwestern Ontario exceptionalism, but to do so would ignore the central facts of
Canadian and North American history.”

As Edward P. Johanningsmeier’s work on the American labour movement
demonstrates, Lakehead and Canadian leftists were hardly unique in their many
ideological shifts. Ideological transformation was a common occurrence amongst
socialists during the early twentieth century. Recently, however, historian Ian McKay
has suggested three distinct formations that delineate certain epochs that overlap the
period explored in this work. The first, from roughly 1900 to 1920, was “shaped
pivotal by the transition from competitive to monopoly capitalism and by the rise of the
theory of evolution.” The underlying the activities of socialists during this period, he

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48 See Ian McKay, Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada’s Left History (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2005), 145-218 and his “For a New Kind of History: A Reconnaissance of 100 Years of Canadian Socialism” Labour/Le Travail 46 (Fall 2000): 69-125. This edition of the journal has also been reprinted as Labouring The Canadian Millennium: Writings on Work and Workers, History and Historiography, edited by Bryan Palmer (St. John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 2000).
contends, were focused on education “in the light of evolution’s political message.” McKay argues, adopted revolution as its “key word.” Historians have described this period as one where “revolutionaries emerged from the labour-union movements of the advanced capitalist countries to demand the inclusion of economic organization and action as an integral part of the socialist revolution.” The pivotal point of this period was the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) and its role as the first ‘real party’ of the Canadian left that went beyond mere pretenses of being a pan-national organization. The third formation is largely defined by the attempt by leftists to rework the existing bourgeois state, implementing new plans for social well-being without positioning these within a strategy for a more comprehensive revolution. According to McKay, this formation “gradually emerged from 1932 to 1935 and attained a hegemony on the left in the 1940s.” Its most notable manifestation was the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation.

As this study will demonstrate, while members of various ethnic communities at the Lakehead did often join forces and fight for common goals, ideological and ethnic differences, whether perceived, invented, or real, assure that pan-national generalizations

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49 McKay, “For a New Kind of History,” 81 and 82. For a discussion of the first formation, see also McKay, Rebels, Reds, Radicals, 145-155.
50 McKay, “For a New Kind of History,” 87. For a discussion of the second formation, see also McKay, Rebels, Reds, Radicals, 155-169.
52 McKay, “For a New Kind of History,” 95. Keeping in mind McKay’s caution that these divisions can easily lead to merely repeating the “older paradigms of socialism,” this study moves forward on the belief that they are correct.
about socialists and their organizations are problematic. If each of the formations of twentieth-century Canadian socialism did indeed take shape in the Lakehead, none of them did so in “pure” form. Each was significantly affected by the region’s unique cultural and economic characteristics. Moreover, each interacted with a stratified community with many different voices and visions about society and politics. The Lakehead provides us with an unrivalled laboratory in which to watch the ways in which the three major articulations of the socialist idea interacted with a dynamic and divided region.53

By centering my analysis on the diversity of voices and visions at the Lakehead, my study will further differentiate itself from existing works. In many respects, this study will continue the debate that has raged in labour history over the primacy of class and, within the Canadian context, the notion that working-class consciousness developed and existed despite internal division.54 This has often taken the form of work exploring such issues as gender, regionalism, and, of particular importance to this study, ethnicity.55

53 Thomas Dunk, for instance, has argued that working-class men in Thunder Bay actively construct sets of meaning and values in opposition to what they see as the dominant culture. See It’s a Working Man’s Town: Male Working Class Culture (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991; reprint 1994).
“If region for historians has been a major factor dividing Canadian workers,” Gregory Kealey points out, “then ethnicity has been another.”56 Ian Radforth likewise has argued, “During the first half of the twentieth century a large proportion of activists in Canada’s labour movement and left-wing parties were immigrants, many of them ‘foreigners’ from continental Europe. Jewish, Ukrainian, and Finnish immigrant groups provided leaders and the vast majority of recruits for the Communist Party of Canada… in the interwar period.”57 The important role of immigrant communities within the socialist movement is not a new concept. Norman Penner, for instance, recognized in 1988 the important role they played in spreading the revolutionary spirit from Europe to North America.58 So too have Donald Avery and William Rodney in their studies of the period under examination in this work.59

Recent scholarship suggests that any study of early Canadian socialism, and the exploration of power struggles inherent in such a work, must examine the important role played by socialists from a variety of perspectives. This study assumes that any investigation of socialism cannot be explored solely through a class lens. As Marcel van der Linden and Lex Heerma van Voss have suggested, the scholarship of the 1980s and 1990s “provoked questions as to whether working-class solidarity was in fact self-

56 Kealey, Workers and Canadian History, 112.
57 Ian Radforth, “Finnish Radicalism and Labour Activism in Northern Ontario Woods,” in A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s-1960s, ed. Franca Iacovetta with Paula Draper and Robert Ventresca (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 293. As his notes indicate, Radforth is in fact building upon the work of Donald Avery.
58 Norman Penner, Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond (Toronto: Methuen, 1988).
59 See Avery, ‘Dangerous Foreigners’ and Rodney, Soldiers of the International.
evidently a logical phenomenon.” As they remarked, “women’s and ethnic history made clear that workers were not only wage-earners with specific occupational and class interests, but also had other identities, including gendered and religious identities. Reality could no longer be reduced to class struggle.” As this study will demonstrate, the presence of so many Finnish, Ukrainian, and Italian workers added an “ethnic” dimension to the ever-changing nature and characteristic of socialism at the Lakehead. In many respects, underneath the class conflict of the early twentieth century was a more pronounced interclass turmoil with its distinguishing feature being ethnic difference rather than material interests.

Much as anthropologist Vron Ware understands “race to be a socially constructed category with absolutely no basis in biology,” so does my study understand that the closely-related idea of ‘ethnicity’ is similarly constructed and owes much to how people are recognized by others. With such a wide variety of peoples from different parts of the

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61 Vron Ware in her classic study *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* comments that her book is “predicated on a recognition that to be white and female is to occupy a social category that is inescapably racialized as well as gendered. It is not about being a white woman, it is about being thought of as a white woman.” Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (New York: Verso, 1992; reprinted 1993, 1996), xii. For more on the treatment of the issues of “ethnicity” in Canadian history, see J. Dahlie and T. Fernando, ed. *Ethnicity, Power and Politics* (Toronto: Methuen Publishing, 1981) and Robert Harney, “Ethnicity and Neighbourhoods,” in *Gathering Place: People and Neighbourhoods in Toronto* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1985), 1-23. The Canadian Historical Association has also produced two short works on the subject. See Franca Iacovetta, *The Writing of English-Canadian Immigrant History* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1997) and John Zucchi, *A History of Ethnic Enclaves in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 2007).
world, many of whom themselves were from different regions of the same nation states, their experiences at the Lakehead produced, defined, and gave language to the nature of their relationship with one another. Ethnicity refers, then, not to a biological substrate but to a cultural production. In the twin cities, it was often tied to language usage, phenotypical appearance, and length of time in the country: the non-English speaking, darker-appearing and more recently-arrived “Finns” were considered to be radically different from, and in many treatments inferior to, the English-speaking, fairer and more settled “Anglo-Saxons.” Ethnicity arose from the play of such differences, arbitrary as they often were; and once a particular category had been solidified – ‘the Finns,’ ‘the Galicians,’ ‘the Indians’ – it was not easily questioned or replaced, even in the face of evidence that all such designated groups were internally differentiated, complexly demarcated and fluid over time.

By the very nature of the regional economy and its historical immigration trends, all works on Northern Ontario must deal with the issue of ethnicity. The works of Ian Radforth and Varpu Lindström have established that within the rural areas, in particular regions involved in the lumber industry, immigrants played important social, cultural, and political roles. Anthony Rasporich’s examination of the role of ethnicity in local politics, for example, demonstrates that “ethnicity has been a salient feature of Lakehead politics in the twentieth century.” The work of Jean Morrison, upon which this study builds, has established the central place of ethnicity within labour relations in the

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region. Recognized by many is the fact that the history of present day Thunder Bay is a construction of a multitude of different “peoples” whose united stories form a cohesive narrative. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, between 32 and 35 percent of the population in Port Arthur and Fort William were non-English speaking immigrants. In 1929 alone the figures were close to 40% of the total population in both cities. While these populations were centred in neighborhoods often treated like “ghettos” in the South end of Port Arthur and the East end and Westfort areas of Fort William, their influence extended well beyond them.

One of the central goals of this study, then, is to explore how ethnic diversity at the Lakehead influenced the nature, structure, and characteristics of the region’s socialist organizations between 1900 and 1935.

My study seeks to complement Ivan Avakumovic’s observation that the Canadian left was historically hampered through its

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64 See those works by Morrison already noted in this chapter. All of these works build upon her Master of Arts thesis, “Community in Conflict.” This work is currently being revised and updated for publication by the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society.

65 See, for example, Polyphony 9:2 (1987). This special edition edited by Antonio Pucci and John Potestio explored “Thunder Bay’s People.” See also Anthony W. Rasporich’s examination of the role of ethnicity in local politics. “Twin City Ethopolitics: Urban Rivalry, Ethnic Radicalism and Assimilation in the Lakehead, 1900-1970,” Urban History Review / Revue d’histoire urbaine 18:3 (February 1990): 210-230. This study, as have all of the works on the region, though, has merely built upon Avery’s ‘Dangerous Foreigners.’ Despite nearly three decades old, it remains the seminal examination of the influence of immigrant workers on both the Canadian economy and on Canadian labour and socialist organizations.

66 These percentages are based on total populations of 15,634 in Port Arthur and 22,800 in Fort William. Rasporich, “Ethnicity in Lakehead Politics 1900-1930,” 61-62.

67 The term “ethnic” will be used to describe non-English and non-French Canadian residents. Recognizing that English and French are themselves “ethnic,” within Canadian society those perceived to be outside of this group have been in the main sources used for this study referred to as such. Avery’s ’Dangerous Foreigners’, for example, demonstrates the stigmatization that occurred. For more on the “Anglo” or “English” ethnicity in Canada, see A.B. Anderson, “’The Invisible Minority’ In Canada: In Search of the Anglo-Canadian Ethnic Group,” Canadian Ethnic Studies Association Bulletin 9(3):1 (1982): 17-18 and R. McCormack, “Cloth Caps and Jobs: The Ethnicity of English Immigrants in Canada 1900-1914,” in Ethnicity, Power and Politics, 38.
inability to speak to French Canadians, rural Ontarians and most Maritimers, with close attention to its attempts to address other, principally ethnic divisions. Ethnicity both strengthened and weakened the left. It strengthened it by creating the cultural conditions under which left-wing ideas could be brought to groups culturally marginalized within the hegemonic cultural order, wherein they served as ways to understand and reshape the oppressive conditions of everyday life. It allowed radical ideas to go beyond their working-class bases into different socio-economic strata. Yet, it also weakened the left, because each ethnic group, in the relative “privacy” of its language, was likely to develop its own distinctive vocabulary of socialism. Moreover, those with superior positions in the game of ethnicity were almost inevitably bound to defend their relative privileges against those who were marked out as inferior, at the cost of a more fully-fledged solidarity.

The Lakehead legacy was one in which socialist solidarity was always both intensified and qualified by ethnicity. A sense of ethnic identification and protests against ethnic discrimination fuelled many Lakehead leftists, particularly the region’s many Finns and Ukrainians. Yet ethnic feelings also permeated the ranks of the Anglo-Saxon labour aristocracy, from which the Finns were largely excluded, and intensified its drive to circumvent radicalism with forms of conventional trade unionism or political centrisnm. As will become apparent, at the Lakehead ethnicity both strengthened and weakened socialist organizations. If working class radicalism grew to almost unprecedented levels in the Lakehead – the region became the epicentre of the CPC – it also sparked unrivalled levels of frustration. In this sense, the statue of Lenin in Petrozavodsk, marginal to this

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story in one sense, can stand as one of its central symbols in another. Many of the Finns who built the statue did so out of their heightened sense of revolutionary activism. Yet, they built it thousands of miles away from Canada because they had come to believe that left politics in Canada itself was a hopeless endeavour. Stymied by factional infighting, labour-aristocratic opposition, and police repression, among other things, such activists as Aate Pitkanen, a well-known member of the Port Arthur District Young Communist League, would see in Soviet Karelia their only chance to have an active role in a socialist society.

Socialist movements necessarily combine social, cultural and political work. Intrinsically committed to the fundamental restructuring of society, they necessarily recognize both the identities of individuals and those of the groups to which they belong. In a culturally heterogeneous terrain, a successful socialist movement will recognize the depth and tenacity of various forms of identity. It will struggle to articulate them to a more overarching project, one which challenges the hierarchies and inequalities inherent in the capitalist system. In the early twentieth-century period covered by this thesis, the ideology of multiculturalism was unavailable as a way of thinking through such problems.

In essence, the largely Anglo-Saxon-dominated labour movement, and even, paradoxically, a socialist movement made up disproportionately of recent immigrants, lacked the conceptual and political tools to address, let alone resolve, the problems raised by ethnic diversity and hierarchy. If at times this incapacity took the form of ethnic prejudice and exclusivism, at many others it simply assumed the unconscious, day-by-
day repetition of the “commonsense” of the surrounding Canadian liberal order.\textsuperscript{69} If any rigorous notion of “multiculturalism” requires (explicitly or implicitly) a “politics of recognition” – one which, philosopher Charles Taylor argues, must “recognize the equal value of different cultures” and not only be allowed to survive, “but acknowledge their worth” – the historian of Lakehead leftism often confronts the systemic misrecognition of the Other in the region.\textsuperscript{70}

The emphasis this thesis necessarily places on ethnicity sets it apart from the work of those Marxists who have tended to treat ethnicity as “of only passing interest,” in the words of Peter Vasiliadis.\textsuperscript{71} Rather, this study follows the lead of such outstanding scholars as Ruth Frager. As she argues, “Whereas many scholars have contended that intense ethnic identity has generally precluded the emergence of strong class consciousness among early twentieth-century immigrant workers in Canada and the United States, others have emphasized historical situations where key groups of immigrant workers have simultaneously displayed deep class consciousness and a deep commitment to ethnic identity.”\textsuperscript{72} It is these concepts that forms a foundation to this

\textsuperscript{69} For more on the concept of Canada as a project of liberal order, see Ian McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History,” \textit{Canadian Historical Review} 81:3 (September 2000): 617-645. For the classic exploration of the rise of multiculturalism in Canadian society, see Howard Palmer, \textit{Immigration and the Rise of Multiculturalism} (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing, 1975).


\textsuperscript{72} Ruth A. Frager, \textit{Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour
study. I argue that socialist organizations during the first three decades of the twentieth century in fact “turned on the need” for support from those ethnic groups which under the liberal order had been unable to achieve recognition.

“The Proletarian Prometheus” is organized into three sections, each chronicling a distinct phase in the early history of socialism at the Lakehead. Part one, “The Roots of Revolution,” comprises the first three chapters and explores the period between the establishment of the first socialist organizations in the region in 1902 and the depression that hit the Lakehead shortly before the First World War. Building upon the work of Jean Morrison, this section takes to heart her observation that the history of labour at the Lakehead “is largely a history of conflict, not only with business and management but also within labour’s own ranks.”


Chapter two explores the period from the formation of the first known socialist party in the region to the internal split of the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC). It also discusses the establishment of the Social Democratic Party of Canada (SDPC) and its relationship with Independent Labour politics shortly before the First World War. Surprisingly, while many works mention and even briefly discuss the SDPC, no monograph on the party exists. This chapter provides the regional history of the organization and explains the internal turmoil that gripped it.

Chapter three outlines the challenges and changes socialists faced during the war years. It begins with the onset of the conflict and ends shortly after the Russian Revolution. The events in Russia, as Ian McKay claims, irrevocably altered the socialist landscape at the Lakehead. This chapter examines how socialists navigated the war years and how their journey, in turn, began to alter the nature and characteristics of socialism in the region.

Part two of this study, “From Winnipeg to the Workers’ Unity League,” comprises chapters four through eight and bridges the period between the Russian Revolution and the onset of the depression in 1929. This period was marked by a profound change in the nature of socialism at the Lakehead. The evolutionary-based socialism that marked the period before the First World War was replaced by a more revolutionary brand inspired and, in many respects, dictated by the events in Russia following the October revolution. However, as Ian McKay has suggested, when exploring this period “there is no point in looking for homogeneity.” Agreeing with Donald Avery that the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 caused immense concern for Canadian authorities,

these chapters also explore Ian Angus’s argument that “enthusiasm for the Russian Revolution was universal in the Canadian Left.”74

Most works on the history of the left in Canada consider the Winnipeg General Strike as the significant moment in the history of the Canadian left. The year 1919 has taken on a mythical role in the struggle of labouring peoples from coast to coast. It has been used as the centerpiece to a number of highly influential discussions and theories about the nature of radicalism and its development within Canada. However, chapter four considers why workers at the Lakehead, despite considerable unrest, did not participate in sympathy strikes in support of their fellow workers in Winnipeg.

My fifth chapter traces the somewhat erratic existence of the One Big Union (OBU) and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) at the Lakehead and explores their relationship with each other and their membership. The One Big Union, despite being a “flash-in-the-pan,” was the first “national” organization to embrace both revolutionary socialism and industrial unionism. Its rise and fall marked a turning point in the formation of the left in the Lakehead and in Canada.75

Chapters six to eight are essentially an exploration of the establishment and eventual predominance (although not complete left hegemony) of the CPC at the Lakehead during the 1920s. Ian Angus, for instance, in his Canadian Bolsheviks suggests that 1919 signaled the end of the SPC and SDPC and ushered in a new era of left organization in the formation of the CPC.76 Larry Peterson further argues that

75 See, for example, Dave Adams, “1919 in Canada: The Birth of a New Left,” Socialist Worker (December-January 1991).
76 Ian Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks (Montreal: Vanguard Publications, 1981), 61-62. Similarly,
“communist hegemony over left-wing radicalism became so great that by the 1930s and 1940s, when many of the issues of 1917-20 were once more on the agenda, there were few if any alternatives to communism among revolutionary socialists… the diversity of the years 1917-20 had been replaced by the unity of a single revolutionary movement.”

This section seeks to complicate Ivan Avakumovic’s argument that immigrants, through their unwillingness to assimilate to the Canadian mainstream, prevented the CPC from flourishing. In many ways, the evidence suggests that Lakehead Communism flourished precisely because of the Finnish factor – with the Finns taking the lead not only in party-building but also in participating in the many other fronts of Communist activity, from union-building to cultural struggles. Yet it also suggests that, in part because of entrenched if unacknowledged Anglo-centrism, and in larger part because of the internal political dynamics of the international Communist movement, it was difficult to work such achievements into a more generalized, consistent and persistent radical movement. In some respects, the Communists developed a massive base in the Lakehead, but lacked the theoretical or political tools with which to build upon, or even to safeguard, it. As chapter six reveals, they were also challenged within this base by other forms of revolutionary socialism, ones associated with syndicalism especially, which severely tested the organizational capacities and ideological suppleness of the CPC, while chapters seven and eight document the extreme difficulties engendered by the Party’s

Adam Kawecki’s exploration of the genesis of socialism in Canada and the origins of the communist party suggests that it was the result of organic growth rather than a divisive split. See “Canadian Socialism and the Origin of the Communist Party of Canada” (MA thesis, McMaster University, 1982).

implementation of Stalin’s “Bolshevization” Plan.”

The final section of this study, “The Great Depression and the Third Period,” comprises chapters nine and ten and examines the first five years of what is commonly referred to today as the Great Depression. The CPC underwent another change from favoring co-operation and a “united front” to organizing revolutionary unions of its own in keeping with the Communist International’s declaration that capitalism had entered the Third Period and revolutionary change was imminent. These chapters demonstrate that despite massive demonstrations and the outward appearance of growing solidarity, the Communist movement became fractured along ethnic lines and tensions between organizations, particularly between the CPC and IWW, hampered the organization and mobilization of workers.

Chapter eleven concludes this work with a brief overview of the events of 1935. The election of 1935 was a pivotal moment in the history of Canada, the Lakehead, and the Canadian left. Internationally, the Communist International adopted that year a strategy known as the Popular Front. By doing so, it had decided to “drop its harsh critique of social democrats” and instead “build alliances with them (and other parties)” in an attempt to stem the spread of fascism. Nationally, the election swept into power William Lyon Mackenzie King’s Liberals and ushered in a new era in federal politics.

While the Liberals swept both the ridings encompassing Port Arthur and Fort William,

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78 McKay, “For a New Kind of History” 95.
79 For more on this period, see John Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class during the Great Depression: The Workers’ Unity League, 1903-1936” (Ph.D. diss., Dalhousie University, 1984); “Does the International Labour Movement need Salvaging? Communism, Labourism and the Canadian Trade Unions, 1921-1928,” Labour/Le Travail, 41 (Spring 1998) and “‘Starve, Be Damned!’: Communists and Canada’s Urban Unemployed, 1929-1939,” Canadian Historical Review, 79:3 (September 1998).
the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) in its first federal election drew support away from candidates supporting the CPC. From this point forward, none of the socialist organizations in the region would again threaten the CCF on the left for political prominence.\footnote{“Federal Election Results in Fort William and Port Arthur, 1917-1940” in Piovesana, \textit{Robert J. Manion: Member of Parliament for Fort William, 1917-1935}, 33-34. A.E. Smith had also been the Port Arthur candidate in the 1925 and 1926 federal elections under the banner of the Canadian Labour Party.} The year 1935 is also a turning point because of the establishment of the Congress for Industrial Organization (CIO) and the end of the Workers’ Unity League.\footnote{Irving Abella’s \textit{Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist Party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour, 1935-1956} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973) remains the most thorough look at the activities of the CIO and labour’s relationship with the Communist Party of Canada and the fledgling CCF.} The formation of the Lumber and Sawmill Workers’ Union to replace the Lumber Workers Industrial Union of Canada and the near collapse of the IWW Lumber Workers’ Industrial Union of Canada ended the existence of powerful revolutionary unions in the region.

This is a thesis primarily focused on institutions, especially parties and unions, with close attention to the ideas and principles championed by these organizations and the ways in which they challenged or confirmed underlying social and cultural patterns. Many fascinating cultural topics and personal biographies lie outside its scope. This somewhat traditional focus can be justified with particular force in the case of the Lakehead, because no other study has sought to bring this institutional history together, and also because only on the basis of such a solid framework can more far-ranging theoretical and ideological analyses be successfully undertaken.

A final note on sources: this study benefits from the use of a number of under-explored archival treasures. The material found in the Lakehead University Archives and
the Library and Archives Canada have provided me with one of the fullest collections of Communist and Wobbly material in North America. Ironically, this study suffers from a lack of regional material. The periodic raids by police on the offices of the socialist organizations examined and the subsequent destruction of what was confiscated combined with the failure of labour organizations to keep their records has left little to work with. The one exception, however, are the records of the Canadan Teollisuusunianistien Kanatuskiitto (Support League for Canadian Industrial Unionists). Housed in the Lakehead University Archives, the material within is not limited to Northwestern Ontario. It contains a significant amount of correspondence to American support circles and the General Executive Branch in Chicago. Although scholars such as Ian Radforth and Peter Campbell have surveyed this collection in the past, their works were focused not on the particulars of the region, but larger national questions.

Perhaps the most exciting new sources reflected in this study come from the Comintern fonds in Ottawa. While the CPC fonds have been explored by historians in the past, the new materials from Moscow allow for a much more in-depth study of the ways in which the International, CPC executive, and local Communists interacted in the 1920s and 1930s. Little used to date by historians, these documents have greatly enriched this thesis.

This study is in no way a definitive history of socialism at the Lakehead or Northwestern Ontario. The nature and the scope of the project has not allowed for as thorough a discussion of a number of elements such as gender relations and the role of

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First Nations. Much more work still needs to be done in the years to come by myself and other historians. However, just as the work of Ian McKay and Suzanne Morton on the labour revolt in the Maritimes between 1919 and 1920 attempts to bring it back into the collective memory of that region, so too does this study of socialist organization at the Lakehead between 1900 and 1935 aim to remember its contested and complicated legacy for the benefit of a new generation of activists and scholars.84

PART 1

The Roots of Revolution?
At the turn of the twentieth century, many middle-class men in Port Arthur and Fort William imagined their communities to be forward-looking towns, perhaps even the future metropoles of a booming North.¹ Their impressions were understandable. The twin cities were growing. They were at the centre of the transshipment of goods in and out of the North. The export of the rapidly-expanding wheat harvest depended upon them. Their industries and businesses were expanding. In addition, with this economic growth came a social transformation, as thousands of immigrants came to the Lakehead. The twin cities acquired all the accoutrements of North American modernity – a growing culture of consumption, an urban cityscape, up-to-date utilities. One might have also predicted the emergence of a strong and unified labour movement. Yet, here there were regional peculiarities that told against any such development. As Anthony Rasporich has provocatively remarked, “the Lakehead labour movement was born divided.”²

Some, Martin Robin in particular, have seen the roots of this division in a conflict between traditional craft unions and a growing socialist element more at home among the unskilled workers and immigrants – one, that is, of “Labourism vs. Socialism.”³ The first participated in politics either as part of the Liberal Party’s “left-wing” or within “a semi-

¹ For example, local newspapers suggested that, “like Chicago, Port Arthur was located both as to water and railway communications to become the national distribution point of this country and the metropolis of the West.” See Port Arthur Daily-News (hereafter PADN), 21 March 1906).
³ See Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 1880-1930 (Kingston: Industrial Relations Centre, 1968), 79-91. This notion is shared in the work of Craig Heron. See, for example, The Canadian Labour Movement: A Short History (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1989), 47.
independent Liberal-Labour, or ‘Lib-Lab,’ position.” The second generated new movements and parties that sought to rally workers against such class alliances. As Robin remarks: “there flourished in the years preceding the war a multiplicity of radical sects competing for the labour vote and official endorsement of organized labour.”

This chapter explores the relationship between labourites and socialists at the Lakehead between 1900 and 1914. It argues that, added to this classic tension between skilled trades and other workers, was the unavoidable question of ethnic differences. The Finns in particular challenged the contours of the Lakehead left. As one Finnish socialist observed about the socialist organizations in his community, “the name and direction was changed several times, always according to advancements made in the labour movement. An attempt was made, as is often said, to stay abreast of the times.” As in the rest of Canada, many organizations claiming to be socialist in nature appeared and disappeared. Each of these organizations claimed to understand Marx better than their competition, and they each had a platform from which their members proselytized to any who would listen. Those that lasted longer than a few months, the typical lifespan for the majority of organizations, even had notions of pan-national grandeur.

Although the twin cities of Port Arthur and Fort William may have been undergoing an economic expansion, when American Federation of Labor (AFL) organizer Harry Bryan arrived at the Lakehead in 1902 he found a region practically devoid of labour and socialist organizations. True, the employees of the Canadian

4 Heron, The Canadian Labour Movement, 47.
5 Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 104.
Northern Railway and the Canadian Pacific Railway had branches of their national bodies in Port Arthur and Fort William and local Finnish carpenters had established a union, but these largely looked after their own and concerned themselves little with the larger social questions. As a result, “industrial unionism remained an ideal for progressive-minded labour leaders, as did the goal of organizing the unskilled.”

Described by historian Bruce Muirhead as “a man of fanatical conviction,” Bryan exemplified an era that would see the creation of a vibrant and diverse socialist culture in the region. Enamored by the philosophy behind the Knights of Labor, he acted as an organizer for them during the late 1870s and 1880s in St. Thomas, Ontario. As Muirhead suggests, Bryan’s activities with the Knights of Labor ultimately “anticipated what would be called the Social Gospel Movement, in harmony with Bryan’s strong Methodist upbringing and radical ideology.” It was these characteristics, Muirhead continues, that put Bryan “considerably to the left of mainstream Canadian society and Canadian

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7 Jean Morrison, “The Organization of Labour at Thunder Bay,” in Thunder Bay, From Rivalry to Unity, ed., Thorold J. Tronrud and A. Ernest Epp (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1995), 122. The United Brotherhood of Railway Employees were crushed between Winnipeg and Port Arthur following the suppression of UBRE-led strikes in 1902. Nothing is known about this early Finnish carpenters’ union. For more on the topic, see Lakehead University Archives (hereafter LUA), Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society, 1870-1970 (hereafter TBFCHS), B, 7, 30, Item 2, Tape 4, Interview with Einar Nordstrom, 15 and 19 March, 2 April, 7 May 1979.


9 For more on the Knights of Labor, see Gregory S. Kealey and Bryan Palmer, Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario, 1880-1900 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
Methodism.” Bryan left for the United States in the early 1880s and soon befriended Samuel Gompers and Eugene Debs. By the turn of the twentieth century, he had been a successful organizer in the United States for the AFL. Bryan’s position as a union leader and his role in a number of prominent strikes in Cleveland eventually led to his being blacklisted by most employers. He and his family had no choice but to leave. With no other prospects, Bryan was convinced by the AFL leadership to return to Canada to organize workers at the Lakehead.

One may reasonably speculate that he was drawn by the region’s extraordinary growth rates at the turn of the century. Its location at the head of Lake Superior, combined with nearby natural resources and the phenomenal expansion of the Canadian wheat economy, made Lakehead a magnet for immigrants. Within the cities the railway yards, coal docks, grain elevators, and ship building yards provided the bulk of the employment for labourers (both skilled and unskilled) and were the driving force of the

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11 For more Bryan’s relationship with Gompers, see Morrison, “Community in Conflict,” 28. Her sources are the Gompers Letterbooks held at the Library of Congress. For more on Gompers in Canada, see Robert H. Babcock’s *Gompers in Canada: a study in American continentalism before the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974) and his much more useful PhD dissertation “The A.F.L. in Canada, 1896-1908: A Study in American Labor Imperialism” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1970). It was in Cleveland while working for the AFL that Bryan organized and later became the president of the Street Railwaymen’s Union and a regional organizer for the federation. One of Bryan’s most memorable moments while in Cleveland was meeting Booker T. Washington. Washington spoke at a convention Bryan organized between local union leaders, employers, and city officials. After his speech and the photographs taken, carriages took all the officials and some union men from the hall. All, that is, except Washington who was denied entry. Bryan and the other organizers went over and apologized to Washington for his treatment. Washington told Bryan that he was used to it and he was not angry, he only pitied them. Bryan, Nordstrom recalled, responded, “that workers have the same problems as coloured people of the United States, but we are more numerous and can make ourselves heard as we do not have to contend with race prejudice.” See LUA, JMLHC, Tape 5, Harry Bryan Reminiscences, 1972.
regional economy until the 1920s when pulp and paper mills would join the mix. The vast majority of workers in these occupations when Bryan arrived belonged to no union.

Bryan’s declaration to the editor of the Fort William Times-Journal in 1903 that he was going to organize all the trades and workers into the AFL was more than bluster. The region presented him with the type of challenge he craved. “The year 1903,” according to Jean Morrison, “would herald many other firsts for labour: the first strikes organized and settled locally, a publicly acclaimed first labour day parade, and the first labour council, a Central Labour Union, affiliated to the American Federation of Labor.” Utilizing all the skills acquired working for the American labour movement, in a few short years Bryan established perhaps as many as 22 unions in Port Arthur and Fort William.

Bryan’s dedication to the political movement was as important as the unions he helped establish. Ideologically, Bryan did not blame capitalists for the plight of workers. He believed the system needed to be changed and warned local workers that the capitalists were as much victims as workers. For this reason, he argued, as long as capitalists were willing to change they should be given a chance to co-operate. This manifested itself in a belief in municipal ownership of public services and utilities.

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14 Morrison, “The Organization of Labour at Thunder Bay,” 121 and FWDTJ, 12 October 1903.
15 Bruce Muirhead points out that this number has been disputed by Jean Morrison and others. See his “Harry Bryan,” 37, fn. 2 for further information.
16 As Jean Morrison has suggested, “along with considerable oratorical and organizational skills, Bryan brought with him the Debsian brand of socialism, a non-dogmatic blend of Marxism, populism and Christian socialism.” See Morrison, “Community and Conflict,” 29.
18 For more on the street-railway system, see F.B. Scollie, “The Creation of the Port Arthur Street
Anthony Rasporich and Thorold J. Tronrud have suggested, “to be an enemy of municipal ownership was political death in either town.”\(^{19}\) As Steven High remarks, the extent of municipal ownership in Port Arthur was virtually unequalled (perhaps with the exception of Fort William) in North America.\(^{20}\)

The success of a 1902 referendum on municipally-controlled telephone systems did not reflect, however, a working class victory.\(^{21}\) Conservative Dr. T.S.T. Smellie, for instance, ran on a campaign during the 1902 provincial election on the “protection of the rights and interests of the people and the province from greedy and rapacious corporations.”\(^{22}\) His electoral success demonstrated that the citizens of Fort William and Port Arthur were willing to vote in favour of public ownership of the telephone system,

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\(^{21}\) *FWDTJ*, 15 May 1902.

\(^{22}\) *FWDTJ*, 24 April 1902.
but had not embraced the working class candidates.\textsuperscript{23} Within the cities of Port Arthur and Fort William, residents, while constantly extracting what they could from the metropolis, had adopted “the tactic of voting, in the main, for the party in power at both the federal and provincial levels.” As Weller points out, this was in stark contrast to the “conventional wisdom about the reaction of voters in many provincial and supraprovincial hinterland regions, who are normally regarded as likely to vote for opposition or third parties as a means of remedying their lot.”\textsuperscript{24}

Not surprisingly, Bell Telephone, unhappy with the situation, began to pressure its employees and those of the CPR to support its services rather than those offered by the towns. However, at a huge public meeting chaired by Louis Peltier, former National Chairman of the Order of Railway Conductors, Bryan revealed a plot by Bell Telephone to discredit the whole concept of municipal ownership. It may well have led to his blacklisting and an interruption in his union organizing activities. Bryan left with his family soon after to find work in the outlying regions of the District.\textsuperscript{25}


\textsuperscript{25} For more on the Bell Telephone incident, see Morrison, “Community in Conflict,” 40-46. For a perspective on why Bryan was blacklisted, see LUA, JMLHC, Tape 5, Harry Bryan Reminiscences, 1972.
Bryan’s treatment incensed many of those in Port Arthur and Fort William who, already dissatisfied with how politicians and local labour leaders in the twin cities had handled the telephone scandal, had begun to search for an alternative. Under the guidance of E.C. Jordan, a branch of the Canadian Socialist League (CSL) was formed in Port Arthur shortly after the provincial election was called in 1904. Scholars differ in their opinion about the nature of the CSL. Martin Robin, for instance, argues that the CSL advertised “a mild and palatable Christian Socialism… [that was] far removed from the harsh, ranting doctrinaire-marxism of the DeLeonites.”

Norman Penner describes it as subscribing to “various forms of Christian socialism, Henry George-ism, Utopian socialism based on Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*, and labourism.” Essentially, the CSL was a “utopian socialism of evolution” that sought societal changes through combating contemporary issues rather than, Ross Johnson argues, awaiting Marx’s “great social revolution.”

In his forthcoming history of the left in Canada between 1890 and 1920, Ian McKay provides an alternative, and more substantiated, view of the CSL. He argues that the CSL in 1904 combined middle-of-the-road liberals and Christian socialists with up-and-coming Marxists. He contends that the SPC grew out of the CSL as many Marxist militants could already be found within its ranks.

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In Ontario, the CSL became the Ontario Socialist League in 1902 and then the Ontario Socialist Party in 1903, to better reflect the group’s intention of contesting elections. Its 1903 convention drew delegates from across the province, with Jordan representing socialists in both Port Arthur and Fort William. As Martin Robin notes, those in attendance decided upon a platform accepting, as ‘democratic’ and therefore ‘socialist,’ “the reform measures of direct legislation, proportional representation, public ownership of public utilities but recognized the fact that ‘when administered by a capitalist government they cannot be but palliatives.’”

Considering the controversy surrounding Bryan and a growing mismanagement of the municipal telephone systems in both Port Arthur and Fort William, the OSP found a sympathetic audience in the region. The October convention itself called for delegates to be “rigidly against any fusion or alliance with any independent or so-called reform party advocating any or all these or other demands that does not include the aims and purposes” of the OSP. This automatically put them in conflict with those candidates in Port Arthur and Fort William running under the Independent Labour Party (ILP) banner and supported publicly by Bryan and the newly established Central Labour Union (CLU).

In fact, organized labour had sought to cultivate an alliance with the business community during the federal election of 1904. With backing from the CLU, railway unions, and Bryan, local Liberal Louis Peltier was selected as the ILP candidate for the

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30 Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 35.
31 Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 37. See, for quoted material, Western Clarion, 24 October 1903. For the general CSL platform, see Johnson, “No Compromise – No Political Trading,” 70-71. Johnson himself references Citizen and Country, 28 October 1899.
32 Western Clarion, 24 October 1903.
riding of Thunder Bay and Rainy River. 33 Peltier advocated “labour’s entry into electoral politics on its own behalf, a policy endorsed by the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada but denounced by the American Federation of Labor.” 34 The key plank of his 10-point platform remained municipal ownership and the protection and preservation of the right of workers to organize. 35 Although not elected, he did receive 14% of the final vote, representing organized labour’s entry into direct politics. 36

The loose coalition of unions backing Peltier and organized by Bryan under the CLU for the federal election was at best unstable. 37 Despite ties to local labour and the votes of confidence given to him by Bryan, Peltier’s close association with the Liberal Party did not endear him to all. His close relationship with Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Clifford Sifton, and railway magnates Lord Shaughnessy and James Stephenson, in particular, concerned the more radical elements in Port Arthur and Fort William. His candidacy did not elicit support from all unions in the riding and, of the nineteen listed on his manifesto, “all were from the railways with the exception of the Fort William Central Labour Union, the Teamsters, the Bartenders, and the Iron Workers.” Many opposed to Peltier reasoned that his participation in the election merely meant that two Liberal candidates were in the

34 FWDTJ, 20 January 1904 and Morrison, “The Organization of Labour at Thunder Bay,” 123. Peltier’s nomination received a boost when A.W. Puttee, elected as a Labor MP in 1901, spoke at his nomination meeting. For more on Puttee and his involvement with Independent Labour politics, see A. Ross McCormack, Reformers, Rebels & Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 79-80 and 86-87.  
35 FWDTJ, 28 October 1904.  
running. Perhaps it was for this reason that Bryan’s name was noticeably absent from the ILP platform despite his being a prominent figure at Peltier’s nomination.\(^{38}\)

By this point, others in the region had also begun to think like Jordan who, speaking to the CLU in June 1904, argued that “the worker must capture political power [directly].”\(^{39}\) Despite running no candidate, the OSP attacked Peltier and the ILP during the federal election of 1904 for what it perceived as an unholy “class alliance.”\(^{40}\) The public condemnation by the OSP did have an effect on Bryan, as, shortly after the election, he and many other like-minded workers became active members. Considering his past experiences in the United States, his growing disputes over AFL policy, and his admiration for the thoughts and ideas of Eugene Debs and his past involvement with the Socialist Party of America, Bryan’s break with the ILP is not surprising.\(^{41}\)

The OSP’s positions on issues such as wages, working conditions, and class would have appealed to him. The OSP also seemed to espouse another tenet of Marxism that, in practice, was not reflected in the existing organizations found in Port Arthur and Fort William. Unlike the craft unions and the Anglo-oriented ILP, the OSP sought to more fully unite and integrate all socialists in the region, regardless of ethnic background. Bryan had previously convinced the fledgling Finnish carpenters’ union in 1902 to join with the AFL Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners branch. In approaching the Finnish Workingmen’s Association of Port Arthur, established in 1903 and the largest workers’ organization in Northwestern Ontario, Bryan brought together the two largest ethnic

40 Morrison, “The Organization of Labour at Thunder Bay,” 122.
groups of workers to discuss the issues facing all workers in the region.\textsuperscript{42}

While Greek, Italian, Ukrainian, and Finnish workers all participated in the labour unrest and organization of unions in Fort William and Port Arthur, only the Finns had initially sought to establish workingmen’s organizations of their own. True, all ethnic groups at the Lakehead formed some type of community organization but, aside from the Italians, none was large enough or inclined to go beyond their ethnic boundary. Finnish immigrants were also much more steeped in the socialist thought spreading across Europe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Industrialization, Russification campaigns, and the commercialization of agriculture had led to a surging popularity in social democratic movements in Finland.\textsuperscript{43}

According to the available statistics, Finns who came to the Lakehead preferred Port Arthur over Fort William as the population of the latter city remained stable at approximately 3.2 to 3.7 percent of the total population.\textsuperscript{44} Finns in Port Arthur could be found living in a number of “ethnic” neighbourhoods; however, the primary area were those streets in the immediate area surrounding Bay Street where, in 1910, the Finnish Labour Temple would be constructed (see Map 2).\textsuperscript{45} The Finnish community generally consisted of Church Finns, Lutheran in denomination, and socialist Finns. These

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{42} LUA, TBFCHS, B, 7, 30, Item 2, Tape 4, Interview with Einar Nordstrom, 15 and 19 March, 2 April, 7 May 1979.  
\end{footnotes}
categories were hardly exclusive as both groups shared similar positions on many issues, temperance being one during the first years of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{46}

The Port Arthur Finnish Workingmen’s Association, \textit{Imatra \#9}, was an affiliate of the Brooklyn-based \textit{Amerikan Suomalainen Työväenliito Imatra} (the Finnish-American Workers’ League).\textsuperscript{47} Its membership drew heavily from those Finns dissatisfied with the social and political discussions in the local churches and temperance associations.\textsuperscript{48} The expressed goal of the \textit{Amerikan Suomalainen Työväenliito Imatra} was the dissemination of socialism by taking an active role in cultural, educational, and political activities.\textsuperscript{49} The Finnish socialists thus sought to compete with the \textit{Pohjankukka}, the Fort William Temperance Society, by building a more all-

Map 2: Traditional areas of Finnish habitation in Port Arthur before the Second World War

encompassing organization for the Finns in both cities.\textsuperscript{50}

The \textit{Amerikan Suomalainen Työväenliito Imatra} also embodied one of the defining characteristics of Finnish-Canadian socialism in the early twentieth century – its borderless nature. Consisting of 32 workingmen’s associations in both the United States and Canada, from its establishment \textit{Imatra} #9 was involved in supporting Finnish workers’ efforts throughout the United States.\textsuperscript{51} Internationally, \textit{Imatra} #9 helped raise funds for the Finnish franchise movement and various strikes held by workers in various Finnish cities and towns against Russian oppression. Within the first year of its existence, the association established its own hall and claimed a membership of over 130, thirty of whom were women. By 1906, this number had increased to 164.\textsuperscript{52} Although discussions over the construction of a joint hall with the much larger temperance society \textit{Uusi Yrtsy Raittiusseura} (UYR) were held throughout 1905, nothing materialized.\textsuperscript{53}

In Fort William, a similar course of events unfolded, but with some differences. By 1905, Finns in that city also established their own reading room. As the population of the community continued to grow and the influence of the \textit{Pohjankukka} decreased, Finnish socialists in Fort William began to explore establishing their own organization. In

\textsuperscript{50} Metsaranta, “The Workingmen’s Associations,” 89. This situation, Metsaranta suggests, only lasted until late 1903 when the Dufferin Street \textit{Torppa} was completed.

\textsuperscript{51} This included being a shareholder in the Finnish-American Socialist newspaper \textit{Työmies}.

\textsuperscript{52} LUA, FCC, 3, 2, Imatra #9 Minutes, “Vuosikertomous 1903” and Minutes of Imatra #9, “Vuokskertomus 1906” (Annual Report) quoted in Kouhi, “Finnish Immigrants in Thunder Bay: 1876-1914,” 27 and 29 and Varpu Lindström, \textit{Defiant Sisters: A Social History of Finnish Immigrant Women in Canada}, 2d (Beaverton: Aspasia Books, 2003), 143. While the executive was comprised of both men and women, the former held the key positions.

\textsuperscript{53} In 1905, for instance, membership in the Port Arthur Temperance Society numbered 224. See LUA, FCC, 3, 2, U.Y.R. Minutes, 2 April 1905 cited in Kouhi, “Finnish Immigrants in Thunder Bay: 1876-1914,” 25. While the UYR did attempt to evict the socialists, many Finns in Port Arthur continued to be members of both organizations. This close relationship lasted until 1909 when, due to dwindling numbers, UYR proposed joining the now much larger Imatra #9 and to the construction of a join labour temple. See LUA, FCC, 3, 2, Minutes of Imatra #9, 29 April 1909 cited in Kouhi, “Finnish Immigrants in Thunder Bay: 1876-1914,” 26.
1907, they formed their own branch of it with the blessing of *Imatra #9*. According to Marc Metsaranta, nothing exists to indicate the relationship between the two organizations and, because most of its membership also belonged to *Pohjankukka*, it was “comparatively ineffectual in the community” as socialists did not have their own home, meetings were sporadic, and membership fees (which decreased as membership dwindled) formed the only source of funds.\(^{54}\) As in Port Arthur, with the collapse of the local temperance society in 1908, the Fort William organization merged with its remaining members and took control of their hall, which they had been using since its establishment.

**Table 2: Finns in Port Arthur and Total Population, 1911-41**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Finns</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>% Finns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1,068</td>
<td>11,220</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1,566</td>
<td>14,495</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>3,252</td>
<td>19,818</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>2,943</td>
<td>24,426</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Recognizing the growing strength of Finnish socialists in the region, local union organizers in both cities began in 1904 to approach *Imatra #9* for its support during strikes. In 1905, the recently-returned Bryan, along with the OSP’s representative E.C. Jordan, actively promoted the party to Finnish socialists in both the twin cities and the outlying region. It appears that Bryan and Jordan went so far as to propose the creation of

\(^{54}\) Metsaranta, “The Workingmen’s Associations 1903-1914,” 89.
a joint Finnish-English socialist newspaper at the Lakehead – an enterprise evidently
doomed by the small number of Anglo socialists.\footnote{LUA, FCC, 3, 2, Minutes of Imatra #9, 10 July and 30 October 1904; Kouhi, “Finnish Immigrants in Thunder Bay: 1876-1914,” 28 and Pilli, The Finnish-Language Press in Canada, 34.} While no paper resulted, the Imatra #9 executive decided to allow non-Finnish socialists to attend meetings and, in 1906, accepted Jordan “as a member even though he was not a Finn.”\footnote{LUA, FCC, 3, 2, Minutes of Imatra #9, 2 December 1906 quoted in Kouhi, “Finnish Immigrants in Thunder Bay: 1876-1914,” 29.} It appears that the membership of Imatra #9 had discussed the possibility of joining the newly formed Socialist Party of Canada in October 1904.\footnote{Metsaranta, “The Workingmen’s Associations 1903-1914,” 76 and Kouhi, “Labour and Finnish Immigration to Thunder Bay: 1876-1914,” 30. For the Finnish connection to the Socialist Party of Canada, see LUA, TBFCHS, A, I, 1, 9, Varpu Lindström-Best, “The Socialist Party of Canada and The Finnish Connection, 1905-1911” (unpublished CESA Conference paper, October 1970).}

These positions put Finnish socialists at odds with many in their community and with their American parent organization. As reconstructed by such historians as Varpu Lindstrom-Best and Donald Wilson, the Finnish experience of emigration to Canada combined relatively small numbers (only about 21,494-strong in 1921, according to the Census) with high levels of politicization. Finland gained its independence from Russia as late as 6 December 1917. Before that, and for most of the previous century, the Finns were part of the autonomous Grand Duchy of Russia. In essence, Finns were fighting a national liberation struggle against Russia in the early twentieth century – a struggle which split the country into Reds and Whites, and eventually plunged it into a civil war whose repercussions, as we shall see in later chapters, were felt strongly in the Lakehead. The introduction of universal suffrage in 1906 – with Finnish women the first in Europe to win the vote – created a massive base for the Social Democrats, which became the
strongest social democratic party in Europe, paradoxically still under the tutelage of the Tsar, the “Grand Duke” of Finland. Finnish leftists in the Lakehead, a beleaguered minority in some senses, could also legitimately feel themselves to be emissaries from a land in which the socialist movement was far more developed than in Canada. From early in the twentieth century, in the temperance societies, then in the socialist halls, and then in the halls attached to the Finnish Socialist Organization, Finnish-Canadian socialism was unusually influenced by social and cultural activities centered on the halls. No matter what the state of play among rival parties and groups on the left, this “hall socialism” remained a powerful force.

The Finnish community was not ideologically homogenous. *Imatra #9*, in part, owed its existence to the ongoing conflict between religious conservatives and anti-clerical reformers within the Finnish community. Dissatisfied with the lack of political action undertaken by the parent organization, Finnish socialists in Port Arthur and Fort William actively pushed the league to play a greater role in politics and unions where Finnish populations existed. *Imatra #9* even publicly criticized the league’s newspaper, *Pohjantahi*, after it attacked the Finnish-American socialist paper *Työmies*. Whether by coincidence or in part because of Bryan and Jordan’s persuasiveness, *Imatra #9* broke from the *Amerikan Suomalainen Työväenliitto Imatra* in 1905 and acted as an independent organization for the next two years.

These changes within the Finnish socialist community occurred just as the Port Arthur branch of the OSP was established due to the merger of the CSL and the Socialist

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58 LUA, FCC, 3, 2, Minutes of Imatra #9, “*Vuosikertomus 1903,*” cited in Christine Kouhi, “Finnish Immigrants in Thunder Bay: 1876-1914,” 28. See also Minutes of Imatra #9, 27 February and 20 March 1904.
Party of British Columbia, the Revolutionary Socialist Party of British Columbia and other smaller organizations to form the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) in 1904. In reality, the joining of the two organizations meant little to members of the OSP. Unlike its counterpart in British Columbia, the OSP had been ineffectual politically and unable to garner support from the Independent Labour Party. It remains unclear how many locals joined the SPC automatically, but neither Port Arthur nor Fort William was initially among them. The official SPC position—one that was contradicted by many an SPC trade union leader—was that trade unionism at best offered palliatives to wage slavery. And SPCers were also identified with the “single-plank” platform, which precluded them from co-operating with, or even sharing platforms with, members of other political parties, even those claiming labour and left credentials.

Inspired by the creation of the SPC, Bryan invited Leo T. English, one of the Socialist Party’s leading theoreticians, to the region to speak. English, a well-known opponent of organizations structured along the lines of the British Labour Party, found a receptive audience.

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63 English’s lecture brought out 50 individuals, many of whom had supported the OSP, from both Port Arthur and Fort William. A John McKiernan told those in attendance that “their position under the present wage system was even less than that of chattel slaves” and joined English in
Bryan, and another worker named John McKiernan nonetheless were able to establish an English branch of the SPC in April 1906. They joined the three other Ontario English-language locals operating in Hamilton, Toronto, and Berlin. It appears, though, that this first branch of the SPC was short-lived, as the *Western Clarion* would later report in September 1908 the creation of Port Arthur’s only English-language branch.\(^6^4\)

Long blocked from political involvement and frustrated by the English orientation of trade unions, local Finnish workers also established a branch of the SPC in Port Arthur in 1906.\(^6^5\) The SPC provided a natural home for those Finnish-Canadian socialists who had left the *Imatra* League looking to take a more active political role within Canada. Yet, while all of the former *Imatra* members in Toronto had joined by 1906, those in the twin cities initially declined, as, Christine Kouhi writes, they did not know where the SPC stood on moral issues such as temperance.\(^6^6\) However, as with the OSP, Jordan and Bryan convinced the Port Arthur Finnish local to join in November 1907 as the Port Arthur Finnish Socialist Local #6 (*Suomalainen Socialisti Osasto*).\(^6^7\) A newly-established Fort William Workingmen’s Association, in the midst of consolidating its membership, speaking out against the existing local situation. See *PADN*, 28 and 30 April 1906 and Morrison, “Community and Conflict,” 93.

\(^6^4\) *Western Clarion*, 26 September 1908. This may have been what later reports would call the region’s second “North Branch”; however, considering the 1906 Branch’s apparent disappearance it was likely its reestablishment. The Ontario locals of the SPC have been little examined aside from the Toronto local. See Johnson, “No Compromise – No Political Trading,” 460-465. One of the outcomes from the socialist criticism of the election of 1904 and the creation of the SPC local was the establishment of the region’s first English-language socialist newspaper, *The Standard*. See Morrison, “Community and Conflict,” 52-53.

\(^6^5\) *Western Clarion*, 30 November 1907.


\(^6^7\) Bryan appears to have also been instrumental in the Cobalt and South Porcupine, Ontario local joining at the same time. See LUA, FCC, 3, 2, Minutes of Imatra #9, 15 January 1905 and Pilli, *The Finnish-Language Press in Canada*, 34; Christine Kouhi writes that, while the exact date of the name change is unknown, the last use of the name “Imatra” occurred on 22 October 1907. By 3 November 1907, *Suomalainen Socialisti Osasto* was in use. See Kouhi, “Finnish Immigrants in Thunder Bay: 1876-1914,” 32.
followed suit a year later and formed the Fort William Socialist Local # 25 with 70 members, a significant number when compared to other well-established locals in the country.\textsuperscript{68}

Like the Toronto locals, the decision to join seemed to rest on the idea that Finnish socialists could only revolutionize Canadian society from within mainstream Canadian socialist activities.\textsuperscript{69} The decision to directly affiliate with a non-Finnish Canadian party also resulted from a lack of widespread linkages between the existing Finnish-Canadian associations. As Arja Pilli suggests, the decision to join the SPC resulted from a “desire on the part of Finnish-Canadian socialists to be part of the Canadian working class and labour movement.”\textsuperscript{70} Next to the English and Ukrainians, the Finnish members comprised the single largest ethnic group within the SPC by 1909. Finnish socialists, according to Varpu Lindström, accounted for up to two-thirds of the local membership.\textsuperscript{71} In addition, she has argued that historians such as A. Ross McCormack, who have suggested that the SPC resulted in Anglo-Saxon radicals organizing “European immigrants,” are not correct. “The SPC did not ‘organize’ the Finns,” Lindström-Best observes, “rather, it was the Finns who ‘organized’ a significant section of the Socialist Party of Canada.”\textsuperscript{72} Nowhere was this more so than at the Lakehead.

\textsuperscript{69} J.W. Ahlqvist, “Jarjestamme Toiminta Vuoteen 1920,” \textit{Canadian Suomalainen Jarjesto: 25 Vuotta} (Sudbury: Vapaus Publishing Company, 1936), 33. The author would like to thank Samira Saramo for translating the section used.
\textsuperscript{70} Pilli, \textit{The Finnish-Language Press in Canada}, 35.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 3 and McCormack, \textit{Reformers, Rebels & Revolutionaries}, 65-66.
The establishment of the branches of the SPC at the Lakehead coincided with Harry Bryan’s return to Port Arthur and Fort William in 1906. Since his forced exile in late 1904, the social and political landscape of the region had changed. The ILP no longer existed, the trade unions he had established had become pawns of Lib-Labs, and, Jean Morrison suggests, by 1906 new tensions had appeared within the working class at the Lakehead. Part of the explanation, she contends, rested in the experiences of the unorganized workers. These workers were largely Italian, Greek, Finnish, and Ukrainian in origin and could be found employed as freight handlers for the Canadian Pacific Railway in Fort William and the Canadian Northern Railway in Port Arthur. Many also lived in the coal dock sections of the two cities, a region notorious for substandard living conditions and overcrowding. The work was hard, heavy, sporadic, and paid lower than the national average for unskilled labour. Not surprisingly, this area was also the centre of most of the labour unrest between 1906 and 1914. For example, a full-fledged gunfight erupted when authorities imported four train cars full of strikebreakers to break a Fort William freight handlers’ strike in 1906.73

Local newspapers, disregarding the Anglo-Saxon identities of the strike’s leaders, focused relentlessly on the theme of “British citizens” struggling with “foreigners.” For the Port Arthur Daily News, the very eruption of the strike had constituted an insult to the community, which it defined in very nativist terms: “For a community of British citizens to have to submit to the insult and armed defiance from a disorganized horde of ignorant

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and low-down mongrel swash bucklers and peanut vendors is making a demand upon national pride which has no excuse.” Likewise, when the CPR refused to hire Greek or Italian workers on account of their role in the previous year’s strikes, British and Northern European workers, two groups deemed to have been moderate during the strikes, were hired as they were thought to be “more than a match for [the] Greeks” should trouble arise.

It was into this strife-ridden situation that the SPC was re-launched in 1908. The meeting of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada (TLC) in 1907 had also been pivotal in the decision. “At issue,” according to Jean Morrison, “was the difference between radical and reform socialism.” Delegates met essentially to decide the role the TLC would play within municipal, provincial, and federal elections and the interrelated issue of what form of politics it would endorse. Those who adhered to the principles of the SPC were intent on arguing that irreconcilable differences between capitalism and the working class now existed and that political action on the part of the working class, not the election of labour party candidates, was needed.

While the more radical English-language socialists were organizing themselves,

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75 *PADN*, 30 April 1907 and *FWDTJ*, 8 June 1907.

76 Morrison, “Frederick Urry, Architect: The Wage-Earner’s Advocate,” 9
Frederick Urry formed in April 1908 the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council.\textsuperscript{77} Much like Bryan in his first days in the region, Urry was an admirer of the British labour movement. Before his arrival in Canada, he had been a member of the British Independent Labour Party. Tellingly, upon his arrival in Port Arthur in 1906, he commented on the “lamentable state of trade unionism” in the city.\textsuperscript{78} Between his arrival and death in October 1927, Urry would play a prominent role in all aspects of the labour movement, continually working, one biography argues, “for a community of interests between Christians, socialists and trade unionists.”\textsuperscript{79}

Conscious of the relationship needed between trade unionists, the social gospel, socialism, and local politics, Urry launched himself more directly than previous socialists into the ideological debate facing the left in the first two decades of the twentieth century. In 1908, he became the regional representative to the Presbyterian Church of Canada’s Board of Social and Moral Reform and later its representative to Canadian labour.\textsuperscript{80} Urry was also one of three from Port Arthur who attended the founding of the SPC’s Ontario section as official delegates and attended the TLC’s annual meeting in Halifax on behalf of the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council. As Morrison justifiably suggests, “his participation in these conferences symbolizes his attempt to use and unite trade unionism, socialism and the social gospel” to further his vision of a “co-operative commonwealth based on social and class harmony.”\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{PADN}, 10 April 1908.
\textsuperscript{78} \textit{FWDTJ}, 14 March 1908.
\textsuperscript{79} Morrison, “Frederick Urry, Architect: The Wage-Earner’s Advocate,” 11.
\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Western Clarion}, 26 September 1908 and Morrison, “Frederick Urry, Architect: The Wage-
Urry’s position met with hostility from some in the region. No incident better illustrates this than the founding meeting of the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council in 1908. Invited by Urry to the event was the national chairman of the Board of Social and Moral Reform, Rev. J.G. Shearer, Mayor J.J. Carrick, perennial Conservative candidate, Rev. Dr. S.C. Murray of St. Paul’s Presbyterian, and F.B. Allen, publisher of the Port Arthur News-Chronicle and a prominent member of the Liberal party. Representing the Fort William Trades and Labour Council and a member of the International Typographical Union was Leo T. English. Speaking on behalf of the SPC, English expressed his disgust, remarking, “I have come to the meeting hoping to hear a workingman’s story, but instead I have heard a couple of politicians and a couple of ministers.” He attacked Shearer declaring to all those present that “Human advancement is not made by making laws. It is made by breaking laws.”

With the strike of 1906 and the law’s failure to protect workers still fresh in the minds of workers, many shared this sentiment. Urry’s response was quick and just as provocative. In his capacity as president and secretary of the labour council, he declared that English’s tactics “[would] bring discredit to the Labor movement.” The Port Arthur Daily News, backed by Conservative J.J. Carrick, declared English to be a student of “the Earner’s Advocate,”

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82 Interestingly, one of the first members of the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council was the Ministerial Association of Thunder Bay.
84 PADN and FWDTJ 5 April 1908. For the platform of the Socialist Party of Canada, see PADN, 27 May and 5 June 1908.
85 The local SPC’s opposition to trade union activity, though, also inspired English’s comments. As the work of Ross A. McCormack has demonstrated, the SPC’s official policy did not often dictate the actions of individual members, especially considering that the majority of SPC members in British Columbia and Ontario were themselves members of trade unions. See McCormack, Reformers, Rebels & Revolutionaries, 56.
anarchistic school being propagated in Canada by ‘the Appeal to Reason’, which does all but openly advocate murder.” The newspaper also linked English to F.B. Allen, the Liberal candidate, and editor of the Chronicle. It was a brazen attempt, as Jean Morrison argues, “to break the seemingly close relationship between organized labour and the Liberals.”

Local Liberals and Conservatives already conscious of the growing strength of organized labour and the SPC, further assisted in widening the growing gap between moderate and radical socialists in the region. Despite the Daily News’ gleeful denunciation of English and the SPC for the incident at the first meeting of the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council, they reversed their position during the provincial election campaign of June 1908. Fearing a Conservative victory due to a split in the labour vote, the Liberals withdrew their candidates in favour of “independent” ones. At a nomination meeting organized by the recently resigned Liberal candidate, F.B. Allen, and Robert Ferguson, the temporary president of the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council, George Mooring was elected as the Independent Labour candidate. For even the most reformist minded SPC supporters in the region, Mooring’s candidacy would have been unacceptable as he was a well-known timber contractor.

Not surprisingly, the SPC in the region was the first to speak out against Mooring and what it perceived as an emergent class alliance. John F. Leheney, vice-president of the Trades and Labour Congress of Alberta, denounced the meeting, rebuked those who had pledged their support, and “promised that a genuine labor candidate would be

86 PADN, 27 April 1908.
forthcoming before nomination day.” The day after the nomination of Mooring, the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council voted in a new permanent council with Frederick Urry as secretary and James Brooker as president. With support from Leheney and John T. Mortimer, former president of the Trades and Labour Congress of Manitoba, the council’s first action was to pull its support from Mooring and put it behind the SPC’s candidate Leo T. English. This support, however, was mixed.

Unsure about the local SPC and cautious about its Anglo-Saxon and trade-union-dominated executive, many Finns opted to run their own candidates in the municipal election of 1908. Despite the community’s relatively small size and the remote chance of their candidates winning, many in Port Arthur and Fort William became alarmed and viewed the situation as a “serious danger” to the region. Both Conservatives and Liberals increasingly characterized the Finns, and all those with association with publications such as Appeal to Reason, as “socialistic” and “anarchistic.”

The salience of this journal in the region suggested some of its underlying patterns of leftism. Although isolated and marginalized in one sense, the Lakehead was tightly integrated into North American patterns of Finnish and Ukrainian settlement and wide open to currents of radicalism south of the border. Thus, although the English-

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88 *Western Clarion*, 21 August 1909.
90 *PADN*, 20 December 1907. The combined votes for the seven candidates running for positions as Aldermen totaled 182 of 5,878 and Matt Ulvila’s attempt to become Mayor only resulted in 43 of a total of 1,104 votes cast. See *PADN* 7 January 1908 for the results. Christine Kouhi suggests that the Finnish community’s support was hampered as many, being recent immigrants, would have fallen under the restrictions placed on the franchise. See her “Finnish Immigrants in Thunder Bay: 1876-1914,” 34.
91 *PADN*, 20 October 1908.
language branch of the SPC may have become inactive shortly after its creation, those
drawn to socialism were not left without sources of information and inspiration. The
Kansas-based *Appeal to Reason* became the focus of the ire of those against socialism.
Local authorities were so concerned that they banned the paper, along with the satirical
Finnish socialist paper *Väkäleuka*, in April 1908. It was a move which, while appealing
to some Finns who worried that Finnish radicalism threatened the community’s image of
respectability, was so draconian that even mainstream local newspapers found it
excessive.

At the Ontario Convention of the SPC that year, delegates from the Lakehead
joined the 15 locals and 500-600 members. However, despite impressive election results
in Toronto, Ontario locals gradually saw their numbers decrease because of internal
divisions rooted in regional peculiarities, incompatible personalities, and disagreements
over the SPC’s role in municipal politics. For SPC supporters at the Lakehead such as
Bryan and English, the various elections and the collusion of labour politicians against
workers was proof that class alliances only benefited the master class. The local labour
councils, Jean Morrison writes, also “rarely ventured beyond advocacy of measures
promoting either honest government or labour’s immediate interests such as fair wage
clause or the union label.”

The SPC and the Port Arthur and Fort William Labour Councils did unite during

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92 For the quotation, see *PADN*, 24 April 1908. For more on the attempts by local authorities to
ban the newspapers consult Morrison, “Community and Conflict,” 93-94.
93 *PADN*, 22 and 24 August 1908; A.W. Rasporich, “Twin City Ethnopolitics” *Urban History
Immigration to Thunder Bay, 1876-1914,” 32.
95 Morrison, “Community and Conflict,” 88 and *FWDTJ*, 28 March and 11 April 1908.
the 1908 federal election to endorse Frederick Urry’s nomination for the riding of Thunder-Bay Rainy-River. Despite the growing divisions between labourites and socialists, Urry appears to have been the only jointly-sponsored SPC and organized labour candidate in the country.\textsuperscript{96} What his joint candidacy reveals is still up for speculation. Clearly, the position of SPCers was much more heterogeneous than the previous literature on the SPC has suggested. It can also be surmised that Urry’s willingness to represent a community of interest both helped and hindered his appeal. While the labour and SPC candidate, he had only “mixed support” from the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council because of his connections to socialists.\textsuperscript{97} Urry’s experiment in bridging the socialist/labourite division was, unsurprisingly, short-lived – it did not even outlive the election itself.

It certainly did not help that the local newspapers (publicly in support of either the Liberal or Conservative candidates) denigrated both him and his candidacy for associating with Finnish socialists who allegedly practised “free love.”\textsuperscript{98} Perhaps local newspapers made these claims with the hope that voters would draw comparisons to the recent attention given to the activities in Canada of Emma Goldman and the Industrial Workers of the World.\textsuperscript{99} They were also responding to actual instances of Finnish socialists defying convention and forming conjugal partnerships without benefit of

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{98} \textit{PADN}, 16 October 1908.
\textsuperscript{99} While in Winnipeg in April 1907, Goldman, for instance, criticized “organized labour, urging more frequent, harder, longer strikes, building towards a general strike.” Theresa Moritz and Albert Moritz, \textit{The World’s Most Dangerous Woman: A New Biography of Emma Goldman} (Vancouver and Toronto: Subway Books, 2001), 12. To his credit, Urry stood his ground declaring “socialism stands clean cut from the awful contamination of the political parties of Canada. The only politically pure platform at the present time is that of the Socialist Party of Canada.” See \textit{PADN}, 17 October 1908.
clergy, as a manifestation of their critique of religion and, at least for some, patriarchal conventions.\textsuperscript{100}

Despite receiving a respectable 752 of a total 4,562 votes, the SPC denounced Urry following the election for his support of “legal compensation in case of accidents, a pension scheme based on ‘sane’ principles, and equal wage for women and men when engaged in the same work, and a fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work.”\textsuperscript{101} The \textit{Western Clarion}, an SPC organ, described his position as “sickly sentimental reform[s]” and, despite his significant showing in the election, labeled Urry a “half-baked socialist… [and as] another example of a distorted and disordered imagination suggestive [of] Keir Hardie Labor-Socialism – a concoction noted for its inspired nothings.”\textsuperscript{102} Not surprisingly, Urry resigned from the SPC soon after and chastised local socialists for their “delight in abusing the workers.” He also declared that the SPC could not be the socialist party of Canada until it abandoned such tactics and focused instead upon enlisting workers.\textsuperscript{103}

The rift between labourites and socialists by 1909 was nowhere more apparent than in the Fort William Freight Handlers’ strike over wages and working conditions that began on 12 August 1909.\textsuperscript{104} The \textit{Industrial Banner} would later argue, “The poor,
exploited foreigners had good cause for revolt.”\textsuperscript{105} The socialist \textit{Cotton’s Weekly} categorized the strikers as “martyrs since, through them and their deeds, the conditions of wage slavery of their comrades have been discovered.”\textsuperscript{106} Negotiations brokered by the Mayor of Fort William, Louis Peltier, were proceeding until, under the cover of night, the CPR imported enough constables, the railway’s chief security agent told local newspapers, “to compete with a company of soldiers, let alone foreigners.”\textsuperscript{107} Tensions continued to mount the next day when Peltier, only recently elected on the labour ticket, “succumbed to pressure,” read the Riot Act to strikers, mobilized the local militia, and asked that the Royal Canadian Mounted Rifles be brought in from Winnipeg.\textsuperscript{108} In Peltier’s view, the decision to subdue the strikers was justified as he had “done everything possible to bring about a peaceable settlement.” As he declared in the local newspapers: “I am through. The men who have brought on this trouble must take consequences. The law of the land must be protected.”\textsuperscript{109} For their part, the local police, militia, and Steele saw force as necessary “owing to the very great number of foreigners in the two cities of Fort William and Port Arthur.”\textsuperscript{110}

Both the strikers and workers sympathetic to their cause rioted following attempts

\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Industrial Banner} (September 1909).
\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Cotton’s Weekly}, 2 September 1909.
\textsuperscript{107} Morrison, “Labour in Fort William and Port Arthur, 1903-1913,” 27.
\textsuperscript{108} Morrison, “The Organization of Labour at Thunder Bay,” 126.
\textsuperscript{110} Steele quoted in Morrison, “Community and Conflict,” 154-155.
by railway police to forcefully remove those impeding strikebreakers. The armed confrontation resulted in a running gunfight leaving eight strikers dead and an additional four police officers, two bystanders, and thirty strikers wounded. The *Industrial Banner* described the incident as “probably the bloodiest labor riot ever in Canada.” The incident only ended when Peltier convinced the strikers to submit their case to a conciliation board. The Trades and Labour Council condemned this action and both “the abuses under which the men have worked and which caused their protest in the strike” and “the practice of calling out the militia to shoot down their fellow workers in times of trade disputes.” For his part, Urry struggled to mobilize public opinion against official violence. He rallied the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council “to denounce the use of the local militia.” He also sought to resolve the conflict through the mediation of the federal Department of Labour. With respect to the Anglo-Saxon workers and mainstream opinion in the twin cities, the damage to the immigrants’ image was difficult to repair, even for so capable and determined a fence-mender. The Fort William *Daily Times-Journal* compared the recent events to Haymarket, which, it pointed out, had concluded with the hanging of foreign anarchists. A composite image of the “dangerous

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111 *Industrial Banner* (September 1909). In one notable half-hour incident, CPR police were driven back and captured, with eight known casualties occurring. See *FWDTJ*, 13 August 1909. For more on the relationship between violence and labour struggles see Irving Abella, ed. *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1975) and, specifically about the Lakehead, Morrison, “Community in Conflict” and “Ethnicity and Violence: The Lakehead Freight Handlers Before World War I.”


113 *PADN*, 17 August 1909 and *Cotton’s Weekly*, 2 September 1909.

114 *PADN*, 17 August 1909.
“foreigner” was taking hold.\textsuperscript{115}

For his pains, Urry probably won the respect of some immigrant workers.\textsuperscript{116} Yet he also likely alienated many of their Anglo-Saxon critics, not a few of whom were found in the working class. As one “labourer” wrote to the \textit{Chronicle}, many workers “had little in common with Urry or hot-blooded Europeans.”\textsuperscript{117} For Finnish, Greek, Italian, and other non-British immigrant workers, the use of the militia also exacerbated existing ethnic and class tensions. As the work of David Ratz has demonstrated, the “ranks of the Militia were largely drawn from the middle class and upper strata of the working class,” which was largely British in character.\textsuperscript{118} In short, in what was perhaps the most bloody battle in Canadian labour history, some workers could be found firing upon others—a violent division in the ranks that was all too easily racialized and ethnicized.

Understandably, the events of 1909 created a certain amount of animosity within the remaining socialist organizations. Peltier’s stance alienated the strikers. His position as a local union leader and ILP activist also served to drive another wedge between non-Anglo socialists, trade unions, and the local establishment. It meant little that after the incident the Deputy Minister of Labour wrote that the CPR carried much of the blame and “that a less prominent display of force would have been dictated by prudence and might have helped to avert the calamity that followed.”\textsuperscript{119}

The events surrounding the elections of 1908 and the unrest of 1909 reveal a

\textsuperscript{115} \textit{FWDTJ}, 19 August 1909.
\textsuperscript{117} Port Arthur \textit{News Chronicle} (hereafter \textit{PANC}), 23 August 1909.
\textsuperscript{118} See David Ratz, “The 96\textsuperscript{th} Lake Superior Regiment in Aid of the Civil Power, 1909 and 1912” (HBA thesis, Lakehead University, 1989), 61.
\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Labour Gazette} X (September 1909), 344 quoted in Morrison, “Labour in Fort William and Port Arthur, 1903-1913,” 27.
division did indeed exist between foreigner/non-foreigner, radical/moderate, and socialist/non-socialist elements within the Lakehead’s workforce. As such, the decision to hold the 1910 annual meeting of the TLC at the newly-constructed Finnish Labour Temple in Port Arthur on Bay Street in the heart of the city’s Finnish community was not coincidental. By lobbying for it as the main site of the convention, Urry attempted to bridge the growing labourite-socialist divide at the Lakehead. It was also an attempt to reach out to those, mostly Finnish workers, who had become dissatisfied with the status quo. Ultimately, however, he was unsuccessful.

One of the main issues discussed at the convention was how to deal with unorganized workers. Some, such as Secretary-Treasurer P.M. Draper, urged their inclusion while the majority felt that it was the duty of the TLC to protect its membership from the growing number of immigrant workers. Significantly, these workers happened to compose the majority of those the Congress considered unorganized. There were socialist activists among the ranks of TLC unionists – James Simpson most famously – but in the Lakehead, most trade unionists were not socialists, and most socialists were not trade unionists. Among the numerous Finnish socialists of the Lakehead, ethnic and fraternal organizations, but not trade unions, were the important foci of working class activism in the pre-1918 period. The same might be said for Italians and Ukrainians. Many did not belong to TLC-affiliated craft unions. They tended to look to their own cultural associations and mutual-aid groups. As one local newspaper cautioned: “the

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120 A testament to his position within the socialist community, Harry Bryan joined the managing editor of Työkansana and chairman of the local Finnish socialist club, Moses Hall, in making the opening speeches. See LUA, TBFCHS, B, 7, 30, Item 2, Tape 3, Interview with Einar Nordstrom, 15 and 19 March, 2 April, 7 May 1979. A local Finnish builder named Alex Beck, while later refined by a professional architect, originally drew up the Hall’s plans. See Ibid., B, 7, 3, 13,Untitled biography of Arnold Beck by Einar Nordstrom, nd.
aristocracy of Labor cannot afford to neglect the grave and pressing questions in which its weaker brother is deeply interested, but which he has no voice to proclaim. It is only by enrolling under its banner the interests of this silent army that the present Labor party of Canada can become a great power.”

By 1910, such stark divisions had taken a toll on the Socialist Party of Canada in the region. As throughout Ontario, members, much more linked to the trade union movement, began to express a desire for changes in the party’s position on industrial disputes. In addition, they sought an end to what they perceived was the “autocratic control of the Vancouver leadership.” Perhaps most damaging was the position taken by non-Anglo locals that systemic ethnic prejudice existed within the SPC. Despite being numerically powerful enough to elect members to the executive, language-locals were almost unrepresented. *The Western Clarion* itself blamed this on a conscious attempt by English-language locals to hold onto power. One common tactic, it suggested, was the withholding of membership dues stamps at elections times so that foreign members could not vote.

Anglo-Canadian labour leaders exacerbated this divisive situation. They refused to conceder to the demands put forward by ethnic minorities within the SPC, typified by the Finns of Toronto and the Lakehead. Since they first joined the SPC, Finnish members had been proponents of a form of socialism that owed its ideas and theories more to European than North American theoreticians. Many Finnish members

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121 *FWDTJ*, 14 September 1910.
123 *Western Clarion*, 30 October 1909.
125 For example, prominent Finnish Social Democratic Party member Frans Syrjälä toured Finnish
continued to argue for the SPC’s affiliation with the Second International, a position many branches rejected in 1909 because of the International’s admission of non-Socialist bodies such as the British Labour Party.\footnote{126 Penner, \textit{The Canadian Left}, 45.} Regardless, Finnish branches such as the one in Port Arthur held out hope that they could influence the SPC in adopting some of the reforms and tactics currently in use in Europe.\footnote{127 For an example of such an appeal, see the \textit{Western Clarion}, 26 September 1908.} This put them increasingly at odds with the more doctrinaire theoreticians of the party such as Leo T. English.\footnote{128 Penner, \textit{The Canadian Left}, 43.}

International in 1909. This resolution – which was enough to earn its expulsion from the Party – had repercussions in the Lakehead, where the Finnish-influenced Port Arthur and Fort William locals made common cause with the Toronto dissidents.

While differences in ideology and opinions about where the party should go played a part in the rift, another possible, and more sinister, reason lay behind the expulsions. A.W. Rasporich, for instance, has argued that “the expulsion of the Finnish socialists from the Socialist Party of Canada in 1910 was the direct result of English-speaking members’ suspicion of the Finnish socialists.”\(^{130}\) J.W. Ahlqvist, a leading member of the Toronto local, recalled that behind the rift was a growing resentment by English-speaking members of immigrant workers.\(^{131}\) This explosive combination of fear of job competition and cultural misunderstanding meant that the expulsion of the Finnish locals in Ontario sent shockwaves throughout the entire SPC.

The actions of the Vancouver-based leadership were seen by many Finnish and non-Finnish members to have been maladroit. Many other locals left the SPC to protest them. Some of the Ontario branches banded together and met in Berlin, Ontario in May 1910. Another group, consisting of branches and members from the Ontario, the Maritimes, British Columbia, and the Finnish branches at the Lakehead formed the Canadian Socialist Federation. In British Columbia and Manitoba, dissatisfied SPCers formed provincial Social Democratic Parties. Many Ukrainians elected to form their own


Ukrainian Social Democratic Party.\textsuperscript{132}

The formation of these separate groups only served to weaken the ability of socialists to contest elections and to mobilize workers on a national and regional scale. Desiring to provide socialists with a new national alternative, the former Port Arthur Finnish SPC local called for a dominion convention to unite the various dissatisfied factions. Their proposal met with enthusiastic support from the dissidents and was actively promoted by the socialist paper \textit{Cotton's Weekly} which, following the completion of the convention, became the new party’s official English-language organ. A preliminary meeting was held in Toronto in April 1911, with Bryan leading the four delegates from Northwestern Ontario among 32 delegates representing 1,196 “socialists.”\textsuperscript{133} Representatives once again met at the Lakehead on 30 and 31 December 1911 to formally discuss unity.

The nature of the location was symbolic. With its foot firmly in both the Eastern and Western Canadian socialist movements, the Lakehead was seen as a bridge for what many in attendance hoped was the beginning of a pan-national party. What initially began as a merger of the Manitoba Social Democratic Party and the eastern-based Canadian Socialist Federation, soon included representatives from Berlin, Ontario once delegates agreed that any Provincial Executive Committee for Ontario would be established in that


\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Cotton’s Weekly}, 4 May 1911. Bryan represented his new home town of Kakabeka Falls (located 37 km from Fort William), while George Mekela represented Port Arthur and C. Kukkel Fort William. Other delegates were also reported from Nipigon, Fort Frances, and Kenora.
The goal of the newly formed Social Democratic Party of Canada (SDPC) was “to educate the workers of Canada to consciousness of their class position in society, their economic servitude to the owners of capital, and to organize them into a political party to seize the reins of government and transform all capitalist property into the collective property of the working class.” In enunciating these goals, the SDPC was declaring that it shared many of the SPC’s ideas. Yet, its more federal structure distinguished it sharply from the older party, as did its decision to join the Second International.

To ensure a level of independence and to avoid the problems that had led to the SPC’s implosion, Finnish members, following a plan first suggested by Port Arthur Finns in September 1911, also decided to form a separate, but affiliated organization, headquartered in Toronto. By October, the Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada (FSOC) had been formed and John W. Ahlqvist was chosen as its first chairman to lead them in the creation of “a new society.” Initially, 19 locals affiliated with the FSOC for a combined membership of 1,205. By 1914, this number had increased to 3,000 members in over 64 locals throughout the country. This included branches in Port Arthur, Fort William, Nolalu, and Nipigon. Operating under the same charter as the Port Arthur branch was a chapter in the rural Finnish community Kivikoski. Port Arthur and Fort William alone accounted for over 31.9% of all FSOC members in Canada. The Port

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138 These statistics are from Metsaranta, “The Workingmen’s Associations 1903-1914,” 88. Metsaranta’s source for these numbers is the report on the FSOC provincial council meeting held in March 1914 at the Port Arthur Labour Temple. See Canada Suomalaisen Sosialistijärjestön
Arthur branch was in particular instrumental in the later formation of branches in Intola, Ostola, and many other smaller communities in Northwestern Ontario.\textsuperscript{139}

It would be wrong, however, to also assume that all SPCers joined the SDPC. As in much of Canada, the English-speaking nuclei in many Ontario SPC branches continued to operate and the majority of the locals in British Columbia remained intact.\textsuperscript{140} The withdrawal of Finnish socialists, though, did leave the English-language branches in Port Arthur and Fort William impotent. The situation was only compounded when Leo T. English left for British Columbia.\textsuperscript{141} “The British element,” Anthony Rasporich writes, “soon opted into the Independent Labour Party of New Ontario in 1911.”\textsuperscript{142} The platform of the ILP of New Ontario was essentially that of a British-style labour party. It called for “the transformation of all private monopolies into the collective property of the people”


\textsuperscript{139} Metsaranta, “The Workingmen’s Associations 1903-1914,” 84. By 1914, branches established in Northwestern Ontario included Port Arthur, Fort William, Nolalu, Nipigon, Kivikoski, Intola, Wolf Siding, and Fort Frances. Many more communities contained locals that were affiliated to those listed. The Finnish branches also brought with them to the SDPC the newspaper \textit{Työkansa}. At the time of its cessation in 1915, the paper had become one of the most widely read Finnish-language newspapers in North America. \textit{Työkansa}, though, remained editorially and organizationally autonomous and, according to Arja Pilli, the Finnish publishing company, not the SDPC executive, “checked that \textit{Työkansa} did not diverge from the policies of the SDPC.” Staples of \textit{Työkansa} were “theoretical articles expounding socialism, usually relying on authorities such as [Karl] Marx, [Karl] Kautsky, or Keir Hardie.” See Pilli, \textit{The Finnish-Language Press in Canada}, 62-65. The quotation is found on page 65. The author draws special attention to \textit{Työkansa}, 3 June 1912 (Sosialismi jaammattiyhdistysliike); 6 June 1912 (Materialistinen maailmankatsomuksemme); 19 August 1912 (Karl Kautsky, \textit{Luonto ja yhteiskunta}); 4 September 1912 (W. Liebknecht, \textit{Työnantajista ja palkkaatyöläisistä}); and 13 May 1913 (Keir Hardie, Karl Marx).


\textsuperscript{141} Robin, \textit{Radical Politics and Canadian Labour}, 96.

and “the establishment of production for use and not for profit.” Frederick Urry, one of the forces behind the ILP’s creation, “equated labour’s message with that of Christianity to the oppressed.”

Formed as a distinct political party for workers and socialists in Northern Ontario, one of its first activities was the establishment of its own newspaper *The Wage Earner*. Edited by Urry, it declared its dedication to the socialist cause and its focus on “all aspects of the working populace rather than with any specific trade or line of endeavour.”

The formation of the SDPC led to increased tensions at the Lakehead. Both the SDPC and the ILP used the Labour Day parade of 1911, for example, as an occasion to convince workers of their individual platforms. Speaking on behalf of the ILP, Frederick Urry discussed the internationalism of the labour movement and that argued success could only be achieved if workers stood together. As Morrison explains, he also “made a special appeal to the immigrant workers, warning that if they were ‘led astray by politicians’ those conditions they had fled would prevail in Canada.”

These calls for class solidarity had little impact. Much of the working class in Port Arthur, for instance, swung during the election from the Labour-Liberal alliance and supported the Conservative candidate J.J. Carrick. There was more concern over the issue of reciprocity with the United States, which Carrick opposed, than local labour disputes.

Animosity between the ILP and SDPC continued during the provincial election of 1911. Urry, with support from the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council, was

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146 Ibid., 180-181.
nominated as the ILP’s candidate. The Liberals, fearing Urry’s candidacy, withdrew and actively supported the Conservative candidate to ensure his victory despite Urry polling an outstanding 27.4% of the total vote.\textsuperscript{147} In Fort William, the Liberals did not withdraw their candidate, but the working class vote was split between the Liberals and ILP, thus ensuring the Conservative victory. Interestingly, in both cities, the Finnish locals of the SDPC refused to support the ILP candidates and they, in turn, refused to support the Finnish ones.\textsuperscript{148}

In Port Arthur, this divisiveness also spilled over onto the municipal elections. Finnish socialists ran candidates in direct opposition to the ILP of New Ontario. All candidates, however, targeted the Finnish vote. For example, the Port Arthur City Council wished for a number of referendum questions to be passed; however, it admitted that without the Finnish vote they stood a good chance of failing. To curry their vote, at a meeting held in the Finnish Labour Temple, Mayor G. Mathews proposed that if the Finns supported specific by-laws, then a tax exemption for the Labour Temple would be put forward on the ballot as well.\textsuperscript{149} An active campaign ensued in which civic officials portrayed the Finns, the Labour Temple, and their supposed willingness to assimilate as positive and desirable qualities. Politicians suggested to the residents of Port Arthur that a vote in favour of the tax exemption would be “a demonstration in Port Arthur of the contempt for and protest against Russian atrocities” and would move many Finns away from the socialist movement.\textsuperscript{150}

While the ILP in Fort William managed to elect one of its candidates to the

\textsuperscript{147} \textit{PADN}, 4 and 12 December 1911.
\textsuperscript{148} Rasporich, “Faction and Class in Modern Lakehead Politics,” 39.
\textsuperscript{150} \textit{PADN}, 11 June 1910.
municipal council, both ILP and Finnish-Socialist candidates fared poorly in Port Arthur due to vote splitting. The proposed tax exemption was also defeated.\textsuperscript{151} These defeats, though, did not lessen the perceived impact of socialists in the region. In Port Arthur, for example, Mayor S.C. Young blamed “the Labor and Socialistic Element” for the defeat of several questions put to the electorate dealing with bonusing.\textsuperscript{152}

The SDPC at the Lakehead appears not to have been content merely to contest elections. In 1912, having recently formed a union, the mostly immigrant workers for the Canadian Northern Coal and Ore Dock Company went on strike over better wages, hours, and working conditions. Bloodshed resulted when company officials, using local police and the militia, tried to suppress the striking coal handlers. The Chief of Police, two constables, and two Italian strikers were wounded.\textsuperscript{153} The Canadian Northern Railway, fearing a general strike, quickly acquiesced to the demand of the coal handlers.

There was much in this moment that recalled earlier labour strife at the Lakehead. Yet, a new element in it, as Jean Morrison suggests, was the growing influence of radical socialists, who were thought to have influence over the coal handlers and have been instrumental in their inclusion in the trade union movement.\textsuperscript{154} Prominent among the activists were “members of the Social Democratic Party of Canada,” including the party’s

\textsuperscript{152} Tronrud, \textit{Guardians of Progress}, 58.
\textsuperscript{153} \textit{PADN}, 30 July 1912. In the case of the Deprenzo brothers, one was shot seven times and the other was shot five times, including having both his hands “shot off.” Both brothers were found guilty of assaulting a police constable and were sent to a federal penitentiary. See Pucci, “Thunder Bay’s Two Little Italies: 1880s-1940s,” 5; Morrison, “Labour in Fort William and Port Arthur, 1903-1913,” 27; Potestio, \textit{The Italians of Thunder Bay}, 44-48; Pucci, “Thunder Bay’s Italian Community 1880s-1940s,” 90-92; and Pucci, “Canadian Industrialization versus the Italian Contadini in a Decade of Brutality, 1902-1912,” 197-203.
organizers for Port Arthur and Fort William, Cobalt’s miners’ union leader James P. McGuire, and the Rev. Madison Hicks, as well as Herbert Barker, a volunteer organizer for the AFL.” In April 1912, Hicks, Barker, and McGuire led a number of English-speaking socialists in Fort William in establishing Ontario local #51 of the SDPC. Initial members also included W.J. Carter, an architect named Richard Lochead, Sid Wilson, a member of the British-based Amalgamated Carpenters, and Fred Moore, owner of the printing press that printed Urry’s *The Wage Earner.*

Before the strike, members of the Fort William SDPC had spoken at meetings of the coal handlers and, in the case of Hicks, took an active role by leading a parade of workers in confronting Port Arthur Mayor S.W. Ray on his way to read the Riot Act to the strikers. The meeting between the two men and the ensuing violence was coincidental, according to Morrison, as “the Social Democratic party posed no real or imagined menace to the citizens of Port Arthur… what alarmed the English-speaking community was the newly won influence of the socialists with the immigrant

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155 Each of these men brought with them different backgrounds and perspectives. Barker, for instance, was a former trade unionist that sought to organize the unorganized. “Big Jim” McGuire had been active since 1906 when he established Colbalt Local 146 of the Western Federation of Miners in 1906. A frequent writer on regional events in *Cotton’s Weekly,* McGuire had run unsuccessfully on a socialist ticket in the federal elections of 1906 and 1908. Hicks, a former Baptist Minister, had been involved in a number of SPC and SDPC locals in Northeastern Ontario and had left Cobalt with McGuire over, he claimed, disagreements with its policy. See Morrison, “Community and Conflict,” 190-191 and “The Organization of Labour at Thunder Bay,” 127. For more on the influence of McGuire and Hicks, see Morrison, “Cobalt agitators stir up Lakehead union interest,” *Highgrader Magazine* (Fall 2005): 24-26 and “Colbalt agitators played a part in Lakehead labour battles,” *Highgrader Magazine* (Christmas 2005): 22-23. Lochead’s prior involvement can be gleaned from his infrequent mention in *Cotton’s Weekly.* See, for example, the 13 April 1911 issue.

156 Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO), Fred E. Moore fonds (hereafter FEM), F 1284, Frederick Urry to W. Hicks, 7 June 1912.

Supporters of the ILP of New Ontario such as Frederick Urry found themselves “at odds with radical socialism” as “not only had the socialists played a prominent part in the strike, though not the riot, but they were also attempting to organize Thunder Bay’s entire waterfront.”

Urry viewed the use of the strike as a last resort when all other avenues of conciliation had failed. He found the SDPC, and Hicks in particular, too radical for the Lakehead (he even rejected Hicks’s submissions to The Wage Earner). Writing as one socialist “in the great movement of the democracy” to another, Urry rejected Hicks’s article “Girls and Wages in Fort William – A Problem for Society” in May 1912. Explaining that he would “like to stand shoulder to shoulder” with Hicks, Urry added that he would do so only “with clean methods and reasonable criticism.” While the content of Hicks’s article remains unknown, its ultra-radical tone may be surmised from Urry’s critique of it: “if the article in question is a fair sample of the language you are using from the platform, then allow me to say, as a Socialist that your efforts in these cities will have no abiding effect for good.” Urry concluded with the following advice:

If Fort William and Port Arthur are to become socialistic it will have to be done by the men and women of these cities who will dare to stand by each other and be prepared to bear burdens and sacrifice. Ten men and women of this caliber will do more than a thousand excited to applause by inflammatory oratory. We cannot win men by calling them criminals or women by denouncing them as heifers and until we convert men and women from the capitalist ideal to the socialist by constructive methods we fail.

Even though newspapers declared that only Italians had taken up arms during the strike, Hicks and the SDPC shouldered much of the blame because of their calls for a general

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158 Ibid., 197.
160 AO, FEM, W. Mantus to Fred E. Moore, 7 May 1915.
161 AO, FEM, Frederick Urry to W. Hicks, 7 June 1912.
strike of all workers on the waterfront to win similar concessions for the dockworkers.

Calls for Hicks’s arrest began to appear in newspapers in both towns. On 1 August 1912, officials arrested him for his role in a “tumultuous assembly… likely to promote a breach of the public peace.”\textsuperscript{162} Shortly after Hicks’s arrest and conviction (although he received a suspended sentence), SDPC organizers undertook an active campaign to take control, or at the very least undermine, the ILP-led Trades and Labour Councils. Following the strike, they sought to cause a general strike on the waterfront and, ideally, spread it throughout both Port Arthur and Fort William. However, as Jean Morrison writes, this was “a move disparaged by the British labour men for its disregard of the law which required negotiations and conciliation preceding strikes by transportation workers.”\textsuperscript{163} The attempt failed and served to widen the rift formed during the municipal, provincial, and federal elections of 1908, 1911, and the labour unrest earlier in 1912. The SDPC was also not left untouched.

In preparation for the 1913 Fort William civic election, Urry and Hicks jointly developed in opposition to the SDPC a manifesto describing the class struggle in general and the issues facing the region’s workers in particular.\textsuperscript{164} At the same time Hicks seems to have entered into collusion with the ILP; the Dominion Executive shocked the Fort William local by notifying them that SDPC branches in Elk Lake and Cobalt, Ontario had leveled complaints of fraud against him. Upon the recommendation of the Porcupine and Cobalt locals that Hicks be expelled, the matter was referred to the Fort William

\textsuperscript{162} P\textit{ADN}, 1 August 1912. Interestingly, his $4,000 bail was paid by Urry and so was his bond of $500 after he pled guilty on the advice of both his lawyer and the presiding judge.


\textsuperscript{164} \textit{The Voice}, 12 October 1912.
membership. Despite being faced with the possibility that their charter would be revoked, Local #51 refused to expel Hicks and launched a vigorous defence on his behalf. The convincing agitator had a coterie of true believers, who “defended him to the last ditch refusing to believe that Hicks would do anything wrong.”

He also had his critics, evidently including the 400-strong Fort William Branch, which, it appears, had sided with the Dominion Executive.

After Hicks’s expulsion, the remaining SDPC branches in Port Arthur refused to support Urry’s candidacy for the Joint Board of the Port Arthur and Fort William Street Railway. They declared non-confidence in ILP candidates in both cities for their unwillingness to “recognize the class struggle and the necessity for abolishing capitalism.” While the ILP controlled the labour councils in both cities (consisting of 22 unions), had successfully elected members to both city councils, and possessed its own paper, its prospects of electoral success relied on having the support of the SDPC with its mass base among the Ukrainians and Finns.

By 1913, the SDPC locals in Port Arthur and Fort William were amongst the 58 reportedly active in Ontario. Calls were being made to reunite with the SPC to create a

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165 AO, FEM, Frederick Urry to W. Hicks, 7 June 1912. Among his supporters was one particularly ardent seventy-year-old socialist named Stewart.
166 Cotton’s Weekly, 7 November 1912. While the number 400 was claimed by both Hicks and W.J. Carter, the local’s secretary, the Dominion Executive disputed this figure in their letter to Fred Moore. Throughout the Thunder Bay and Rainy River Districts, Cotton’s Weekly reported 9 locals of the SDPC existed. See the 23 January 1913 issue.
167 Cotton’s Weekly, 14 November 1912.
168 Morrison, “The Organization of Labour at Thunder Bay,” 127. Over the course of the next few months, Ukrainian and Scandinavian locals were established in Fort William and a Russian was reportedly in the works. However, no more is known about them. See Cotton’s Weekly, 5 June 1913.
strong national party.\(^{169}\) During the municipal election of 1913, the SDPC in Port Arthur, backed numerically by Finns, opted to run candidates of its own in direct opposition to the ILP. While the ILP drew its candidates from amongst the Anglo-Canadian labour leaders, the Port Arthur branch of the SDPC differentiated itself by running candidates better representing the ethnic composition of the working class in the region.\(^{170}\) In Fort William, with a much larger base, the ILP fared better, electing A.H. Dennis to the council and Louis Peltier once again as mayor. However, in perhaps one of the SDPC’s first electoral successes in Canada, the SDPC candidate K.E. Gröndahl, manager of the Fort William Finnish co-operative, managed to get elected to council by acclamation.

Peltier’s success was also in large part due to the decision of the SDPC branches in Fort William and the local Italian community to support his candidacy.\(^{171}\) This support was criticized by many including William Hicks who, on behalf of the newly-formed Workingmen’s Club – which he claimed boasted a membership of over 10 nationalities – refused to endorse Peltier or his opponent. Incidentally, Hicks left the Lakehead shortly after, but not before defrauding local residents of an estimated $2,250.\(^{172}\)

\(^{169}\) The total number of SDPC locals reported throughout Canada was 126. The number of locals by province reported was Quebec (3), Ontario (58), Manitoba (22), Saskatchewan (8), Alberta (11), and British Columbia (24). In contrast, the SPC had 144 in good standing. The number reported by province was New Brunswick (1), Quebec (1), Ontario (4), Manitoba (3), Alberta (56), British Columbia (77). See Cotton’s Weekly, 10 April 1913.

\(^{170}\) See Morrison, “Community and Conflict,” 231 and PADN, 20 December 1912 and 2 January 1913.

\(^{171}\) Morrison, “The Organization of Labour at Thunder Bay,” 127.

\(^{172}\) Hicks left for Kansas where, apparently, he continued to defraud workers and reputedly was expelled from the Socialist Party of America and imprisoned. By 1918, he was involved with a group of socialists opposing the First World War in Elk City, Oklahoma. His involvement led to his being tarred and feathered by a mob. Hicks’s last known whereabouts were in Oklahoma during 1923 where he attempted to establish a public library with funds “raised by dubious means” and was eventually imprisoned once again in a State penitentiary. See AO, FEM, Frederick Urry to W. Hicks, 7 June 1912 and Morrison, “Colbalt agitators played a part in
With him exited one highly personalized version of a response to the ambiguous legacy of Lakehead socialism. In his wake, both the ILP and the SDPC grew rapidly during 1913. The labour councils in the twin cities began to discuss unity, in the form of the construction of a joint Central Labour Temple. The Finnish branch of the SDPC in Port Arthur also called out for working class and socialist unity. Moreover, as a more tangible indication of a potential unification of the socialist and labour movements, SDPC organizer Herbert Baker was elected president of the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council in April 1913.¹⁷³

Yet, as would so often prove the case, such incipient unity was challenged by the region’s sheer class volatility. The strike by street railway workers in May 1913 was a volcanic moment. As David Bercuson writes, “The walk-out provided a focal point for much of the hatred and bitterness that had developed between labour and its enemies in the twin cities for several years.”¹⁷⁴ Sparked by the CPR’s attempts to use strikebreakers, rioting and violence occurred. When strikers overturned a streetcar operated by strikebreakers, police arrested one of the participants and, when a crowd tried to break him out of jail, fired into the crowd killing a bystander.¹⁷⁵ Local newspapers tried to pin the violence on the socialists, allegedly responsible for agitating the crowd.¹⁷⁶

The railway workers belonged to the trades and labour councils in both cities. As a result, in a show of solidarity both the Fort William and Port Arthur Trades and Labour

Lakehead labour battles,” 23.
¹⁷³ Morrison, “Community and Conflict,” 233-236
¹⁷⁴ Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, 53. For a thorough overview of the strike, see Morrison, “Community and Conflict,” 239-248.
¹⁷⁵ FWDTJ, 10 May 1913; Morrison, “Labour in Fort William and Port Arthur, 1903-1913,” 27; and LUA, TBFCHS, A, I, 2, 11.
¹⁷⁶ They had even, much to the chagrin of Major John Oliver, also wrecked the police station. Morrison, “Community and Conflict,” 241.
Councils called for a general sympathy strike. These calls went unheeded and most workers returned to work after four days of protest. In response, Urry, Booker, McGuire, Bryan, and many members of the SDPC met at the Finnish Labour Temple. They criticized the local councils “for not being radical enough to resist the ruling of an unscrupulous upper class.” They hoped it would become “more radical.” Not surprisingly, the obviously inflamed right-wing media in the twin cities characterized the meeting as one of “sedition, anarchy, socialism, violence and most everything else calculated to worry orderly society and responsible government.”

It was not a critique of the Lakehead workers reserved for the mainstream press. Mayor John Oliver summed up the situation well when he argued that the continued unrest in Port Arthur and Fort William was not wholly due to working conditions. Making specific mention to the strikes of 1909, 1912, and 1913, he suggested that this unrest had been the result of socialist agitators. “There is hardly a night in the week,” Oliver writes, “that inflammatory speeches have not been made by several agitators… something will have to be done to either remove them or check their actions.” Interestingly, specifically named were Frederick Urry and J.P. McGuire for their reputed advocacy of a general strike. McGuire was further singled out for his reputed suggestion that it would be an easy thing to cut telephone, telegraph, and electric lines.

Some saw signs of growing unity within the working class. In his 1913 social

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177 PADN and Cotton’s Weekly, 22 May 1913. For more on the strike, see LAC, Department of Labour, RG27, vol. 302, Box 73.
178 PADN, 22 May 1913; Cotton’s Weekly, 22 May 1913; and Morrison, “Community and Conflict,” 243.
179 LUA, TBFCHS, A, I, 2, 11, Mayor J. Oliver to Edmund Leslie Newcombe, Deputy Minister of Justice, 6 June 1913. Oddly enough, no mention was made of Harry Bryan who appears to have for unknown reasons temporarily left the region.
survey of Port Arthur, Bryce Stewart attributed to the ILP a drive to achieve the “solidarity of the working classes.” Yet, his pioneering work of sociological research also introduced many empirical details that showed how difficult such unity would be to achieve. The population of the two cities was understood to be separated into “three distinct grades of society.” These included the well-to do, an artisan class composed primarily of English-speaking residents, and the “ever increasing horde of unskilled workers.” The suppression of the 1912 strike and the differing opinions during the protests of 1913 only reinforced the underlying inner-class and intra-ethnic conflict that characterizes this period.

By 1914, the notion that socialists and violence were synonymous had been implanted within the minds of many in the community. So too had the role of immigrants within socialist organizations and their role in radicalizing local union activities. As this chapter has outlined, the limitations and strengths of socialism at the Lakehead revolved around both issues of ethnicity and ideology. Coming to grips with these two factors had allowed Harry Bryan and others to successfully mobilize workers to protest their conditions and had resulted at times in real electoral successes. The events between 1900 and 1913 clearly demonstrate that, although significant division indeed existed, the bonds of solidarity could prevail. As one local newspaper, ironically and for other reasons, aptly observed: “For the time being the labor and socialist parties, which have recently been drifting apart, merged their interests. The hatchet was buried, a love feast was held...”

Yet, it went on, this alliance was accompanied by strident rhetoric in which the

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movement’s enemies were denounced as ‘traitors,’ unscrupulous capitalists,’ and ‘pig headed mutts,’ to say nothing of other terms of derision.”¹⁸¹ Deep-seated patterns had taken hold that would make the working-class unity so feared by the newspaper a distant menace for its mainstream readers—and a much-sought-for objective for labour and the left in the Lakehead.

¹⁸¹ *PADN* 22 May 1913 and Morrison, “Community and Conflict,” 256.
Chapter 3
Repression, Revitalization, and Revolutions, 1914-1918

“With the outbreak of World War I,” Janice Newton writes, “events in Europe overwhelmed and transformed the agenda of the left.”¹ The four years of the war would see Canada undergo one of the most remarkable “periods of economic and social change” in its history.² Traditionally, historians when dealing with the war crafted from the victories, defeats, and sacrifices of the period a narrative that inevitably ended with the conclusion that Canada came of age as a nation.³ In recent years, historians have increasingly turned their attention to the social conditions that prevailed on the “home front.”⁴ As Desmond Morton suggests, “the war years were as traumatic for Canadian labour as they were for any other sector of society.”⁵ “The cause of labour support for radical representation,” Martin Robin has observed, “reached a low ebb at the beginning of the First World War. But as the impact of the War on domestic production and social relations began to be felt, there occurred a sudden radicalization of the labour movement.”⁶

The Lakehead left was caught up in these dramatic changes. The period between 1900 and 1914 had been challenging for socialists in the region. Frictions between

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³ For this concept, one only has to pick up any of the current Canadian survey textbooks geared towards high school or university students.
⁴ Robert Rutherford’s recent work, for example, demonstrates how the everyday lives of people in three cities affected their perceptions of the war. See Hometown Horizons: Local Responses to Canada’s Great War (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004).
⁶ Martin Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 1880-1930 (Kingston: Queen’s University Industrial Relations Centre, 1968), 119.
employers, civic officials, and workers had often led to violent conflicts. It was also a period of growth, with the formation of dozens of unions and the establishment for the first time of socialist organizations comprised of workers from all ethnic backgrounds. While the participation of Finns in particular had resulted in substantial success, ethnic prejudice within general society and amongst the Anglo-Saxon trade union aristocracy led to divisions and weakened solidarity. For workers at the Lakehead, the war merely proved to be a further “embittering experience,” much as it would be for their brothers and sisters across the country.\(^7\) Its conclusion, coupled with the events in Russia in October 1917, led to a “sense of grievance” amongst many which provided an opening for a more radical form of social and political protest that would successfully challenge the power of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada.\(^8\)

The end of the war transformed the world of Lakehead leftism. Recent immigrants, with the apparent exception of the Italians, turned *en masse* to more radical organizations. While, as Gregory Kealey suggests, “the state’s willingness to move against the Canadian-born and British immigrant workers with equal vigor suggests that class, not ethnicity, motivated its actions,” Anglo-dominated unions and organizations were more than willing to differentiate themselves from Finnish, Ukrainian, and any other “foreign” workers.\(^9\) Secondly, by 1914, class conflict at the Lakehead often had more to do with issues of ethnicity than it did with class. While agreeing with A. Ross

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\(^8\) Ibid., 102.

McCormack that during the war anti-war sentiments galvanized “socialists and labourites, syndicalists and social democrats,” ethnic prejudices still affected relationships. ¹⁰ Ethnically-based conflict, often accompanied by bouts of violence, polarized Fort William and Port Arthur into two factions: “foreigners” and “non-foreigners.” Yet, given all of this, the First World War also brought the left together in new and surprising ways. The Russian revolution, in addition to being a new force in western agitation, also carried with it a renewed enthusiasm for socialism at the Lakehead. ¹¹

Even before the outbreak of war, the situation facing workers at both the Lakehead and across Canada looked grim. The prewar depression that began in 1912, and dragged through the first years of the war, decimated union ranks and left “an army of unemployed that furnished the first huge wave of recruits for the Canadian Expeditionary force in August 1914.”¹² At the Lakehead, “the wheat boom collapse in 1913,” writes Jean Morrison, “virtually paraly[sed] the local economy.” The majority of workers in both cities were unemployed and those lucky enough to still have work experienced wage-cuts unless they belonged to a trade union. ¹³ By 1915, many of the region’s largest employers had shut their doors, prompting an abrupt decline in the region’s population. ¹⁴

¹¹ For more on the effect the Russian revolution had on the western radical movement, see McCormack, Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries, 137-164.
¹⁴ Labour Gazette, XV (1914-1915) and Morrison, “The Organization of Labour at Thunder Bay,” 128.
In the first three years of the war, Fort William alone saw its population decrease from 27,000 in 1914 to 21,000 in 1915, and 19,000 by 1916. Business depression accompanied population decline. A sizeable portion of those now unemployed and those who had left the region were members of the various branches of the Social Democratic Party of Canada (SDPC), the only socialist organization still operating in the region. Socialists, however, continued to voice concerns and, despite an ever-increasing marginalization, began to subtly alter the political and social landscape in preparation for the post-war period. After 1916, socialist activism and class polarization increased together.

The outbreak of war, however, only made an already bad situation worse. As A. Ernest Epp remarks, the war with Germany “aroused the patriotic fervour of British subjects in Canada.” By the end of the first month of the war, over 319 men from both cities had joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force. By February 1915, the twin cities had contributed over 1,000 mostly Anglo men. Perhaps, though, the Mayor of Fort

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15 City of Thunder Bay Archives (hereafter TBA), Fort William fonds (hereafter FWF), Series 16: City of Fort William Annual Reports (hereafter FWAR), 207, No. 71 and James Stafford, “A Century of Growth at the Lakehead,” in Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity, 44.
18 This first 1,000 consisted of 327 to the first contingent, 241 to the second, and 127 in a special contingent. The remainder of the volunteers could be found in various units including 252 on duty.
William best expressed the feeling of the majority in the twin cities in a letter written to the Officers and Men of the Fort William Expeditionary Force: “the Anglo-Saxon will dominate… the equilibrium of nations will surely prevail.”¹⁹ This outpouring of support expressed as a form of ethnic solidarity, as in the rest of Canada, did not bode well for the largely immigrant-based socialist organizations at the Lakehead.

Socialists at the Lakehead soon found themselves the objects of suspicion. In the case of the many Finns and Ukrainians in the region, oppression, and suspicion hardened into repression. As the work of Franca Iacovetta has demonstrated, “the First World War provided the pretext for the Canadian state to deal with foreign-born labour radicals through disenfranchisement and deportation of even naturalized citizens.”²⁰ In many respects, the war provided both traditional trade unionists and government officials with an opportunity to deal with radical socialists. The war also served to reveal the deep mistrust of “foreigners” that still existed in the region.²¹ The belief in the foreigner-violence connection did not lessen despite the dramatic decrease in labour unrest in the

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¹⁹ TBA, FWF, Series 4: City Clerks Files (hereafter FWCCF), 5-157, War – Military Grants, 1914 quoted in Margaret Frenette and Patricia Jasen, “Community through Culture,” in Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity, 151.
²⁰ Franca Iacovetta, “Encountering the ‘Other’: Society and Responses, 1900s-1930s,” in A Nation of Immigrants, 360-361.
²¹ Penny Petrone, in her autobiography, recalls some of the overt prejudice and racism that existed at the Lakehead before, during, and after the war. See Breaking the Mould (Toronto, Buffalo, and Lancaster: Guernica, 2001), 14-32. For the changing position of the Trades and Labour Congress, see Charles Lipton, The Trade Union Movement of Canada, 1827-1959 (Montreal: Canadian Social Publications Limited, 1966), 168-184.
region in late 1913 and early 1914.

Replacing the labour unrest, however, were growing tensions between local labour and socialist organizations. For example, during the provincial election of 1914, Fort William socialists nominated a candidate to run in direct opposition to candidates supported by the local trade unions. This was typical of the lack of cooperation between “possibilists,” “impossibilists,” and ILPers throughout the province. While the ILP under Urry and the local branches of the SDPC had been adamant in their opposition to militarism and imperialism in late 1913, they both quickly threw their support behind calls for the defence of Belgium and France. Although the municipal election had resulted in a number of labour and socialist-supported candidates winning both council and school board seats, it appears that many followed the lead of SDPer Sid Wilson and supported resolutions calling for support of Canada’s involvement in the war. Once

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22 The lone strike in May 1914, involving 52 barkeepers, lasted only three days and the only terms were the recognition of local 761, Bartenders’ Union. This was a far cry from the violence that had surrounded the streetcar workers strike a year before. See LAC, Department of Labour (hereafter DL), RG27, vol. 303, Strike 19; Fort William Daily Times-Journal (hereafter FWDTJ), 1 May and 2 May 1914; and Port Arthur Daily-News (hereafter PADN.), 1 May 1914. For national coverage, see Cotton’s Weekly, 14 May 1914 and The Edmonton Journal 1 May 1914.

23 The Voice, 10 July 1914 and Robin, 115.

24 This appears to have been a unique situation at the Lakehead. Nationally, the SDPC opposed the war and it, along with its newspaper The Canadian Forward, would be subject to persecution and banning by war’s end. For the SDPC’s position, see The Canadian Forward, 24 May 1917.

25 Unfortunately, no other information explaining this position has been located. For more on Wilson, see Morrison, “The Organization of Labour at Thunder Bay,” 129. Sid Wilson embodied the change in position that many socialists underwent. A member of the Amalgamated Carpenters Union and secretary of the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council, he represented the SDPC in the municipal election of 1912 on a largely anti-militaristic and anti-capitalistic platform. Shortly after the outbreak of war, however, he joined the army as a commissioned officer and spoke out in favour of conscription. According to Cotton’s Weekly, 14 candidates supporting the SDPC ran for three positions. It remains unclear, aside from Wilson, and a Finn named Peter Katamen, who these men were. It is known that some of the remaining 11 were “Scandinavian” candidates. See Cotton’s Weekly, 22 January 1914.
again, in the particular political climate of the Lakehead, a national pattern was transformed in its regional manifestation.

SDPers such as Harry Bryan and former candidate W. Welsh took a lead role during the 1914 provincial election campaign in Port Arthur and in the nomination of the SDPC local’s secretary, S.F.H. Sangster.\textsuperscript{26} Sangster polled a respectable 838 votes, the second largest sum in the province and 13\% of the SDPC’s provincial total.\textsuperscript{27} Local socialists believed the total would have been much higher if not for the “abolish the bar issue.” SDPers in particular were apt to blame the successes of Liberals and Conservatives on their focus on the liquor trade as the cause of many ills, including poor economic conditions.\textsuperscript{28}

Although having succumbed to pressure from government officials and the CPR in 1909 and taking a position against the strikers, Louis Peltier’s endorsement of socialism in 1914 reveals that a level of fluidity still existed in the region. Speaking to the Fort William Trades and Labor Council in July 1914, he argued that, “being a socialist is no less [than being] a man. The socialist party and the labor party are the only two parties which stand clearly for labor, and then they remain divided as they were at the present time it only pleased the third party, or the so-called capitalist class. Every effort on the part of trades unionism to better the lot of mankind is socialism.”\textsuperscript{29} However, as Martin

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Robin suggests, “little was accomplished by the campaign of 1914 except to drive a wedge between independent labor and socialist groups. The 1914 vote for socialist and labor candidates was much smaller than in the minor campaign run three years earlier.”

Once again, the Lakehead pattern does not precisely bear out that discerned for the country as a whole; in this region, the total vote had in fact increased from 243 in 1911 to 838 in 1914.

By the time of the 1915 civic elections, few in the region openly opposed the war. Organized labour did put forth five candidates for alderman in Port Arthur, and the three candidates it endorsed for positions as school trustees were all members of the SDPC. A moderate level of success was achieved as socialist and labour candidates in both cities gained seats on city councils, school boards, and public commissions. Their success, however, did not come without a cost. The Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council’s decision to dispute the loss of one of its candidates drew criticism from many. While many voters believed in “the sincerity of labour’s claims and the men who were their candidates,” they still feared labour’s ulterior goals of taking control of the city council. “Surely the labour element are not endeavoring to obtain control of the Council,” as one

shortly after arriving in Canada in 1909. Trained as an accountant, blacksmith and tentmaker, he chose to remain in Canada and become a blacksmith rather than return to Sweden. Johnson’s ability to run in the municipal election of Port Arthur was possible because he was a tax paying landowner and had been granted his citizenship in 1913. While he lost the election, his candidacy demonstrates a growing desire for political activity from the non-Anglo population. See **PADN**, 6 January 1914 and Elinor Barr, “Swedes at the Lakehead,” Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Papers & Records 20 (1992): 50-62.


*Cotton’s Weekly*, 30 July 1914.

Candidates for alderman included Sid Wilson, Rod Young, George Bell, Ernest Mann, and Peter Katainen. The three candidates nominated for school board trustees were T.H. Wynn, H. Barker, and A.E. Kettridge. At the last minute, James Dunbar, the Independent Labour Candidate for council, and James Booker, the Independent Labour Candidate and member of the SDPC, pulled out of the race for public commissioner. See **PADN**, 26 December 1914.
concerned citizen wrote to the editor of the Port Arthur Daily News. The views of “concerned citizens” aside, substantive gains had been made. Unfortunately, at the same time another, more ominous threat began to influence non-English socialists at the Lakehead. The general anti-war position of the SDPC before the war and its role in radicalizing local union activities during the strike of 1913 made socialists and non-English workers the subject of rumours and speculation regarding plots of espionage and sabotage. As with many communities throughout Canada, this belief was rooted in two things that demonstrated how many residents of the twin cities imagined their communities’ roles within both Canada and the world. The editor of the Port Arthur Daily News best summarized what many in the region felt in an editorial published on 25 June 1915. He charged that Port Arthur, as a port of strategic national importance, needed to become more vigilant against the impending threats against the community. This position was strengthened by the apparent sabotage of a government wireless station in Port Arthur and subsequent chase of two assailants who, despite a

33 PADN, 9 January 1915. Local trades and labour council representatives A.F. Manchee (secretary, R.M. Young (president), and Sid Wilson (Chairman of the Labour Representative Committee) were less diplomatic. Upset that many residents of Port Arthur would “take for gospel truth anything that is published detrimental to the labour interest,” they attacked by the News-Chronicle and those that held anti-labour sentiments. Arguing that labour in the twin cities were in favour of the abolition of property qualification for public office, they also realized that it was “there by the will of the governing classes for one and all to conform to.” See PADN, 11 January 1915.
36 See, for example, PADN, 25 June 1915.
gunfight, escaped into the wilderness.\(^{37}\)

In response, federal, provincial, and municipal officials stationed men from the local militia and police departments at those industries and services deemed critical. This move, however, only served to heighten tensions. Incidents between workers and soldiers increased during the first years of the war at the coal docks and grain elevators, including gun battles and fistfights. However, while labourers from every ethnic group participated in the taunting and fighting, the local press only targeted “aliens” and known socialists in its condemnation.\(^{38}\) As the work of Gerald Ross has revealed, “in spite of the perceived notion that the threat of sabotage came largely from the unemployed and impoverished workers, there was also strong sentiment among Anglo-Canadians and immigrant workers from all allied powers that the enemy aliens should be released from their jobs.”\(^{39}\) This not only resulted in the dismissal of thousands of workers across Canada, but the establishment of work camps under the War Measures Act. These camps, designated for ‘enemy aliens,’ were often located in the more remote regions of the country.\(^{40}\)

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\(^{38}\) Mauro, *Thunder Bay*, 263.


Internment plainly often had more to do with relieving governments of the burden of maintaining the unemployed than it did with questions of national security. It was of a piece with a growing climate of hostility against “foreigners,” one which by no means exempted members of the left. Moreover, it fit comfortably into a long-standing state interest in repressing labour. Labour protests and agitation were now deemed to violate these conditions. Workers participating in strikes were considered by local authorities as unemployed and they, along with “any suspicious individuals,” could be arrested and interned.\footnote{PADN, 18 December 1914.} For many, internment meant both being sent to work camps located in the Canadian hinterland and the confiscation of property. Far from doing nothing, internees were required to build additional camps and their labour used for road-building, land-clearing, woodcutting, and railway construction.\footnote{See LAC, DND, vol. 4744, File 2, Major A.E. Hopkins, commandant of the Jasper internment camps to Sir W.H. Otter cited in Luciuk, 19, fn. 7.}

war interned in Canada during the war, roughly 5,000 were of Ukrainian origin and an additional 80,000 were registered as “enemy aliens.” In Fort William, 2,270 (or 9% of the total population of 24,071) were designated as enemy aliens. Although changing economic conditions and the growing shortage of labour saw many of those interned freed, by 1916, the number had risen to over 3,450 (15% of the population). The City of Port Arthur reported similar numbers. By December 1914, 223 men, 111 children, and 62 women had been registered as enemy aliens from a total population based on the most recent census of 590 Austrians, 535 Galicians, 104 Germans, and 189 Poles who fell under the enemy alien category.

The Lakehead held one of the largest pre-war Ukrainian communities in the country, and, although little is known about them, they comprised a significant portion of the working class. This included a purported Ukrainian-language branch of the SDPC. The nature of the Ukrainian workforce in Fort William was similar to that in Edmonton and Montreal. Ukrainians in Fort William predominantly worked for the Canadian

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44 Lubomyr Luciuk, *A Time for Atonement: Canada’s First National Internment Operations and the Ukrainian Canadians, 1914-1920* (Kingston: Limestone Press, 1988), 7. See also J.B. Gregorovich, ed., *Ukrainian Canadians in Canada’s Wars: Materials for Ukrainian Canadian History* (Toronto: Ukrainian Canadian Research Foundation, 1983), 74-94. What we call today Ukrainians were known by a number of names before and during the First World War. These were based on regional origin and included “Galician” and “Bukovynian” or “Ruthenians.”

45 Ross, “Fort William’s Enemy Alien ‘Problem’ During the First World War,” 7. 2,078 of the total designated as enemy aliens in Fort William were immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

46 TBA, Port Arthur fonds (hereafter PAF), Series 72: Licence, Police and Relief Committee Minutes (hereafter LPRC), 5 and 11, Police Department 1917 and 1918; TBA, FWG, FWCCF, Watkins, Acting Chief Constable to J.T. Horne, Chairman of Alien Committee of Fort William, 25 June 1915; S.C Young, et al. to The Mayor and Council, City of Fort William, 25 June 1915; and Ross, “Fort William’s Enemy Alien ‘Problem’ During the First World War,” 7.

47 *PADN*, 27 November 1914.

48 Nothing is known about this branch and it appears to have been relatively inactive and eclipsed by the more dominant English and Finnish branches.
Pacific Railway, both as freight and coal handlers and in the local iron foundries. The nature of the work was hard, heavy, dirty, and often some of the most dangerous in the region. These areas of employment were also ones in which labour unrest was rampant before 1914 and, thus, were targeted by officials.\footnote{In 1906, for example, a rail yard worker by the name of Nykola Haidiuk was run over by a locomotive in the Fort William yards, a mere three days after coming to Canada. For this incident see Svoboda 17 May 1906 cited in Orest T. Martynovych, }Similar to the Ukrainians, Italians living in Fort William and Port Arthur were also treated with suspicion despite the significant role Italian troops were playing against Germany. This circumstance, though, had more to do with their involvement in past labour unrest, than any real concern by employers over the loyalty of those they employed, a situation highlighted by the fact that preference continued to be given to Austrian and German workers in both cities. So pronounced had the situation become by June 1915 that the Italian Consular Agent, E. Marino, publicly criticized local hiring practices. He chided employers for ignoring the fact that, unlike many in the region, these men were “offering themselves for service in defense of the principles [for] which Britishers were fighting in France against Germany.”\footnote{PADN and FWDTJ, 14 June 1915.} However, those most targeted – aside from those ethnically German – for their ‘socialistic tendencies’ were members of the Finnish community. In large part, such attention resulted from the leading role many Finns in Port Arthur and Fort William had taken in the establishment of the Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada (FSOC) in early 1914. In March, Port Arthur had in fact been the site of the first convention. Delegates representing 3,062 Finns from Finnish socialist societies across Canada
attended.\textsuperscript{51} From Northwestern Ontario, locals from Port Arthur (359 members), Fort William (235 members), Nolalu (16 members), Nipigon (42 members), Kivikoski (39 members), Fort Frances (27 members), Intola (37 members) and Wolf Siding (37 members) were present.\textsuperscript{52} Those in attendance included a young Sanna Kannasto who was given the task of organizing both men and women in Northern Ontario.\textsuperscript{53} 

The RCMP, prompted by the FSOC’s apparent interest in radicalizing Lakehead workers and the salience of socialists in its leadership, began an intensive campaign of harassment. As future Wobbly and Communist organizer Amos Tobias (A.T.) Hill later recalled, more than once the RCMP would “march to the [Finnish] hall during just an ordinary dance, or during the middle of a play, and stop everything, then [demand] naturalization paper or other forms of identification to prove that they were ‘loyal Canadians.’” It was not uncommon for a dozen people attending a dance to be arrested and imprisoned in the local jail for a couple of days.\textsuperscript{54}

Considering the ethnic factionalism that defined the experience of the working class

\textsuperscript{51} J.W. Ahlqvist, “Jarjestamme Toimina Vuoteen 1920” in \textit{Canadian Suomalainen Jarjesto: 25 Vuotta} (Sudbury: Vapaus Publishing Company, 1936), 38. The 3,062 members were drawn from 64 locals from across the country.
\textsuperscript{52} Lakehead University Archives (hereafter LUA), Finlandia Club Collection (hereafter FCC), MG 3, Executive Minutes of the Port Arthur Finnish Socialist Local of the S.P.C. (\textit{Suomalainen Sosialisti Osasto}), 1911.
at the Lakehead before the war, it should come as no surprise that the predominantly Anglo-controlled labour organizations remained relatively quiet about this issue. As authorities interned hundreds of local workers, the local trades and labour councils supported government officials. Only when federal or municipal officials intended to let employers use “alien labourers” did they protest. For example, in March 1916 the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council voiced their concern over attempts to import “Austrians from internment camps to work in local lumber camps.” They argued that such work should go to returned soldiers and preferences also be made within the federal civil service for them.  

Workers, who had stood shoulder to shoulder in strikes before the war, were divided further between those labeled “enemy aliens” and those who were not. As the editor of the Port Arthur Daily News suggested in July 1915: “certain sections of the enemy alien foreign population are restless over the restrictions placed upon them by necessities arising from the war. It is even hinted that another section, not regarded as an enemy is holding secret meetings at which anything but sentiments of sympathy for Britain and her Allies are given expression.” For all those deemed to be a menace, real or imagined, the threat of deportation was an ever-present danger. This included any who spoke out against municipal, provincial, and federal authorities or against the war in general.  

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57 PADC, 16 July 1915.  
58 Although soon after the war began actual deportation became rare as wartime restrictions on travel made it impractical, it did not save save socialists from persecution. For many, such as
By 1915, union membership in both Port Arthur and Fort William had declined dramatically and membership in the English-language branches of the SDPC in both cities had dwindled to the point that the Port Arthur SDPC branches barely operated, and the SDPC-controlled Wage Earner had gone bankrupt. The Finnish-language branches of the SDPC experienced significant losses nationally. Their membership dropped from 3,062 in 1914 to 1,867 by the end of 1915. In contrast, the newly-established Fort William Socialist Local # 25 had grown to 235 members. When combined with the Port Arthur local, the region possessed the two largest and most active Finnish-socialist locals in Canada. However, while membership in the local Finnish-language branches of the SDPC remained relatively stable during the war, they still experienced crushing financial constraints as the war progressed.

The continued complacency of the local trades and labour councils and the growing hostility towards unions and non-British workers did not sit well with many socialists in the region. Having his belief in the ineffectiveness of the existing organizations confirmed and desiring a more robust ideological atmosphere, local printer Fred E. August Sandgren, a well-known Finnish worker with ties to both the SDPC and the FSOC, the inability of authorities to deport him led to a prolonged incarceration in local jails. See TBA, Series 3, File 82, Superintendent of Immigration to A.M.F. Naughton, Fort William City Clerk, 20 August 1914. For more on the “great fear” of enemy aliens and deportations during the war, see Barbara Roberts, Whence They Came: Deportations from Canada, 1900-1935 (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988).

59 PADNC, 3 March 1916.
Moore spearheaded in May 1915 a movement to reestablish some form of socialist party. Unsure of the SDPC’s stance on key issues he contacted the Dominion Executive in Berlin, Ontario, to inquire about this and the fate of the branch established by William Hicks in 1912.

The head of the Ontario section, an enigmatic figure named W. Manthus, granted Moore permission to form a new English-language branch in Fort William as long as the disgraced Hicks was in no way associated. Moore quickly began the process of establishing a new English-branch of the SDPC. It appears that he also contemplated the creation of an associated paper, but decided against it after his father counseled against such a move and urged him to be wary of the working class.

The position of the local labour councils did not help the situation. Speaking to local unionists on 19 June 1915, J.C. Watters, president of the TLC, argued the Congress, and not socialist organizations such as the SDPC, were responsible for the improvement in wages, conditions, and the standard of living conditions through Canada. Shortly after, the Port Arthur Daily News openly attacked the Trades and Labour Council’s backing of a strike by regional plumbers. Declared “more than unpatriotic,” the view of

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63 Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO), Fred E. Moore fonds (hereafter FEM), F 1274, W. Manthus to Fred E. Moore, 7 May 1915. This decline, Manthus argued, was largely from the SPC executive’s refusal to hold a referendum once more uniting the two parties and the resulting exodus of its remaining members. Moore was also informed that while the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) “was on the ground first, their dogmatic tactics caused an off shoot and our party which has outgrown them four times over in that many years is still growing every week in spite of the hard times.”

64 AO, FEM, Moore to Fred E. Moore, 6 and 13 June 1915. A printer himself, Moore’s father advised his son to forget it and to be wary of workers: “do not cater to the working slave unless you have your living assured from some other source, be good to him and don’t throw any stones at him, keep his good will, but for God’s sakes don’t let him think you are trying to get anything from him to keep body and sole together or he will stay up all night to beat you, make him think he is the whole cheese so far as you are concerned and he will do everything he can for you, but always be too busy to be connected with any one sided game he s mixed up in.”

65 PADN, 19 June 1915.
the *Daily News* was that any British workman involved cared little for the needs of the nation and these fights over “union rules” were considered both shortsighted and selfish. Workers throughout the region were put on notice that for “hampering the defensive measures of the government… they are inviting their ruin.”

Although many within the twin cities were concerned over the activities of the ILP and the TLC, the rise of the SDPC and the accompanying increase in Finnish radicalism received the bulk of local attention. For example, even before the war, Mayor Oliver had singled out Finnish socialists for their allegedly anti-British and anti-Canadian position. He pleaded on more than one occasion for the Minister of Justice to “help in keeping this condition from spreading to other places, as you are no doubt aware this City has a very large foreign population, of which the greater number are Finnish, and it is possible that three-quarters of these are socialists.”

For local authorities, the most alarming change was the formation by mostly immigrants in Port Arthur and Fort William of a branch of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies). Well-known for its participation in labour action throughout the United States, “the early sweep of IWW industrial unionism,” according to early IWW organizer and future Communist stalwart A.T. Hill, “was presented as a working class organization across the continent.”

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66 *PADN*, 25 June 1915. To reinforce this point, the paper frequently made comparisons to the situation in Britain. In the same article, for example, readers were informed, “English unionists may believe that they are hard worked and abused; but if Germany ever gets hold of the ‘tight little island’ they will learn what hardship really means… Nor will these laborites receive a great deal of sympathy from a world already disgusted with their actions… Sympathy will be reserved for the patriots of the upper and middle-class who are working desperately to save their country.”

67 LUA, TBFCHS, A, 1, 2, 10, J. Oliver to Minster of Justice, 6 June 1913, pp. 2-3.

68 LUA, TBFCHS, A, 1, 2, 10, J. Oliver to Minster of Justice, 6 June 1913, pp. 3-4.

69 A.T. Hill, “Historic Basis and Development of the Lumber Workers Organization and Struggle
Federation of Labor (AFL) decision to not support the organization of industrial workers, the IWW was formed in 1905 to give the working classes in industrial settings an opportunity to organize and mobilize.\(^7\) It also emphasized during this period industrial unionism as the key to social change rather than direct political action. Under the guidance of William Haywood, and largely through the activities of the Western Federation of Miners, the IWW quickly distinguished itself as one of the most active socialist organizations of the pre-First World War period.

Upset with the activities of the local AFL unions and the general apathy expressed towards lumber workers by both the Trades and Labour Congress and local labour councils, Hill and Harry Bryan (who after establishing a branch of the SDPC in Dorion in 1913 appears to have organized on behalf of the Wobblies for a brief period), established an IWW presence sometime in 1916. The IWW carried out its activities through Lumber
Workers’ Industrial Union support circles located in largely Finnish lumber camps. The IWW first entered Northwestern Ontario via the Mesabi Iron Range in Minnesota. Having established a foothold within both the mining and lumber unions in that state, it worked through seasonal Finnish workers such as Hill to infiltrate mining and lumber camps in both Northeastern and Northwestern Ontario.

Although the IWW did appeal to many English-speaking workers, the backbone of the IWW during this period became the FSOC. The previous FSOC branches found in those communities dependent upon the lumber industry began to favour the IWW. The change had a lot to do with the conversion of leading organizers to the Wobbly cause. Hill, for example, was such an individual. In the particular milieu of the Lakehead left, seemingly hard-and-fast ideological and tactical lines separating organizations of different types frequently proved far less formidable on the ground than they appeared in theory.

71 Harry Bryan appears that have been very active throughout the eastern part of Northwestern Ontario. Having moved to Dorion, approximately 100 kilometres away, he continued to make the journey into the twin cities for meetings. For a discussion of his leadership in the formation of the SDPC branch in Dorion, see Cotton’s Weekly, 6 February and 6 March 1913.


73 G. Jewell, The History of the IWW in Canada (Chicago: Industrial Workers of the World, 1975), 2. Jewell puts the date at 1916. However, Hill recalls organizing workers as early as 1913.

74 According to historian Oiva W. Saarinen, the FSOC in the Sudbury region differed as it was focused on the mining industry. For example, it “worked closely with the WFM [Western Federation of Miners], a Colorado-based radical union formed in the United States in 1893 that fought strenuously for better mine regulation, the eight-hour day, and workmen’s compensation and trade union rights.” See Between a Rock and a Hard Place: A Historical Geography of the Finns in the Sudbury Area (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1993), 188. See also Allen Seager, “Finnish Canadians and the Ontario Miners’ Movement,” Polyphony 3:2 (1981): 38 and Morrison, “The Organization of Labour at Thunder Bay,” 130.
Hill’s story before arriving in Northwestern Ontario is typical of those of many Finns. Upon arriving in North America, Hill worked as seasonal worker for a number of years in both countries as he alternated between jobs in North Dakota, Montana, Minnesota, and Northwestern Ontario. Like most Finnish migrants during this period, he belonged to a socialist family that had fled a turbulent and often hostile political climate in Finland. In the United States, this socialist background found expression through the IWW and his participation in strikes such as the Copper Country Strike of 1913. His involvement in Eugene Debs’s 1912 election campaign and time spent at the Marxist Work People’s College (Työväen Opisto) reinforced his desire to participate in radical labour action.

Unlike most existing organizations within Canada, the IWW provided immigrant workers with the opportunity to become involved in the actual workings of the union, and had low memberships fees compared with those charged by AFL and TLC affiliates. Its membership cards were transferable from union to union. Most important, however, was the IWW’s ability to remain consistent and relatively focused in purpose and actions. As


76 In his memoirs, Hill claims to have worked for Debs in the 1916 campaign. However, Debs ran for President of the United States in the 1904, 1908, 1912, and 1920 (the final time from jail). As Hill is known to have been in the United States for only the period of the 1912 election, this is most likely the election he refers to. The Work People’s College played a significant role throughout the early twentieth century in the education of radical socialists in both Minnesota and Northwestern Ontario. Its curriculum focused on radical and revolutionary ideas, with many of its courses being taught by leading North America Finnish socialist theoreticians such Leo Laukki and Yrjö Sirola. See Ollila, “From Socialism to Industrial Unionism (IWW): Social Factors in the Emergence of Left-Labor Radicalism Among Finnish Workers on the Mesabi, 1911-1919,” and John Hodgson, Communism in Finland (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967), 16-19. Yrjö Sirola eventually became a well-known “Moscow Finn” and a member of Lenin’s inner circle in the Russian government.
Donald Avery has stated, the IWW was not preoccupied “with sterile ideological controversy: despite their syndicalist underpinnings their attention was focused on specific grievances.” In late 1915, Hill began organizing and agitating in the small lumber town of Fort Frances, Ontario, to establish an IWW presence in the region. With the help of the Fort Frances Finnish section of the SDPC, he organized workers under the IWW banner at the Shevlin Clark Sawmill and other company camps. The goal of the Lumber Workers Industrial Union # 120 (LWIU) was, in keeping with the IWW’s general philosophy, the overthrow of capitalism by industrial, not political, action.

Martha Isobel Gerard Allen argues that “socialism of a much redder hue than the moderate Social Democratic variety was on the march in the Canadian settlements” during this period. “Marxism, atheism, and syndicalism were all matters for enthusiastic discussion and missionary effort on the part of the ‘radical socialists’ many of whom, by the second decade of the twentieth century, were to identify themselves with Communism.” However, just as Ian McKay argues that within the ranks of the Canadian Socialist League one found militant Marxists by 1902-3, so within the ranks of the SDPC did one find many who were not reformists by any description, but rather socialists of a much redder hue.

Lumber work presented unique challenges for socialist organizers. Unlike in mining where sites were often organized around a central location, the lumber industry

77 Avery, ‘Dangerous Foreigner’, 53.
79 Morrison, “The Organization of Labour at Thunder Bay,” 130.
was decentralized and composed of a series of “camps” with no central location aside from the company’s head office, which was often located hundreds of kilometers away. Despite these obstacles, the LWIU had success in organizing workers in the Northwestern United States and Canada before and during the early years of the First World War. Predictably, local, provincial, and Federal authorities greeted the reentry of the IWW to Canada with hostility. The American IWW leadership’s pre-war adoption of sabotage as a means of protest only heightened the concern of officials already worried about such tactics being employed by enemy aliens. While the Canadian leadership attempted to distance itself from this position and emphasize the IWW’s non-violent nature, its position as a revolutionary organization, and the perception by many that revolution equalled violence, only increased the tension at the Lakehead. As a result, officials began to attack local Finnish socialists, regardless of affiliation, in an attempt to root out socialist tendencies. The IWW’s general lack of support from Anglo-Canadian workers further isolated it and its non-Anglo supporters.

One strike in early May 1916 serves as an example of the growing hostility facing workers at the Lakehead. Emboldened by reports of the activities of British socialists and the severe labour shortage within Canada, on the morning of 28 April 1916, residents of Fort William awoke to find 60 workers at CPR Elevator D in Fort William on strike over

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81 Hill, “Historic Basis and Development of the Lumber Workers Organization and Struggle in Ontario,” p. 1. Hill recalled from his experiences that “the organization of the workers in these camps was not an easy task, because workers were distributed to various lumber camps, workers did not know where they would be going for the next season, and then their movements were easily noted by the bosses and stool pigeons ready and handy.”


wages and working conditions. Soon after the workers in Fort William walked off the job, rumors began to spread throughout the two cities that a general strike was imminent.\textsuperscript{84} Bryan’s participation, as evidenced by newspaper reports, did little to calm the fears of officials in both the twin cities and Ottawa. When strikers were urged by H.S. Hood of the Department of Labour to return to work using the process outlined in the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, Bryan, long considered by the Department to be a socialist agitator, dissuaded them from taking this course of action.\textsuperscript{85} Speaking in the Trades and Labour Hall on Finlayson Street, he advised strikers not to go back to work until their demands were met. He also called upon workers in both communities to join in the struggle.\textsuperscript{86} Within two days, the strike spread to include another 160 shovelers at the Grain Growers’ and Eastern Terminal Elevators and the Ogilvie Flour Mill in Fort William. The Government and Thunder Bay Elevators in Port Arthur also ceased to operate.\textsuperscript{87} Blame was solely placed on the strikers who were described as “foreign labour-class” and “socialists.”\textsuperscript{88}

Despite open musing by newspapers that the strike could lead to a shortage of rail cars throughout the West and hamper the transcontinental shipment of goods, officials from the CPR refused to negotiate with the strikers at its elevators.\textsuperscript{89} This position

\textsuperscript{84}PADNC, 29 April 1916.  
\textsuperscript{86}FWD\textsubscript{15}, 2 May 1916.  
\textsuperscript{87}The elevators only managed to remain in operation because of the managers and those workers paid by the month rather than hourly. As Frederick Urry reported to the Department of Labour: “casual day workers did not go on strike; however, this class of labour most serious problems, and will have to be dealt with sooner or later.” See LAC, DL, vol. 305, Strike 62. Workers at the CNR elevator, the largest in the world, however, remained on the job despite rumours that they too would join the strike on the second day.  
\textsuperscript{88}Winnipeg Telegram 1 May 1916.  
\textsuperscript{89}PADNC, 1 May 1916. The spread of the strike also received coverage in the Winnipeg
continued until, on the fifth day of the strike, 150 truckers at the CNR docks joined the
shovelers. Concerned, the Minister of Labour sent his Deputy Minister from Winnipeg
to assess the situation personally. Negotiations followed, but workers remained steadfast
in their demands. It was the opinion of the company that the breach between them and the
workers was widening; however, they assured strikers that negotiations would continue in
good faith.

On the morning of 2 May, strikers were caught off-guard by the arrival of a group
of strikebreakers. Although subsequent attempts to move more into the region were
blocked, strikers were urged to return to work using the process outlined in the Industrial
Disputes Act. Bryan, though, counseled strikers once again that they should only go back
to work if officials met their demands. Bryan’s qualities of leadership and idealism are
suggested by this episode. The local labour councils had been unwilling to take a lead
role and, with the collapse of the local branch of the SDPC, strikers were left without
political guidance. Notwithstanding his efforts, the strike ended 4 May by a vote of 80 to
40 (a lop-sided result that can be explained by the out migration of many of the more
radical elements). The hours and wages for both the truckers and the shovelers remained

*Telegram* the same day.

90 Frederick Urry’s reports on the Truckers’ participation can be found in LAC, Department of
Labour Collection (hereafter DL), RG27, vol. 305, Strike 50. Urry estimated the dispute only
involved between 90-100 men, but the number cited in local newspapers accounted for both
monthly and hourly wage earners. The situation at the Government Elevator in Port Arthur was
slightly different. Workers had attempted to negotiate with management following the onset of
the Elevator D strike, only to be rebuffed by the general manager, C.E. Allen.

91 *PADNC*, 3 May 1916.

92 In the interim, the CPR and CNR had on the morning of the third, imported 75 strikebreakers
from Winnipeg and another 50 men from Sudbury. By the end of the day, the CPR
Superintendent Morgan boasted that things were satisfactory at its effected facilities and “he
believed our records will show that we have sent out more grain than usual during the past few
days.” See *PADNC*, 2 May 1916.

unchanged. As Bryan predicted, the Government Elevator in Port Arthur only took back 23 of the 40 strikers while the full staffs of the elevators in Fort William returned.\textsuperscript{94}

The threat of unrest increasingly concerned employers in Fort William and Port Arthur as labour became scarce in the twin cities. Many of the workers who left may well have been prompted by rumours of an impending policy of conscription.\textsuperscript{95} Many of the workers involved in the strikes were no doubt among those who left for the United States over concerns that it would not be long before legislation mandating conscription would be put forward by the federal government.\textsuperscript{96} The Western Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company of Port Arthur, for instance, reported that they were losing men daily and it was becoming increasingly difficult to meet demands. Many of the company’s projects were war-related. Mayor Cowan even went so far as to petition the Militia Department to determine if shipbuilding was an essential industry.\textsuperscript{97} It was a gesture, echoing the region’s past violent history, that suggested the depth of official concern.

\textsuperscript{94} LAC, DL, vol. 305, strike 62. Those lucky enough to retain their job were back to work the next day. In the case of the truckers, they capitulated just as the majority of the 140 imported workers from Winnipeg refused to work. See \textit{PADNC}, 5 May 1916.

\textsuperscript{95} \textit{PADNC}, 26 August 1916, p. 1. On railway labour shortage see 17 August 1916, p. 1.


\textsuperscript{97} \textit{PADNC}, 26 August 1916.
Tensions came to a head when the federal government announced that it was contemplating conscription. For reasons unknown, both unions and the trades and labour councils in both Port Arthur and Fort William reversed their previous position and joined local socialists in condemning the position.\textsuperscript{98} The subsequent qualified decision of the TLC to approve the government’s conscription policy served to further exacerbate the growing divide within the region. Predictably, local newspapers began to attack all those who opposed both the idea of conscription and the signing of national service cards. In turn, socialists became more vocal in their denunciation of the local press. Most meetings occurred in the Port Arthur Finnish Labour Temple, still under the control of the Port Arthur Finnish branch of the SDPC.

In January 1917, 700 men in Port Arthur rallied to the banner of the SDPC at a meeting about the National Service Bureau and its plans for a manpower survey, accurately interpreted as a first step towards a conscription policy. Speakers asked why, at the outbreak of the war, they had not been not consulted if Canada should enter. “The government ignored us then and has done so since,” Bryan declared, “except when the wanted to use us for their purposes.” He also proclaimed to the largely “foreign born” audience that “they [the government] will never force me to sign this card, but they may put me where it is unnecessary to do so. If they made a practice of this, they will have a

\textsuperscript{98} Morrison, “The Organization of Labour at Thunder Bay,” 129 and \emph{Labour Organizations in Canada} (Ottawa: Department of Labour, 1917), 49. For the Trades and Labour Congress’ reaction, see Lipton, \emph{The Trade Union Movement in Canada}, 168-172. According to Kenneth McNaught and David J. Bercuson, the opposition to conscription was based on three points. Some saw the war as “a power struggle between capitalists... Others believed that the government should not ask the lower classes of society to contribute their lives to the war effort without confiscating the wealth of the rich... [and] almost all shared the belief that compulsory military services was but a prelude to industrial conscription.” See Kenneth McNaught and David J. Bercuson, \emph{The Winnipeg Strike: 1919} (Don Mills, Ontario: Longman Canada Limited, 1974), 15-16.
large board bill to pay. How many of you are willing not to sign the cards and go behind
the bars if necessary? To be behind them would not be much more a form of slavery than
that we are now in.” To those who stood up and began to cheer, Bryan said: “[T]his was
the kind of spirit that will make them [the government] sit up and take notice.”

This Port Arthur meeting was one of many that would sweep the Lakehead and
the West, culminating in the famous Walker Theatre meeting in Winnipeg, whose ringing
declarations against the war and for the Russian Revolution were to resound later in the
trials following the Winnipeg General Strike. There was a growing spirit of revolt in
the air. Yet there was, in Port Arthur, an equally powerful spirit of dissension. Bryan
went so far as to attack the “Anglos” who were reluctant to make their private anti-war
feelings public. About half the audience at the Port Arthur meeting refused to declare
themselves in favour of Bryan’s motion.

The Russian Revolution also appears to have led to a revitalization of activity
from both labour and socialist organizations at the Lakehead. As William Rodney has
suggested: “The news that the Tsar of Russia had been deposed, coinciding more or less
as it did with the conscription issue, did much to break down the inhibitions against
organization and expression within the labour and radical groups caused by the war effort
and, more particularly, by the War Measures Act.”

99 PADNC, 5 January 1917. The Port Arthur Daily News-Chronicle, for abuse of local socialists,
also figured prominently in both the speeches by Bryan and Booker and those from floor.
100 For more on the meeting in the Walker Theatre, see J.M. Bumsted, The Winnipeg General
Strike of 1919: An Illustrated History (Winnipeg: Watson Dwyer Publishing Limited, 1994), 17-
19; Lipton, The Trade Union Movement in Canada, 187 and Harold Logan, Trade Unions in
Canada (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1948), 304-305.
101 PADNC, 5 January 1917.
102 William Rodney, Soldiers of the International: A History of the Communist Party of Canada,
what the events in Russia meant for the war effort. Initially, media covered favoured articles syndicated from Toronto and Ottawa on the concern over the new Russian government’s continued participation in the war effort. As one member of Port Arthur’s Russian community stated to the editor of the Port Arthur News-Chronicle: “As a result of the changed conditions in Russia I think the chief feature will be a more vigorous prosecution [sic] of the war. The nation will have but one enemy to fight, the Germans at the front.” After reports that this would be the case, local media tended to cover Russian military successes in much the same fashion as Italian and other allied offensives.

By March, however, the exact situation in Russia had become unclear. Rumours began to circulate that a counter-revolution was now a possibility. As one newspaper report exclaimed: “The work of agitators whose efforts are designed to hinder the successful accomplishment of the revolution is becoming apparent with the subsidence of activity on the part of the military, which forced the supporters of the old regime to keep in hiding during the early days of the upheaval.” As the spring of 1917 turned to summer, the tone of local newspaper articles increasingly began to suggest that something was wrong in Russia. Vladimir Ilich Lenin was often blamed. Suddenly Canadian socialists were front and centre in the public eye, as both their supporters and their critics drew direct and tenuous connections between their propaganda and the Russian situation.

Lenin’s willingness to talk peace with the Germans led to sweeping criticism and mounting concerns. As A. Ernest Epp has suggested, “Lenin’s determination take Russia

103 *PADNC*, 17 March 1917.
104 *PADNC*, 28 March 1917.
out of the war intensified Western anxiety about socialism and gave new strength to the forces of repression.” Sensational headlines such as “Lenine [sic] Would Release Million Hun Prisoners” became the norm. Corporate interests watched the situation with concern. The Mutual Elevator Company of Fort William, for example, asked the city council for increased protection.

The IWW and the Finns took the lead in supporting the Russian Revolution as it had profoundly influenced political developments in Finland. The overthrow of the Tsar, in particular, was very popular amongst local Finns. For many, Russia was seen as the Finns’ ancient adversary. Finland had often been caught in the middle of Russian conflicts with Sweden and, in 1809, had fallen completely under the domination of the Russian Empire. Tsar Alexander’s process of Russification of the now Grand Duchy of Finland irked many. Tensions only mounted when Tsar Nicolas, upon assumption of the throne in 1894, intensified the process. For nationalist Finns the revolution provided an opportunity to seize independence.

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106 PADNC, 26 November 1917.

107 TBA, FWF, FWCC, 5, File 148. F.H. Bole, Mutual Elevator Co. Ltd. to Fort William City Clerk, 5 October 1917.


109 See Anthony F. Upton, The Finnish Revolution, 1917-1918 (Minneapolis: University of
December 1917, independence was declared from Soviet Russia. The resulting civil war, fought between nationalist “Finnish White Guards” (who received military support from Germany) and the “Finnish Red Guards,” the largely working class supporters of the Soviet system, lasted until 1918. The victorious “White Guard” began a campaign of terrorizing those who had been members of the Social Democratic Party or merely sympathized with the red cause. Many of these migrated, eventually making their way into the bush camps of Northern Ontario. Throughout North America, this new influx of Finns brought with them their dedication to socialism and breathed new life into those Finnish and non-Finnish organizations that predated their arrival.

According to Hill, local Wobblies “hailed the Russian Bolshevik [sic] revolution as something that had followed the IWW economic blueprint.” Mass meetings to

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114 A.T. Hill, “Historic Basis and Development of the Lumber Workers Organization and Struggles in Ontario,” 3. Hill’s comments on the IWW are hardly unique. For more on the IWW’s
protest continued involvement of Canadian armed forces in Russia were organized. A “Friends of Russia” committee, composed of workers representing a number of organizations and trade unions in Port Arthur and Fort William, was also established. And as A.T. Hill remembered, within the columns of the newly-created Vapaus, members of the Finnish community could engage with recent events in Russia and enter into closer bonds with fellow Finns working in other lumber camps.

Many Wobblies viewed the Russian Revolution much like other socialist organizations in North America. Its success was seen as an indication that the end of capitalism was at hand and that workers in North America should take heart from the events in Russia. Despite becoming largely inactive in the region during the second half of the First World War, the IWW remained vigorous across the border in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Most notably, the Superior District Lumber Workers Industrial Union No. 500 continued to agitate and lead strikes. It was amongst the lumber workers in response to the Russian Revolution, see Melvyn Dubofsky, We Shall be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 349-422; Philip S. Foner, The Bolshevik Revolution, its impact on American radicals, liberals, and labor (New York: International Publishers, 1967); and William Preston, Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903-1933 (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), 91-97.

Canada played an active part in Allied intervention in Russia to overthrow the Bolsheviks. Over 5,000 troops were sent to Siberia, including a contingent of RNWMP and 599 were sent to North Russia to operate in the Murmansk and Archangel area. See Roy MacLaren, Canadians in Russia, 1918-1919 (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1976); John Swettenham, Allied Intervention in Russia 1918-1919. And the Part Played by Canada (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1967), 54 and 128; and Robert Jackson, At War With the Bolsheviks (London: Tandem, 1974).


The Chicago-based General Executive Board of the IWW argued that, while not Bolshevists, “we rejoice with a full heart every time the Bolsheviks destroy some instrument of oppression and liberate the masses from their hard masters, and their achievements along this line alone make us forget their incapacity for economic reconstruction, and would in themselves be sufficient to keep us in good humour.” See The One Big Union Monthly (hereafter OBUM) (Chicago) (May 1919): 7.

OBUM (Chicago) (April 1919): 56.
Wisconsin and Minnesota and in classes taken at the Work People’s College in Duluth, that Hill had spent much of the war.

Drawn to the growing unrest at the Lakehead, Hill moved to Port Arthur in 1917 and dedicated himself to the activities of local Finnish socialists. On behalf of the IWW LWIU, Hill and those he recruited toured much of Northwestern Ontario in an attempt to organize workers and to drum up subscriptions for Vapaus. Much of the IWW’s attention was focused on the Russell and Newaygo Timber Company and its operations within the District of Thunder Bay. Despite high hopes, in the end Hill was fired (both for his agitation and for conflicts with Lutheran Finnish workers). There now existed within the camps a rift between non-socialists and socialists and debates over the various interpretations of Marxism.

The IWW appealed greatly to immigrant workers in Northwestern Ontario. As Holmer Borg, a Swedish lumber worker and IWW organizer, recalled in 1972: “The IWW organized through its members. Every member was expected to organize, not necessarily by having well organized meetings, [but] simply by talking among workers.” The IWW also tended to focus on the immediate issues that faced workers where they organized. In addition, many recent immigrants were drawn to unions whose organizers actually spoke their language. Most of the other established trade

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119 By 1917, the Russell and Newaygo Timber Company was one of the largest producers of pulpwood and one of the region’s biggest employers of bush workers. The company’s camps were seen as ripe for organizing as they had a reputation for poor working conditions and general labour unrest.
120 LUA, Jean Morrison Labour History Collection, General Series, 186, Tape 4, Interview with Holmer Borg, 1972.
121 Avery, ‘Dangerous Foreigners’, 53.
unions tended to send English-speaking organizers who had little or no actual experience in the regions they were visiting or with the workers they were trying to organize.

Largely because of the revitalization of the SDPC and the formation of the IWW, the police spent much of the First World War watching socialist organizations at the Lakehead very closely, the Finns in particular.\(^{123}\) While many Finnish socialists such as Martin Hendrickson, F.J. Syrjala, and Sanna Kallio-Kannasto toured throughout Canada at the start of the First World War speaking against the conflict and selling literature, often this surveillance had as much to do with domestic concerns as it did with international events.\(^{124}\) One report by the Dominion Police referred to the Finns in Port Arthur as “anarchists pure and simple.”\(^{125}\) As increasingly became the case in the months following the first Russian Revolution, the ethnicity of the strikers became the main point of discussion in local newspapers and in negotiations with government officials. A strike by pulp mill workers and freight handlers in Fort William in April, for instance, immediately led to concerns over a general strike and a focus on the fact that many “non-naturalized immigrants” were on the strike committee.\(^{126}\)


\(^{125}\) Avery, ‘Dangerous Foreigners’, 73.

\(^{126}\) *PADNC*, 30 April and 5 May 1917. The strike committee consisted of James Cline, a German-American; Dan Olson, a naturalized Norwegian; Charles Jackson, a non-naturalized Finn; J.B. Gravelle, a French-Canadian; and Ed Esse and Fed Wayreynon, both non-naturalized Finns. Owing to the Port Arthur Ship Building Company’s designation as an essential industry under the 23 March 1916 Order-In-Council, the 70 Finns, five Russians, and three Poles, in particular, were threatened with immediate deportation and being forced to fight for “their own country.” See *PADNC*, 25 May 1917.
A more radical opposition to conscription accompanied the renewed strike activity. Since 1914, SDPC locals at the Lakehead had increasingly aligned themselves with the party’s anti-war position. For example, over 850 men and women, mostly from the Finnish and Greek communities of both cities, attended a meeting chaired by Bryan in the Port Arthur Finnish Labour Temple on 3 June to pass a resolution condemning conscription. While the 1916 anti-registration rallies featured a number of moderate socialists, it is telling that the leadership of this particular struggle was comprised of those who, in a few short years, would form the core of the local Communist movement. The meeting featured an open discussion by both those in favour and those against conscription. Both Herbert Barker and A.E. Kettridge, members of the Port Arthur SDPC English-branch executive, pointed out to those in attendance, “twenty-three men owning ninety out of 101 industries control ninety per cent of the capital of the country.” They went on to argue that a “selective draft” would mean “that the government can pick but the Liberals and labor men and keep the power of the country in their hands indefinitely.” Many of those applauded William Welsh when he told the government officials present, “I’ll fight for my country when you show me where my country is.” Bryan, quoting from a speech made by German socialists to the Reichstag, told those present that “it is the duty of workers to fight the tyranny of government in their own country. Because a man is born on a piece of land which he never owns is no

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127 Joining Harry Bryan to speak to those in attendance (a cross strata of the region included returned soldiers) were Herbert Barker, A.E. Kettridge, and William Welsh. See The Canadian Forward, 24 May 1917.
128 PADNC, 4 June 1917 and The Canadian Forward, 12 June 1917.
129 Even the hostile Daily News-Chronicle remarked that the heavily anti-conscription audience allowed those in favour of the government, including returned soldiers, to speak (although only after the main speakers had had their say) and the presence of the Chief of Police and a number of officers had been unneeded due to the total lack of disorder. See PADNC, 4 June 1917.
reason for his having to fight for it.” Supporting conscription, he argued, “means that we favor putting a debt on the heads of our children. They will have to pay the national debt when we are dead.”

Tensions came to a head in late July, when Fort William police uncovered the existence of an anti-conscription league operating in the twin cities. Headquartered in Port Arthur, the league’s membership drew heavily from members of the SDPC. Its executive consisted of Kettridge (president), Barker (treasurer) and J. Brown (Secretary). Despite attempts by local officials, and assistance from the militia, meetings occurred in secret and, as one newspaper reported in September, “all is quiet and [unclear] along Bay street, especially in the neighborhood of the [Finnish Labour Temple] which is generally supposed to be the headquarters of the socialistic and anti-conscription element.”

In early October 1917, about 1,100 elevator employees in both Port Arthur and Fort William went on strike over wages, hours, and working conditions. The strike essentially ground all activity in both cities to a halt as the ports could no longer take incoming ships and the CPR became congested as grain coming from the West could no longer be unloaded. Much of the discussion in both cities surrounding the strike focused on the conflicting reports over how many “aliens” were involved. The Grain Elevator Workers’ Union Local 934, in particular, took issue with claims by employers and some officials that workers of certain (i.e. non-English) “nationalities” on strike had been discriminating against returned soldiers. The unions involved claimed only 40% of the

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130 *PADNC*, 4 June 1917.
131 *PADNC*, 21 July 1917.
132 *PADNC*, 12 September 1917.
militants were “aliens,” while the employers reported to local newspapers that such people made up over 80% of the strikers. The ethnicity of the strikers was clearly a paramount issue in public representations of the strike.\(^{133}\) By the fifth day of the strike, the workers were being ordered back to work, on pain of being arrested. They refused. Only after the personal intervention of Prime Minister Borden – who he assured strikers that arbitration proceedings would be instituted and that the government would assume control of the elevators – did they return to work after two further days.\(^{134}\)

The specter of socialism and the involvement of aliens in the growing labor unrest in the region also figured prominently during the run-up to the federal election of 1917. The election, Desmond Morton and Terry Copp argue, “gave Canadian labour its first real opportunity to test its strength at the ballot box.”\(^{135}\) Socialists at the Lakehead united behind labour candidates throughout Northwestern Ontario.\(^{136}\) The local ILP, operating under the banner of the Ontario Labor Party created in Hamilton, nominated former alderman and recently-wounded soldier Sid Wilson.\(^{137}\) Wilson, however, declined and James Dunbar took his place.

Dunbar’s campaign centered on the slogan: “It is a struggle between democracy and autocracy.” Specifically attacking the Borden government, he described the Conservatives as “organized hypocrisy” and declared “Borden was either a traitor to the principles of conservatism or a traitor to democracy.”\(^{138}\) Dunbar disturbed the local
establishment press, because he seemed capable of uniting pro- and anti-labour elements in his opposition to conscription. “This little group of men have suddenly buried their own name,” the editor of the newspaper commented, “which, by their conduct and advocacy they had utterly discredited and now bob up as independent labor men. Life has its ironies, but the leopard cannot change its skin and the autocrats of the Socialist party will, without a doubt, seek to be the autocrats of the new Independent Labour Party.”

Dunbar and Albert Hugh Dennis, a candidate in the riding of Fort William-Kenora, received the endorsement of English and non-English speaking socialists. Their platforms focused on the inequality treatment meted out to various groups of workers and, generally, condemned capitalism. Both men, speaking at the Port Arthur Finnish Labour Temple in early December, argued that within three months Germany would experience what had happened in Russia. Canada, they suggested, would soon follow suit. “For my part,” one speaker finished to thunderous applause, “I hope to see it.”

Despite his ostensible enthusiasm for radical change, however, the centrist Dunbar distanced himself from socialist organizations in Port Arthur as the campaign progressed. He declared that he was not “a representative of the Socialist party in Port Arthur or any other association and that he was nominated as a straight Independent candidate by the Trade Unions in Port Arthur.” In fact, his attitude revealed the rift that continued to exist within the region. In his very short speech made to those gathered at the Port Arthur Finnish Hall, he declared, “If the working class stood together they could win” and denied being a socialist in any sense of the word. Rumours even circulated in the city that he had gone so far as to send a letter to the local Liberal Association.

139 PADNC, 21 November 1917.
140 PADNC, 5 December 1917.
endorsing Laurier’s position.\textsuperscript{141}

Such gestures were not enough to win Dunbar and Dennis the support of the mainstream media. Its attacks upon them were doubtless sharper because they were seemingly uniting, in an original manner, the region’s disparate socialist and labour elements. “Genuine Labor Union Men,” the Unionist candidate for the riding of Port Arthur-Rainy River F.H. Keefer advised the local newspapers “are like Samuel Gompers – their President fighting and working to win the war.”\textsuperscript{142} Despite the very vocal and public support given to the war effort by labour councilors such as Sid Wilson, union and socialist organizers were increasingly targeted for their position on conscription and support for the events in Russia. The advertisements on behalf of both Robert Manion, the Fort William-Kenora Unionist candidate and future Conservative Party leader, and E.H. Keefer stooped to unprecedented levels of viciousness. Daily, banners could be found in local newspapers suggesting that “Between Keefer and Dunbar, the Kaiser Would Vote for Dunbar!” and “Shall we go on with the war in which we started three and a half years ago, or shall we quit as the Russians have done?”\textsuperscript{143}

The ILP candidates in both ridings were viewed as “merely obstructionists.” The party had been subverted by “socialist elements,” declared the Liberal-supporting Port Arthur Daily News-Chronicle.\textsuperscript{144} While the specter of socialism and the appeal to

\textsuperscript{141} PADNC, 5 December 1917.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{143} PADNC, 30 November 1917; FWDTJ, 12 December 1917; and Roy H. Piovesana, Robert J. Manion: Member of Parliament for Fort William, 1917-1935 (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1990), 12.
\textsuperscript{144} PADNC, 30 November 1917. Interestingly, the list of delegates to the joint convention at Kenora for the nomination meeting include A. Mustonen, editor of Canadan Uutiset and A. Kyro, a former member of the Finnish branch of the SDPC. See PADNC, 12 November 1917. On Gompers and trade unionism in Canada during the war, see Samuel Gompers, American Labor
prejudice against enemy aliens by Manion and Keefer carried the day, Dennis and Dunbar did receive over 2,000 votes in each of their respective ridings. These results and the formation of a new branch of the SDPC in Fort William and the election of Bryan as its secretary shortly afterwards certainly did not calm the fears of right-wing opinion. It turned increasingly to the vilification of the Finns.

The increasing focus on the Finns in Port Arthur no doubt resulted in part from the shift of focus of IWW agitation in Ontario to the Finnish Labour Temple in Port Arthur in 1917. Throughout the winter of 1917-1918, Hill and other Wobbly organizers set out from the city and successfully organized lumber workers throughout Northwestern Ontario under the IWW banner. Success was limited to those regions not dominated by the railroad and AFL-affiliated unions. However, although IWW organizational successes were confined to those lumber camps where Finnish workers predominated, within Fort William and Port Arthur a series of strikes involving hundreds of workers between April and July were perceived to have been motivated by the Wobblies. Such a belief was only fuelled by reports in April 1918 that “enemy aliens” intended to organize a massive strike in both Fort William and Port Arthur in protest against the war and internment. The agitators turned out to be non-enemy foreign socialists led by the Finns.

In May 1918, just under a hundred building labourers and shipyard workers were

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146 The Canadian Forward, 10 February 1918. Bryan’s connections to the IWW are unclear at this point.
147 LAC, Robert Borden fonds (hereafter RB), MG26-H, OC 519, 56639-56640, Chief Commissioner of Police to F.A. Acland, Deputy Minister of Labour, 9 May 1918.
involved in strikes over wages. A general strike of all carpenters and joiners was only averted by a last-minute deal. This was accompanied by a two-day strike by the 240 employees of the Great Lake Dredging Company in Fort William. The shipyard strike, in particular, worried many. As Frederick Urry reported to F.A. Acland, it would have resulted in the complete standstill of every industry in the twin cities.148 Through October, the threat of violence overshadowed all negotiations. The month began with a strike of CPR freight handlers. On 7 October, 500 elevator workers went on strike for recognition of their union, increased wages, and better working conditions. By 25 October, coal handlers in both cities had walked off the job and commenced a sympathy strike. The local crown attorney, W.F. Langworthy, was told to arrest the strikers for defying the no strike Order in Council.149 As the Toronto Globe reported, it appears that the ending of the strike by the elevator operators and the coal handlers had a lot to do with the threat.150

This growing unrest in the region led the mayors of Port Arthur and Fort William to petition the provincial and federal governments for remedial action. In June 1918, the federal government appointed C.H. Cahan – a wealthy Montreal lawyer and notorious alarmist throughout the war years – to examine the activities of the organization in the region.151 According to Donald Avery, Cahan’s report was based on the testimony of

148 LAC, DL, vol. 309, strike 107, Frederick Urry to F.A. Acland, 12 June 1918. For more on the strike, see Strike 120 and FWDTJ, 5 May 1918.
149 LAC, DL, vol. 309, strike 157A. Langworthy also publicly made it known that the department would seek to have all strikers drafted into the militia. See FWDTJ, 25 October 1918 and PANC, 25 October 1918.
150 Toronto Globe, 29 October 1918.
151 Donald Avery, Reluctant Host: Canada’s Response to Immigrant Workers, 1896-1994 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995), 75 and Rodney, Soldiers of the International, 17. C.H. Cahan belongs to a long list of wartime bureaucrats that had the ear of the more hawkish
local police officials and, most interestingly, “respectable labour leaders.”¹⁵² Cahan’s findings supported the government’s belief that a “Bolshevick [sic] conspiracy” was developing in those areas where Russian, Finnish, and Ukrainian workers could be found in large numbers. His report also concluded that the growing disturbances at the Lakehead and throughout the country had more to do with the activities of the Bolsheviks in Russia than with the war. As a result, Cahan’s final report in September recommended that Ukrainian, Finnish, and Russian workers and their organizations be added to the list of “enemy aliens.”¹⁵³ The Dominion Government accepted his recommendations and on 25 September 1918 passed an Order-in-Council declaring that, under the War Measures Act, “all socialist, syndicalist, anarchist and other subversive organizations” were illegal. Over 15 socialist organizations were mentioned by name in this ban, including the IWW, SDPC, and the FSOC, but interestingly not the SPC.¹⁵⁴ In addition, most domestic and imported socialist publications were also declared illegal, including Työmes and Industrialisti.¹⁵⁵

members of the Bordon government. According to Kealey, they brought with them “a set of business and media linkages previously missing. In the process they pioneered a number of repressive innovations, which either remained in place thereafter, such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and its security and intelligence apparatus, or remained as ideas to be drawn on again in later emergencies such as internment, censorship, and conscription.” See Kealey, “State Repression of Labour and the Left,” 386.

¹⁵² Avery, Reluctant Host, 74-75.
¹⁵³ LAC, RB, OC 519, 56657-56658, Cahan to C.J. Doherty, Minster of Justice, 20 July 1918; 56665-56681, Cahan to C.J. Doherty, Minster of Justice, 14 September 1918; Rodney, Soldiers 17-18; and Pilli, Finnish-Language Press, 91.
¹⁵⁵ The exception was the Sudbury based Vapaus established in 1917. See Pilli, “Finnish-Canadian Radicalism and the Government of Canada from the First World War to the Depression,” 23. The ban, interestingly, also included the right-wing Port Arthur-based Finnish
By 1918, the growing unrest amongst workers began to manifest itself in the pages of non-English language newspapers across the country. Demonstrations and strikes became common. In response, officials at the Lakehead, fearing the worst, began to call for the suppression of all workers’ organizations within the region. The earliest such calls were made by patriotic organizations such as the Great War Veterans’ Association. They demanded that all “enemy alien” newspapers be suppressed, called for “compulsory badges for ‘foreigners’” and championed “forced labour for ‘Austrians’ and German men in Canada.”

In Port Arthur and Fort William, this intensified nativism influenced the newly formed branches of the IWW, the SDPC, and the FSOC. It also affected the Finnish and Ukrainian communities. Both their languages were declared “enemy languages.”

Cahan, for example, suggested the registration of aliens should include Russians, Ukrainians, and Finns as they “are now being thoroughly saturated with the Socialistic

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doctrines which have been proclaimed by the Bolsheviki [sic] faction of Russia.” This was also extended to the IWW for its radical actions before the war in the United States and Western Canada and SDPC, as many of the leaders in Russia and Red Guard in Finland had been prominent in those two organizations.\textsuperscript{158} Edward Laine further contends that the government targeted the SDPC because its membership was largely comprised of recent immigrants.\textsuperscript{159}

The FSOC appealed their inclusion. In doing so, however, it drove a wedge between its membership and the socialist community at large. While needing to distinguish itself from other groups to become exempt, the FSOC leaders were not unlike other trade unionists and independent laborites who saved their organizations at the expense of class solidarity. For example, in his attempt to have both Vapaus and the FSOC reinstated by federal authorities, J.W. Ahlqvist, former secretary of the FSOC, attacked other organizations rather than discussing the merits of the workers they represented.\textsuperscript{160} By December, they had succeeded and received permission to re-organize as the FSOC on the condition that the organization not be involved in any workers’ party.

The suppression of the IWW, the SDPC, and other working-class organizations in 1918 did little to alleviate the desire of workers in the region to organize and fight for immediate changes in working conditions and for the eventual restructuring of society.

Although hampered in its ability to organize workers and take an active role in labour disputes, a makeshift apparatus of the IWW continued to operate and agitate under the guidance of Hill in small underground groups supported by the Finnish Federation of the SDPC. In addition, Finnish and Ukrainian workers’ organizations continued to operate, even if in a much more limited capacity. Unorganized workers also continued to fight for recognition despite the threat of violence, incarceration, and impressments into military service. Lakehead organizers had many grounds on which they could organize local leftists. For Finnish socialists at the Lakehead, the period, according to Nick Viita, was “fateful.” Many of the workers and co-operative restaurants in Port Arthur and Fort William ceased operation. Even the Port Arthur Finnish Labour Temple, for example, was closed by the Canada Permanent Mortgage Company after the Finnish Building Company defaulted on its loan.

Another result of the First World War was the movement of the Italian community in both Fort William and Port Arthur away from labour action. They had been key to the vibrant protests of the pre-war period. Many had fought the Germans as they had served in both the Canadian and Italian forces. Now they were persecuted by the Canadian state. Many chose silence, and others abandoned leftism for participation in mainstream political parties. As Penny Petrone would later remember: “‘Communist’

\[163\] This situation remained until 1919 when the newly established Finnish support ring of the One Big Union bought control of the temple for $29,000. See Viita, “The Origins of the Canadian Finnish Labour Movement,” 7.
\[164\] Antonio Pucci, “Thunder Bay’s Italian Community 1880s-1940s,” in *The Italian Immigrant*
[was] a word we whispered because it was supposed to be ‘bad’ although we did not know why.”

In his speech to the 1917 TLC Convention, longtime labourite Louis Peltier captured the feeling of socialists at the Lakehead during the final years of the war: “Every wreath of smoke from the battlefields of Europe is weaving a rope that will hang every vestige of capitalism.” Such socialists felt themselves to be living in a time of drastic, even apocalyptic change. Moreover, many believed they should respond to such a time with new kinds of organizations fighting for a more rigorous kind of socialism. The structure of socialist organizations operating at the Lakehead would shortly undergo a dramatic change. The February and October revolutions in Russia brought with them both new inspirations for local socialists and a focal point for attacks by anti-socialists. As Ivan Avakumovic has written, government officials “shared the fairly widespread fear that strikes would lead to disorders which, if unchecked, might degenerate into a Communist takeover of Canada.”

Government repression reaped a legacy of resistance. Many of those interned later felt that the very internment camps intended to stem the influence of “agitators” galvanized and reinvigorated the movement. Internees, despite doing the same work under worse conditions, were paid far less than the actual value of their labour. As Lubomyr Luciuk has stated: “While passive resistance was common, some internees were

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Experience, ed. John Potestio and Antonio Pucci (Thunder Bay: Canadian Italian Historical Association, 1988), 93.

165 Petrone, Breaking the Mould, 77.

166 Lipton, The Trade Union Movement in Canada, 175.

more vigorous in protesting against the conditions in which they found themselves.”

“The end of the war,” comment Margaret Frenette and Patricia Jasen, “did not bring
greater ethnic harmony… because the Red Scare caused by the Bolshevik Revolution in
Russia intensified fears and suspicions and some local immigrants active in the labour
movement were deported for having Bolshevik sympathies.” Socialists at the
Lakehead, then, would seem to have been given the necessary catalyst for the
construction of a renewed sense of purpose.

By the end of the First World War, a multitude of socialist organizations had
made an appearance at the Lakehead. All of these organizations, though, did share the
same goal: the transformation of society into one more equitable for the working masses.
Such organizations inherited a complex Lakehead legacy, one that combined moments of
divisiveness and ethnic tension with subtler bonds of unity and solidarity. While the
largely Anglo-Saxon leaders may have appeared to be the prime movers, they were
subject to the concerns and desires of the “ethnic” majority, led by the Finns, which
provided much of the rank-and-file strength. The participation of the Finns and their
organizations at the Lakehead was clearly a requirement for regional and, as the next
section will establish, even national organizations to succeed.

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168 Luciuk, *A Time for Atonement*, 13 and 20. For example, in the 1916 riot in the Kapuskasing
internment camp, 1,200 prisoners squared off against 300 guards. There is no doubt that, owing to
the high percentage of Ukrainians involved in workers’ and socialist organizations, that they were
detrimentally affected. See Luciuk, 8 and W.D. Otter, *Internment Operations 1914-1920* (Ottawa,
1921), 20. Unfortunately, as Melnycky has discovered, determining the nationality of the
internees or of those registered as "enemy aliens" is difficult, since relevant archival materials
were destroyed at the National Archives of Canada after World War II. See P. Melnycky, “The
Internment of Ukrainians in Canada,” in *Loyalties in Conflict: Ukrainians in Canada During the
169 Frenette and Jasen, “Community through Culture,” 151.
PART 2

From Winnipeg to the Workers’ Unity League
Chapter 4
“A Bolshie Holiday?” The Lakehead and the Winnipeg General Strike

While the First World War may have decimated the ranks of both socialist organizations and trade unions throughout Canada, the oppression experienced by many workers coupled with the apparent success of Vladimir Il’ich Lenin and the Bolsheviks in Russia created an atmosphere of hope for many. Workers in Canada began to appraise their situation. In light of the rising cost of living and growing unemployment, they noted the new situation in Russia. There can be no doubt that many socialists saw the success of the Bolsheviks through rose-colored glasses – often ignoring the accompanying violence Lenin directed against many in the working class – but the ethos of revolution soon began to infuse many pre-war organizations and form the ideological foundation for new ones. As Ian McKay has suggested, “revolution” replaced “evolution” as the key word for Canadian socialists.1 The most famous single event that occurred on the cusp of this second socialist formation, McKay has argued, was the Winnipeg General Strike.

For historians, the Winnipeg General Strike has long been a watershed event. In fact, most works on the history of the left in Canada consider the Winnipeg General Strike to be the significant moment in the left’s response to the growing capitalist nature of the country following the First World War. The year 1919 has taken on a mythical role in the struggle of labouring peoples from coast to coast. It has been used as the centrepiece of a number of highly influential discussions and theories about the nature of radicalism and its development within Canada. Despite varying explanations of the strike

itself, historians have attempted to explain the nature of the radicalism that marked the event and socialist activities afterwards.

While the history of the strike remains a matter of debate, it deeply influenced the nature of socialist organizations in Canada and ushered in a new era.\(^2\) It also profoundly changed how the Canadian government viewed socialism in general. As Merrily Weisbord writes, “For the Canadian government, the Winnipeg General Strike brought the bogeyman of the Russian Revolution home to roost.”\(^3\) However, despite the important role of socialists at the Lakehead later in the One Big Union (OBU), the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies), and the Communist Party of Canada (CPC), historians have treated the region as an appendage of the Winnipeg situation in 1919. As David Bercuson has suggested, the Winnipeg General Strike had “far-reaching effects upon organized labour across Canada,” in the form of sympathy strikes. These strikes, located mostly in a host of Western Canadian towns and cities including Fort William


and Port Arthur, he argues, “were limited in scope and did not last very long.”

Even D.C. Masters, in his more discerning observation that “there was no large body of radical opinion to which to appeal,” mistakenly suggests that, “strikes in Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Port Arthur, and Toronto, helped to maintain morale.”

While historians have long made the jump in logic that Port Arthur and Fort William, known throughout the pre-War period as one of the most unsettled regions, would undoubtedly support the Winnipeg strikers, no such sympathy strike occurred.

Considering the radical ideas and labour violence that characterized the pre-war socialist experience at the Lakehead and marked the last years of the war, this mild response in itself should be viewed as remarkable. It would be wrong to believe that the absence of a sympathy strike was synonymous with a lack of support for the Winnipeg strikers. Many socialists and trade unionists at the Lakehead whole-heartedly believed in what their Winnipeg comrades, ostensibly, were fighting to achieve. They even, in 1919, began to break down many of the barriers separating different groups. Anthony Rasporich has described the year 1919 as an “anomaly,” in that Fort William’s many east-end ethnic groups became interested for the first time in politics. He notices a similar pattern among the British-born and English-speaking workers of Port Arthur.

As this chapter will show, the lack of dramatic Lakehead support in the form of strike action in 1919 stemmed from the region’s distinctive class chemistry in the postwar years. First, past ethnic-tinged violence and socialist/trade unionist tensions continued to

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4 Bercuson, Confrontations at Winnipeg, 155.
5 Masters, The Winnipeg General Strike, ix.
6 Bercuson, for example, describes the workers at the Lakehead as “perhaps the most militant in the country.” See Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1978), 42.
be influential and, in a sense, functioned as cautionary tales. Few informed local people would have been oblivious to the risk of a substantial loss of life, if pre-war conflicts were to be any guide. Secondly, the centre-left managed to mobilize much more effectively and appeal to a wider base of support. The establishment of a Citizens’ Committee in Port Arthur and a Citizens’ League in Fort William by middle-class workers, backed by both city councils, successfully defused the very real threat of strike action.

The Lakehead’s seemingly quiet response to Winnipeg 1919 can be understood in part by looking first at the final months of the Great War. The decision by Vladimir Il'ich Lenin and his government to pull out of the First World War on 23 February 1918, the subsequent collapse of the Eastern front, and the movement of tens of thousands of German and Austrian troops to the Western Front, greatly influenced the actual conflict and the perception of the Bolsheviks within Canada. Ostensibly, hundreds of Canadian and allied troops were sent as part of a strategy for winning the war by reopening the Eastern Front. These troops, though, did not leave Russia following the end of the war. As Roy MacLaren remarks, propelled in part by a desire to keep wartime factories active and to demonstrate Canada’s new international status, the government decided to keep the troops in Russia to give “the anti-Bolsheviks time to reorganize and to recruit new forces with which to eliminate what [Winston Churchill] later called the ‘foul baboonery of Bolshevism.’”8 While the Allied intervention ultimately failed, newspaper coverage in Canada increasingly portrayed the postwar Bolsheviks much the same guise they had applied to the Germans and Austrians during the war.

Just as the Dominion government announced the Canadian troops would be leaving Siberia, newspapers increasingly ran articles describing Bolshevism as the new threat.⁹ Leading socialists in the United States, such as Eugene Debs, were targeted. The connection between them and figures in Russia was the subject of articles and editorials. Events in Russia, and the spread of Bolshevism in particular, became a consistent topic in local newspapers. Authorities as diverse as nineteenth-century philosopher Thomas Carlyle (who had said, “no revolution ever rises above the intellects of those that make it”) to contemporary part-time analysts of “Bolshevism” who saw it as the hobby of the “amateur world-mender”¹¹ were drawn upon to denounce the Revolution. Bolsheviks were all-purpose villains, blamed for a host of ills, such as the dissent then sweeping the mines of Western Canada.¹² Closer to home, there were, from the mainstream perspective, even more alarming indications of a growing Bolshevik presence in the region.¹³

How was this impressive propaganda offensive received in the Lakehead? For the most part, on the available evidence, Lakehead workers seem to have been ambivalent

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⁹ Surprisingly, no full-length monograph exists dealing specifically with the Canadian reaction to the events in Russia during 1917. The most thorough studies to date, although limited by their focus, are Theresa Catherine Baxter, “Selected Aspects of Canadian Public Opinion on the Russian Revolution and on its Impact in Canada, 1917-1919” (MA thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 1972) and Elliot Samuels, “The Red Scare in Ontario: The Reaction of the Ontario Press to the Internal and External Threat of Bolshevism, 1917-1919” (MA thesis, Queen’s University, 1971).
¹¹ FWDTJ, 8 April 1919.
¹² FWDTJ, 5 May 1919; Port Arthur News-Chronicle (hereafter PANC), 15 April 1919; 16 April 1919.
¹³ This concern is reflected in the number of files listed in the RCMP Personal Files Register and Subject Files Register for 1919. See Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds. R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929 (St. John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1994), 383-651.
about it. Within the cities of Port Arthur and Fort William, most of the major unions either were in the midst of negotiations or had just reached some form of agreement with their employers. For the first time in the history of the Lakehead, the 175 men working for the Freight Sheds in Port Arthur were English-speaking – a harbinger, some hoped, of a new class and ethnic atmosphere in the region. A reporter from the Port Arthur *Daily News-Chronicle* contentedly observed a “difference in the demeanour” of these men when they were contrasted with the “foreigner.”

The Dominion government quickly agreed to Fort William and Rainy River Unionist MP Robert Manion’s request for the establishment in mid-April of a detachment of 20 Royal North West Mounted Police in Fort William to “avert the possible rise of ‘Bolshevism and revolution.’” A general sympathetic strike in the Lakehead contained a revolutionary potential that, given the region’s strategic significance in the grain export trade and its geographical centrality, overshadowed even that of Winnipeg itself. Port Arthur and Kenora Unionist MP Francis Henry Keefer clearly felt there was a clear and present danger in the region when he argued that the entire force should be increased by 5,000 as “dangerous days were ahead of Canada” and “there were breeding places of revolution” that needed to be dealt with. As the editor of the Port Arthur *Daily News Chronicle* wrote the day before the Winnipeg General Strike began, “there is an element in this country consisting largely of aliens, which would welcome an opportunity to start a revolution.” This group, he suggested, was only waiting for the right conditions. The

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14 *PANC*, 30 April 1919.
16 *PANC*, 13 May 1919.
present unrest and increasing cost of living, “this rich soil for the alien agitator, striving for a repeat of the Russian revolution,” could be removed – either by timely reforms or by the exercise of armed force, the option emphasized by Keefer.\footnote{PANC, 14 May 1919.}

Another solution, advocated by officials in Port Arthur and Fort William, was to combine increased police presence with the deportation of “alien enemies.” Both city councils endorsed a letter sent by the Great War Veterans’ Association of Winnipeg to its local branches calling upon the “government to enact legislation to deport all undesirable aliens, to take aggressive steps to educate foreigners in English, to place a strict censorship on immigrations, and to keep foreigners under close observation.”\footnote{FWDTJ, 15 April 1919.}

Nowhere was this more apparent than in the Fort William meetings arranged by the Mathers Commission, convened after the war to inquire into the country’s widespread industrial unrest. Held just days before the rebellion in Winnipeg came to a head, the Commission only consulted with local employers. Both the Port Arthur and Fort William labour councils refused to participate, citing the commission’s perceived penchant for putting a premium on what employers reported and trivializing the concerns of workers.\footnote{PANC, 8 May 1919.}

The only unions to attend appear to have been the more traditional English-speaking affiliates of the AFL. As a result, the Fort William meeting focused mostly on representatives from the elevator companies, each “speaking as a working man.” Workers were criticized, not surprisingly, for blaming employers. As J.W. Irwin, superintendent of the Fort William Consolidated Elevator, suggested, “If workers would pay less regard to agitators and render their best services possible, the feeling of discord between

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17 PANC, 14 May 1919.
18 FWDTJ, 15 April 1919.
19 PANC, 8 May 1919.
employer and employee would entirely disappear.” Labour agitators were seen as men of inferior ability who were creating “a breach” between the employee and employer and exaggerating the plight of local workers. When Tom Moore asked for a clarification on what exactly was meant by “agitator,” one unnamed witness defined it as “a man who takes part in things where he has no interest.” When Moore asked if he, as a traveling labour organizer, might be considered an agitator, the witness commented, “possibly, but, not knowing you, I can’t say.”

Despite economic difficulties in some sectors of the local economy, those without work were, one witness informed Justice Mathers, in such a condition “by choice, but not of necessity.” When asked to clarify whether or not “the workingman is working under good conditions and that his trouble is that somebody is telling him he is not,” the same witness replied, “where a man has energy and ability he can get employment and get along nicely.” Frederick Urry, once a symbol of Lakehead leftism, now appeared in 1919 as a figure of the most moderate labour elements. He criticized the closed shop and deplored the impact of outside agitators.

Similarly, moderate sentiments could be heard among the Ukrainians, recently organized in a defensive league to combat signs of intolerance on the Port Arthur city council and elsewhere. Such Ukrainians disputed the careless use of the word “alien,” demanded that the federal government make provision for returned Ukrainian soldiers, and urged voluntary and state-assisted repatriation to the Ukraine of their fellow immigrants in the event of a continued glut on the local labour market. This was a far cry

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20 PANC, 14 May 1919.
21 PANC, 14 May 1919.
from the crazed Bolshevism derided and denounced in the press.\textsuperscript{22}

Nowhere was the growing suspicion of Bolshevism and the threat of growing revolutionary tendencies within the Canadian working class more apparent than in the Winnipeg General Strike. Even before the onset of the strike, both the Port Arthur and Fort William newspapers frequently contained articles culled from the national news services about the growing unrest in Winnipeg. Occasionally, it was reported by some unnamed resident that a fellow worker passing through the twin cities had commented on the deplorable conditions many in Winnipeg faced. News of the possibility of some form of general strike in Winnipeg reached the Lakehead on 7 May 1919.\textsuperscript{23} Between 7 and 14 May newspapers contained daily reports of the activities of the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council and, as early as 9 May, articles on the “inevitability” of a general strike.\textsuperscript{24} Residents of the Lakehead awoke on the 15 May to news that over 27,000 unionists had left their jobs to enjoy a “‘Bolshie’ Holiday.”\textsuperscript{25} The Fort William \textit{Daily Times-Journal} described Winnipeg on the second day of the strike as being “Primitive as [an] Indian Village,” a city held hostage by autocratic strike leaders and forcibly isolated from the wider world. Others discerned “Soviet rule” in a Winnipeg that had fallen under the rule of “Prussian war lords” and been transformed from a prosperous and busy city into a “non-producer.” In such analyses, both the strike committee and the Winnipeg elite were blamed for bringing the city to a standstill.\textsuperscript{26}

The Lakehead press thus orchestrated a ‘centrist response’ to Winnipeg that

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{FWDTJ}, 5 May 1919.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{FWDTJ}, 7 May 1919. Often connections between Ukrainians and Russians were within the context of military alliances and political intrigue. See, for example, \textit{FWDTJ}, 5 May 1919.
\textsuperscript{24} See \textit{FWDTJ} and \textit{PANC}, 7 May to 14 May 1919.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{FWDTJ}, 15 May 1919.
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{FWDTJ}, 16 and 17 May 1919.
seemingly found echo in the local labour movement. Unions and labour councils did not rise up in defence of Winnipeg. Even reports of trains carrying troops to the city aroused no response.\footnote{PANC, 16 May 1919.} As the Winnipeg conflict entered its most dramatic stage, a 20 May labour meeting in Fort William featuring Dominion Labour Party activists, including local alderman A.H. Dennis, focused on reassuring the public that “[the] people, not a select few, must govern here.”\footnote{FWDTJ, 21 May 1919. For a discussion of the second week of the strike as the launch of a crucial period, see McNaught and Bercuson, \textit{The Winnipeg General Strike: 1919}, 62-85.} The established craft unions saw little in Winnipeg to inspire them. They had traditionally promoted class alliance with the government, benefited from discriminatory practices against non-Anglo workers, and stood to lose much in any upsurge of radicalism.

At the same time, other workers, inspired by events in Winnipeg and restless with the leadership of such craft unionists, began to hold separate meetings to hear presentations by delegates from the General Strike committee and formulate tactics to have their grievances heard and acted upon. The same week that the Fort William and Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council announced their non-committal resolution, a closed meeting was held in the Corona Theatre in Fort William to which only men carrying union cards were admitted. The meeting was arranged to hear a delegate from the Winnipeg Strike committee who had accompanied A.T. Hill back to the Lakehead following his trip to meet the strike leaders.\footnote{Lakehead University Archives (hereafter LUA), Canadian Teollisuusunionistinen Kannatus Liito fonds (hereafter CTKL), MG10, Series D, 8, 10, “A.T. Hill Biography,” nd., p. 12.} He spoke to a full house, and received an encouraging response; with Bryan’s encouragement, the assembled workers passed resolutions favouring an immediate general strike, and bringing the issue to the urgent
attention of the trades and labour councils in the twin cities.\(^{30}\)

“We have nothing to give out for publication” was the comment provided to local newspapers by Fred Moore, secretary of the Fort William Trades and Labour Council, following a raucous meeting at the Finnish Labour Temple in Port Arthur to discuss the resolutions made at the previous night’s meeting chaired by Harry Bryan.\(^{31}\) In fact, while the council agreed with the complaints made by the Winnipeg strike committee, its actions were not condoned. The resolution put forward and passed called for action only in the event of “unfair methods or [the] use of the military.”\(^{32}\) Something similar had occurred two days earlier when trade unionists in Port Arthur met to discuss the issue and to listen to a speaker from Winnipeg. A.F. Manchee, secretary of the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council, reported that the meeting, open only to those carrying union cards, had been attended by over 1,000 trade unionists. A resolution had been passed at this meeting and a letter forwarded to the Winnipeg strike committee pledging their “full moral support for their brothers.” Speculation abounded following the announcement of the resolution. Some believed this meant that a sympathy strike was imminent in Port Arthur, while others connected to various unions scoffed at the idea and reminded residents that each union must take a vote on such a resolution.\(^{33}\)

These meetings, though, did not go unnoticed by federal, provincial, and local officials. Civic officials were watching the events in Winnipeg closely and, with the

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\(^{30}\) *FWDTJ* and *PANC*, 29 May 1919.

\(^{31}\) City of Thunder Bay Archives (hereafter TBA), Fort William fonds (hereafter FWF), Series 4: City Clerks Files (hereafter FWCC), 5, File 148, Fred E. Moore, Secretary, Trades and Labour Council to Mayor Murphy, Fort William 30 May 1919 and *FWDTJ*, 30 May 1919.

\(^{32}\) *FWDTJ*, 26 May 1919.

\(^{33}\) *PANC*, 28 May 1919.
strike of Kenora express handlers, with increasing concern.\textsuperscript{34} Despite the tepid resolutions put forward by the trades and labour councils, officials were cognizant of the more radical elements at the Lakehead (both meetings had been attended by large numbers of Finns and “Austrians”) and the role of Bryan and others in the unrest that had rocked the twin cities before the First World War.\textsuperscript{35}

Some local leaders also shared this worry. They tried to downplay the participation of non-Anglos fearing that this would discredit the efforts of organized labour. Even though the meeting at the Corona was held in opposition to the Fort William Trades and Labour Council, Fred Moore, for instance, took exception to statements by local papers that the majority of those in attendance were Finnish and Austrian. He argued that such comments were part of a “scheme seemingly practiced all over the country” to “heap upon its [organized labour’s] activities the stigma of non-patriotism.”\textsuperscript{36} Yet, officials in both cities believed that many immigrant workers were unpatriotic. Such fears were heightened when the Lakehead press began to broadcast the rumour that the IWW had orchestrated the Winnipeg Strike.\textsuperscript{37} As news of the growing turmoil arrived at the Lakehead, municipal, provincial, and federal officials began to worry about what effect the unrest in Winnipeg would have in the twin cities.\textsuperscript{38} Unions currently involved in contract negotiations distanced themselves from the radicalism thought to be sweeping

\textsuperscript{34} The Fort William City Clerk was informed by the Mayor of Kenora on 17 May that the express handlers of the railway depot had walked off the job in support of those in Winnipeg. See \textit{FWDTJ}, 17 May 1919.

\textsuperscript{35} The 19 May 1919 issue of the \textit{FWDTJ} contains an article describing this “peculiar feature” of the Winnipeg strike.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{FWDTJ}, 30 May 1919.

\textsuperscript{37} See \textit{FWDTJ}, 19 May 1919.

\textsuperscript{38} For an example of the type of coverage given see \textit{PADNC}, 17 May 1918.
Winnipeg.\textsuperscript{39}

When the residents of Port Arthur awoke on the morning of the 19 May to find that over 1,300 workers from the Lakehead’s biggest industry, the Port Arthur Ship Building Company, had gone on strike, they were quickly assured by both the unions and the company that the dispute had been caused by the suspension of ongoing negotiations. It was not a sympathy strike.\textsuperscript{40} Representatives from the City of Port Arthur, the Board of Trade, the Trades and Labour Council, and those unions involved all took part in the negotiations in an attempt to defuse the situation.\textsuperscript{41} As the boiler makers’ union and shipbuilders’ union’s representative, J. Grant, stated: “the best of feelings exists between the company and the men, and the men don’t wish to work for a better company, but we have got to get the high cost of living down, or else we have got to get sufficient wages to enable us to live.”\textsuperscript{42}

The striking unions in Port Arthur emphasized that their primary grievance was with the federal government’s stance toward a skyrocketing cost of living, and not with the local company. Local merchants and businessmen shared this sentiment. Frederick

\textsuperscript{39}\textit{PANC}, 28 May 1919.
\textsuperscript{40}\textit{PANC}, 19 May 1919; 21 May 1919; \textit{FWDTJ}, 19 May 1919; and Library and Archives of Canada (hereafter LAC), Department of Labour fonds (hereafter DL), RG27, vol. 313, strike 136, Frederick Urry to F.A. Acland, 15 and 19 May 1919. Newspaper articles from other parts of the country also reiterated this claim. See, for example, \textit{Saskatoon Phoenix}, 29 May 1919; \textit{Toronto Globe}, 21 May 1919; and \textit{Montreal Star}, 21 May 1919.
\textsuperscript{41}\textit{PANC}, 21 May 1919.
\textsuperscript{42} Crafts affected included, according to newspapers reports, 100 Machinists; 700 helpers, laborers, riveters, and bolters; 90 carpenters; 25 painters; 75 riggers; 40 blacksmiths; 45 electricians; 15 pattern makers; 60 moulders’; 25 boilermakers; 100 scaffoldmen; and 25 lathemen. Grant, for example, stated to the Fort William \textit{Daily Times-Journal} that by going on strike it might “be the means of getting the government to see what it means to have all this striking throughout the country.” \textit{FWDTJ}, 19 May 1919. For coverage of the strike, see \textit{PANC}, 13 and 19 May 1919.
Urry once more served as a spokesperson for this centrist perspective.\textsuperscript{43} Yet, while union representatives did have the Winnipeg strike on their mind, the possibility of a nation-wide general strike and the government fear of such an event was a tool to be used for their own immediate gains.\textsuperscript{44} The strike ended two days later with the workers receiving all of their demands.\textsuperscript{45} When the Fort William coal dockworkers did go on strike, both sides took care to distance their local issues from the situation in Winnipeg. This strike was in no sense a ‘sympathetic strike’ designed to emulate the Winnipeg model.\textsuperscript{46}

To deal with complaints over the increasingly high cost of living, councils in both Port Arthur and Fort William held special meetings to discuss the issue following the order-in-council rescinding the ban on the power municipalities held “over those making excess profits.” Fort William quickly established a Fair Price Inquiry Commission comprised of three representative taxpayers with the power to summon witnesses and to obtain court proceedings. The committee reported their findings to the Fort William City Council which, depending upon the findings, would then appoint another commission composed of the senior district Judge, a representative selected by labour, and a representative of the “commercial trades.” Their report was binding and forwarded with the council’s full endorsement to the Minster of Labour.\textsuperscript{47} However, as the editor of the

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{FWDTJ}, 26 May 1919.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{FWDTJ}, 19 May 1919. Grant, for example, stated to the Fort William \textit{Daily Times-Journal} that by going on strike it might “be the means of getting the government to see what it means to have all this striking throughout the country.”
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{FWDTJ}, 22 May 1919.
\textsuperscript{46} \textit{PANC}, 21 May 1919; 3 June 1919; 5 June 1919; \textit{FWDTJ}, 3 June 1919; 4 June 1919; 7 June 1919; 21 June 1919; \textit{Montreal Gazette}, 9 June 1919; \textit{Toronto Globe}, 4 June 1919; \textit{Toronto Star}, 4 June 1919; and \textit{Ottawa Citizen}, 4 June 1919. While the strike technically lasted until 25 June, workers actually had gone back to work fifteen days earlier and both the unions involved and company officials stressed publicly throughout that strike that negotiations continued unabated.
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{PANC}, 22 May 1919.
Port Arthur *Daily News Chronicle* reported, the council by its actions “washed its hands of any responsibility regarding the high cost of living” and instead demanded that the Dominion and Provincial Government not shirk their responsibility and “get at the ‘fountain head’ of the high cost of living [or] resign.”

By 29 May, rumours reached Ottawa that workers in Fort William and Port Arthur were meeting to decide whether or not to start a general sympathy strike. In a telegram to Fort William Mayor and ILP member, Harvey Murphy, the Dominion Minister of Labour, G. D. Robertson, attempted to assure officials in the twin cities that the Winnipeg strikers “deserve no sympathy from organized labour outside.” Robertson further informed Murphy that, under the pretext of supporting the Metal Trades Council and the right to collective bargaining, the strike was actually “intended to be a blow at international trade unions” and to rally support nationally for the One Big Union movement. The goal of the strikers and the union, he argued, was “the probable intention of seeking to overthrow constitutional affairs and governments both as to Federal, Provincial, and Municipal affairs.” As for the “Emissaries sent East and West this week for the purpose of obtaining sympathetic action in other cities,” Robertson believed that they were “wholly without justification as the citizens of points outside Winnipeg are in no way responsible for the dispute here and certainly should not be inconvenienced as a result of this local conflict.”

Upon Robertson’s request, Murphy forwarded the telegram to the Joint Trades and Labour Council. He promised to “seriously consider” their actions and even

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49 *TBA*, FWF, FWCC, 5, File 148, Telegram, G.D. Robertson to H. Murphy, 29 May 1919; *FWDTJ*, 29 May 1919; and *PANC*, 29 May 1919.
suggested that he had received reports indicating that the Winnipeg situation “is about to be amicably settled by arbitration.” Murphy, however, was well aware that trade unionists from both cities had already met independently at the Port Arthur Finnish Labour Temple, and had voted to tentatively support the Winnipeg strikers under certain conditions. In addition, he was also aware of the gathering held at the Corona Theatre in Fort William chaired by Harry Bryan that unanimously passed a resolution in favour of a sympathy strike. Murphy’s letter to the Joint Trades and Labour Council’s meeting on the afternoon of 29 May, newspapers in both cities reported, was returned and he along with Port Arthur’s mayor were informed that a resolution on the situation in Winnipeg had been passed. Its content, however, was not disclosed either to the local media or to civic officials.

The editor of the Fort William Daily Times-Journal, however, cautioned workers in both Port Arthur and Fort William to avoid being dragged by “the chariot wheels of Winnipeg” into a general strike. He reminded them that the “practiced socialist speaker” could easily portray the “triumphant victory of the workers and total extinction of capitalists.” Much less clear, according to the newspaper, were the ways in which any such triumph might be accomplished. “When the battle is over and the Winnipeg labor men have either lost or won or reached a settlement of some kind, they will be too busy repairing the ravages that weeks of enforced idleness have made in their own conditions to pay much attention to the workers of Fort William and Port Arthur.” Workers, the editor suggested, would be “knocking the props [out] from under their own city.”

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50 TBA, FWF, FWCC, 5, File 148, H. Murphy to Fred E. Moore, Secretary, Trades and Labour Council, 29 May 1919.
51 TBA, FWF, FWCC, 5, File 148, Fred E. Moore, Secretary, Trades and Labour Council to Mayor Murphy, Fort William 30 May 1919 and FWDTJ, 30 May 1919.
reminded them that they risked giving Winnipeg, the twin cities’ economic rival, an advantage.\textsuperscript{52}

Just as the more radical elements of the Lakehead’s working class were mobilizing in opposition to the status quo, so too were more moderate middle-class workers representing trade unions and professional and salaried workers arousing themselves in its defence. Upset with the Trades and Labour Councils’ decision to oppose, even tacitly, government intervention in the Winnipeg strike and by the handling of the strike by the various levels of government, centrists formed two new organizations, the Canadian Citizens’ League in Fort William and the Citizens’ Committee in Port Arthur, both in late May.\textsuperscript{53}

The Canadian Citizens’ League was envisioned as a pan-national organization headquartered in Fort William. Headed by Frederick Urry, the organization “promoted moderation and class co-operation,” and publicly denounced the Winnipeg General Strike as a “Bolshevik Plot.”\textsuperscript{54} Its manifesto upheld the rights of the middle class, which, it argued, “was ground between the upper and nether mill-stone.” Central to its worldview was the concept that “a properly constituted state or city” could never exist without “capital, the so-called middle-class, or labor.” To achieve class harmony, it believed, five objectives needed to be fulfilled:

1) To obtain the removal of unfair burdens imposed on all the classes;
2) To enable citizens, by united co-operation, to protect their interests when threatened by Government or industrial tyranny;

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{FWDTJ}, 30 May 1919.
\textsuperscript{53} The first announcement of this organization came in the 20 May 1919 issue of the \textit{FWDTJ}.
3) To scrutinize and watch legislation to ensure that all or any citizens are not unjustly exploited, and to secure amendments to the law where the interests of the citizens generally are unfairly dealt with;
4) To co-operate in the advancement of industry, both production, distribution and consumption, and to eradicate uneconomic practices;
5) To support by Every Means in Its Power Constituted Authority and to uphold the Present System in Canada of Constitutional Government.

The manifesto was designed to appeal as broadly as possible to centrist opinion in Fort William. In an apparent bid to win the support of newly-enfranchised women, it even suggested that the equality of men and women would be a guiding principle of the new organization.\(^{55}\)

Although the Canadian Citizens’ League enjoyed the support of the local press, another twin cities organization was the subject of much debate. “A storm of protest” resulted when the Port Arthur City Council passed a resolution at a special meeting supporting and legitimizing the powers of a Citizens’ Committee. Recognizing the “loyalty and discretion of the citizen’s [sic] committee,” the resolution requested that it “take all reasonable steps which may seem necessary to them to preserve the public peace, and that the city council will defray all expenses.” The Port Arthur City Council also declared that it would ensure that the public utilities commission and special police constables would be made available to them (and presumably under their control) in case of a general strike or as the citizens’ committee deemed necessary.\(^{56}\) The major difference between the two organizations – one not lost on the Port Arthur City Council – was the fact that one had arisen from civil society and the other from the state.

Those in support of the resolution, such as Aldermen F. Duncan Roberts and L. J.B. Bolduc, argued that as the people of Port Arthur in fact owned the utilities (as a

\(^{55}\) _FWDTJ_, 30 May 1919.

\(^{56}\) _PANC_, 3 June 1919 and _FWDTJ_, 3 June 1919.
result of decisions made in the 1902 election), they therefore enjoyed the collective right to ensure their protection. Not all councilors, however, were in favor of the resolution. Some discerned startling similarities between the Port Arthur Citizens’ Committee and the “Citizens Committee of 1000” that had arisen in opposition to the Winnipeg General Strike. The editor of the *Daily Times Journal*, for example, wrote that “any outside organization [which] desired to help in this work should be welcomed, but, on the other hand, no outside organization should be allowed to even make the ‘pretense’ of running the city.”57

Leading the opposition in Port Arthur was Alderman Sid Wilson, a former prominent local member of the Social Democratic Party of Canada. An officer of the 94th Battalion recently returned from Winnipeg and the president of the Port Arthur Branch of the Great War Veterans Association, he launched into a tirade as soon as the motion was put forward. He voiced his displeasure with the local newspapers for publishing “such stuff” and for their coverage of the Winnipeg General Strike, and noted, “In Winnipeg there was a great objection to a certain body of citizens trying to run the city apart from the city council.” In Winnipeg, the Committee of 1,000 had taken power against the wishes of the city council. In Port Arthur, the City Council was unbelievably cooperating in its own demise – even to the point of funding its rival!58 Alderman Dunbar agreed. By endorsing the “self-appointed” citizens’ committee, the Council itself was admitting that it was “not capable of coping with the situation [a general strike] should it occur.” Endorsement of the resolution, he argued, would only aggravate the situation at the

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57 The editor of the Fort William *Daily Times-Journal* also supported the notion that both the Fort William and Port Arthur City Councils would be able to maintain the law.
58 *FWDTJ*, 3 June 1919.
Lakehead and undermine municipal authority. When the announcement was made that
the resolution had passed, Alderman Young, who had joined Dunbar and Wilson as the
only councilors opposed to the scheme, turned to the members of the Citizens’
Committee present and cried out: “Now go ahead and run the city. Let us hand it over.”59

The controversy surrounding the Citizens’ Committee did not end with the
passage of the resolution. The decision by the Port Arthur City Council to instruct the
City Clerk to ask the secretary of the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council to update
the city council on the steps that could be taken to prevent a general strike also met with
hostility. Dunbar, himself a member of the joint trades and labour council, took exception
and informed the other city councilors that “the trades and labour council is not causing
the general strike; that is a mistaken idea which people might as well get out of their
heads first as last.” Distancing the council from any possible action taken by the more
radical unions, he argued that it was the unions that would make such a decision and it
was from them that information would have to be requested. Alderman Bolduc, one of
the chief supporters of the Citizens’ Committee, scoffed at Dunbar’s suggestion and
found it odd that the TLC, which he viewed as the centre of the existing unrest, was
unable to give information “to put a stop to the destruction of organized government.”60

While the tone of the Citizens’ League’s objectives became the content for
editorials in the Fort William newspaper, the very possibility of a sympathy strike had an
immediate impact on the Lakehead. Would “the sanest section of labour” continue to
prevail? Residents were divided between those who feared the local consequences of a
sympathetic strike and those who identified with the Winnipeggers’ demands. Were they

59 PANC and FWDTJ, 3 June 1919.
60 FWDTJ, 3 June 1919.
reasonable responses to the high cost of living and the autocracy of the federal
government? Alternatively, did foreign conspirators acting out of ulterior motives
orchestrate them? 61

The evidence of a growing division within the Joint Trades and Labour Council
did little to alleviate this concern. Many of the long established Anglo-dominated unions
had refused to participate in the strike vote. This included members of the Brotherhood of
Locomotive Engineers, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers, the
Order of Railway Conductors, and the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen. In fact, these
unions held their own separate meeting after which they called upon officials at all levels
of government to immediately intervene in Winnipeg to prevent “a nation-wide
catastrophe.” 62 This turmoil served to negate any chance at solidarity amongst all workers
and, by 4 June, newspapers in both cities began to report that unions “appear to be giving
up the idea of quitting their work.” 63 Interest in the Citizens’ League in Port Arthur,
having initially been positive, declined within days of its formation. 64 In fact, despite the
grandiose claims found in its manifesto, the Citizens’ League appears to have concerned
itself more with combining pleasure with business and taking “the day off for a Picnic.”
While it was more than willing to rally support for the establishment of a bowling club
and a picnic at an outlying resort, and to concern itself with the regulation of animals
within the city limits, nothing was done when the Grand Trunk decided to close its freight
sheds in Fort William and reduce many Ukrainian, Italian, and Finnish men to

61 FWDTJ, 3 June 1919.
62 FWDTJ, 2 June 1919. Unfortunately, after a thorough exploration, I have been unable so far to
obtain figures as to the total number of workers involved in these unions.
63 PADNC and FWDTJ, 4 June 1919.
64 PANC, 4 June 1919.
unemployment.65

Yet, however limited the League’s practical effects may have been, it exerted an important symbolic influence. Jean Morrison argues that the formation of the organization and the participation of many leading labour figures in it was one of the major reasons wide-scale sympathy strikes never occurred at the Lakehead.66 Existing evidence supports this claim. Following the establishment of these two citizens’ organizations, those unions and organizations that had participated in the vote in favour of a sympathy strike took a softer tone. While the announcement on 4 June 1919 that the members of the Joint Trades and Labour Council had voted in favour of a strike mandate did provoke a response from officials in both cities, the growing factionalism within the working class essentially made the motion toothless, despite the fact that a clear majority of those present favoured striking.67

In Fort William, the timing of the establishment of the league and the participation of Frederick Urry directly influenced both the outcome and the credibility of the sympathy strike vote. While a number of unions went on record supporting the voting proposal, others declined to participate. The public was not informed, however, which unions had taken what position.68 The cities, by their support of the two citizens’ committees and those committees’ appeal to a large number of workers, essentially forced the Joint Trades and Labour Council to open discussions with officials.

A day after the announcement that workers had voted in favour of supporting the

65 FWDTJ, 10 June 1919.
66 Morrison, “The Organization of Labour at Thunder Bay,” 129.
67 FWDTJ, 4 and 6 June 1919. Following the announcement, the mayor of Fort William immediately banned all forms of parades and large gatherings.
68 FWDTJ, 31 May 1919.
Winnipeg Strikers, representatives from the Fort William Trades and Labour Council agreed that their members would delay any strike activity and attend a mass meeting brokered by the Fort William Great War Veterans’ Association (GWVA). Interestingly, the GWVA and the Fort William Trades and Labour Council had been involved in separate meetings since the 22 May following the strike of dockworkers over the high cost of living. The GWVA was also cognizant of the recent decision of their Vancouver brothers to oppose the Winnipeg strike. The growing tensions between the Winnipeg GWVA and strikers in that city spurred the Fort William branch to approach the Joint Trades and Labour Council through their Fort William connections to ask for a delay in any strike activity until a public meeting among veterans, civic officials, labour leaders, and citizens could be held. The GWVA also asked and received clarification “upon what lines it [the strike] would be conducted.” In contrast to the Winnipeg strikers, representatives of the Joint Trades and Labour Council “strike committee” responded that if a strike were called, workers would still recognize the mayors of both cities as “the fountain of authority” in their respective cities.

Perhaps the most important item acquiesced to by the strike committee – evidently comprised mainly of Anglo trade unionists and supporters of the Independent Labour Party – was the GWVA’s request that any decision to strike be delayed until a response was received from Dominion and Provincial representatives to a resolution

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69 PANC, 22 May 1919 and LAC, DL, vol. 313, strike 136. Although it is not known if the Port Arthur Branch of the Great War Veteran’s Association met or attempted to meet with representatives of that city’s Trades and Labour Council, they did hold a similar position as their Fort William counterparts.
70 FWDTJ, 6 June 1919. The Fort William Great War Veterans Association was represented by Douglas Kerr. He had originally referred to the committee and the “strike committee,” but, following an objection by W.N. Welsh, he corrected himself and referred to them as “labour leaders.”
demanding immediate government action on both the situation in Winnipeg and on the high cost of living. Essentially, the resolution demanded that Mayor Murphy of Fort William contact all regional, federal, and provincial officials. These men should then deal with the Winnipeg situation and the growing cost of living or resign and submit such issues to the electorate. “There would be no trouble in Fort William,” J.R. Pattison suggested, if “detectives and scab clerks were kept out.” Representatives from the trade unions and labour party described the workers at the Lakehead as preferring to work with government officials. They were British “subjects” and “in full agreement with the British Constitution which they consider to be the greatest constitution on earth.” Trouble could be averted at the Lakehead, such centrists argued. Workers had successfully negotiated with their employers in both cities. A Winnipeg model of destructive polarization need not be followed in the region.71

The June meeting of unions did result in a resolution recognizing the lack of workers’ voices in determining working conditions and the role of the Dominion government in taking action. It called upon the government to legislate collective bargaining and to grant workers a living wage. Finally, it also demanded that action occur within 48 hours or the government resign and submit the question to the electorate. As the capacity crowd was comprised of fifty percent workers and the balance comprised of those unconnected to the labour movement and members of the newly-formed Canadian Citizens’ Committee, the resolution passed without any difficulty. While, on the one hand, such an outcome could be viewed as an acknowledgement of the strike committee’s concerns, and they themselves later suggested as much, the content of the resolution also

71 FWDTJ, 6 June 1919.
reflected the general disgust felt towards the Conservative efforts to quell the Winnipeg conflict.\textsuperscript{72} The resolution also allowed both the strike committee and the civic officials to save face.

It should not be assumed that each of the twin cities agreed with how the other responded to the growing tensions in the region. For example, those who attended the Fort William meeting mocked the creation of the Citizens’ Committee in Port Arthur. Many at the meeting believed that the Port Arthur city council had essentially “turned over the reins of government to a soviet regime of patriotic citizens.” Speaking on the situation, the mayor of Fort William assured Fort William residents that the mayor and council would be the authority and no one else. Murphy informed Manion and other federal and provincial officials of the meeting. “[T]he situation of affairs at the Head of the Lakes and West is evidently not fully understood by the Government and our Member,” he argued. If drastic action were not taken and the situation in Winnipeg were to continue, “constitutional government in this part of the country [would be] endangered by the powers of State and Civic Government being usurped by unauthorized bodies of citizens.” Manion was also requested to return to deal with the local situation or to reflect the desire of his constituents and “make demands upon the Government on the floor of the House of Commons, that the cabinet cease to procrastinate, and at once take steps to show that they are not controlled by the great financial interests of the country.”\textsuperscript{73}

Unwilling to criticize his own party, Manion informed Murphy that, contrary to

\textsuperscript{72} FWDTJ, 6 June 1919.
\textsuperscript{73} LAC, Robert Borden fonds, MG26-H, vol. 113, Harry Murphy to Robert Borden, 6 June 1919; TBA, FWF, FWCC, 5, File 148, Harry Murphy to Robert Borden, 6 June 1919; TBA 5, File 148, Harry Murphy to Sir. Robert L. Borden, Dr. R.J. Manion, and Mr. F.H. Keefer, 6 June 1919; and FWDTJ, 6 June 1919.
what many believed, the government fully realized “the serious condition of affairs in
Canada.” What many saw as procrastination, he argued, was in fact a methodical process
of deliberation to prevent anyone from taking “any hasty action which will interfere with
that settlement....” As for demands that both he and the government resign, Manion
retorted that, “with Canada in its present seriously unsettled condition the resignation of
the government… would appear to me to be a calamity for we need a government now if
we ever did.”74 Manion addressed such questions as the rising cost of living and legal
protection for collective bargaining through the time-honoured tactic of passing the buck
to the provincial government. Such matters were “a provincial matter entirely,” he
argued. F.H. Keefer, M.P. for Port Arthur, agreed, and added for good measure that he
was in favour of collective bargaining and shorter hours, but not “sovietism.”75

With the differences among the region’s union and socialist organizations now
aired, employers in the twin cities began to turn back to their old habits following the
cessation of the Winnipeg General Strike. They began – to the disgust of Fred Moore of
the Fort William Trades and Labour Council – to collude in blacklisting suspect workers.
The Council also argued that employers were targeting workers injured on the job. In
response, it called for its members to organize and “combat such high-handed treatment
of members of our class.”76 Local trades and labor officials also began to be more vocal
in their denunciation of the actions taken against the Winnipeg strikers. Workers in Fort

74 TBA, FWF, FWCC, 5, File 148, Telegram, R.J. Manion to H. Murphy, 6 June 1919 and
FWDTIJ, 7 June 1919.
75 TBA, FWF, FWCC, 5, File 148, Telegram, F.H. Keefer to H. Murphy, 7 June 1919. Keefer had
long believed that certain areas of the country – namely the Lakehead – were “breeding places of
revolution” and should be dealt with severely. See PANC, 1 May 1919.
76 Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO), Fred E. Moore fonds (hereafter FEM), MV 2160, F 1284,
William, for example, were encouraged to demand that the eight imprisoned Winnipeg strike leaders be released. Support was also given for a proposed Dominion-wide strike if authorities refused to release the men. The meeting in Port Arthur resulted in a similar resolution after speeches by Herbert Barker, James Dunbar and others were heard.

Thus, the Lakehead was afire in 1919, with dissatisfaction with the Conservatives and with calls for radical change. Like many in Ontario, residents of the Lakehead took out their frustrations over high prices and the Hearst government’s seemingly indifference by electing Local locomotive engineer Harry Mills who represented Fort William in the coalition government formed by E.C. Drury in October 1919. A longtime member of the board of education, Mills’s nomination came to many as something of a surprise. Alderman A.H. Dennis, a high profile member of the council and the Dominion Labour Party, W.N. Welsh, president of the Fort William Trades and Labour Council, and A.C. Stewart, a recently-arrived newcomer but highly popular rhetorician, had all reputedly sought the nomination. Even the Fort William Daily Times-Journal commented that Mills was not very well known amongst the rank-and-file of labour and his attendance at labour council had been spotty. However, both organized labour and former members of the Social Democratic Party of Canada (such as J. Dixon) in both

77 FWDTJ, 6 and 8 September 1919.
78 PADNC, 8 September 1919.
79 For overviews, see Peter A. Baskerville, Sites of Power: A Concise History of Ontario (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2005), 183-192; Joseph Schull, Ontario Since 1867 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 235-257. Some scholars have argued that the election of the United Farmers, and the role of labour in the Drury government, was foreshadowed by the 1918 Manitoulin By-Election. See F.J.K. Griezic, “Power and the People. The Manitoulin By-Election, October 24, 1918,” Ontario History LXIX:1 (March 1977): 33-54.
80 Despite being a surprise, the nomination meeting featured a who’s who of local socialists and labor representatives. Speaker’s featured M. Welsh, H. Barker, Alderman Sid Wilson, who were joined by Harry Bryan, now living in the town of Dorion located 100 km away, representing the United Farmers of Dorion Township. See PADNC, 16 September 1919.
cities rallied around Mills.\textsuperscript{81}

On the day of the election, solidarity won, and Mills was elected to office with a majority of over 1700 in the city (although he fared less well in the rural areas).\textsuperscript{82} His nomination and election no doubt resulted from the wider base of support and appeal to former Liberal-Labour (Lib-Lab) supporters. Mills was unique, as it appears he was the only strictly Independent Labour Party (ILP) member of the Drury Government who had been the candidate of a Labour Council.\textsuperscript{83} Upon the recommendation of fellow Northern Ontario labour MPP Peter Heenan (himself recently elected in the Kenora riding) and in recognition of the Independent Labour Party’s support of the United Farmers of Ontario, he was appointed Minister of the newly-created Department of Mines.\textsuperscript{84}

Mills’s success was the beginning of a series of electoral breakthroughs for organized labour in the twin cities. At the municipal level, the Independent Labour Party ran candidates in both cities for a wide range of civic positions.\textsuperscript{85} Longtime councilor A.H. Dennis was elected as mayor in Fort William, replacing Murphy. Many felt a crucial issue in his rise to power was the latter’s handling of the Winnipeg situation.\textsuperscript{86} In

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{FWDTJ}, 27 September and 4 October 1919; \textit{PADNC}, 1 and 3 October 1919. See also Martin Robin, \textit{Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 1880-1930} (Kingston: Industrial Relations Centre, Queen's University, 1968), 223. The \textit{Daily Times-Journal} attributed his absence from the Trades and Labour Council to his dedication to his board of education duties. Mills received support also from the Woman’s Labour League in Fort William. His wife, a member, spoke of “Votes for Women.” See \textit{FWDTJ}, 11 October 1919.
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{PADNC}, 21 October 1919.
\textsuperscript{85} \textit{PADNC}, 30 October 1919.
\textsuperscript{86} Murphy’s role in settling the Coal Dock Worker’s Strike received national attention. See, for
Port Arthur, Sid Wilson, an army veteran, Social Democratic Party of Canada member, and outspoken critic of the local newspaper’s coverage of the Winnipeg General Strike, was reelected as ILP candidate to the city council. He, along with James Dunbar of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, represented the interests of organized trade union workers.

Thus, the ultimate beneficiaries of Lakehead’s subdued “labour revolt” of 1919 were the labour centrists – the craft unionists, Lib-Lab supporters, and city councilors distrustful of both the Unionist government and the Winnipeg radicals. As one such centrist proclaimed, Lakehead workers had shown “more common sense” than the “ultra-radicals” of Winnipeg. Such labour centrists were generally Anglos who often disparaged political intransigence as the vice of foreigners. The succeeding decades would reveal that these centrists, although powerful in their own circles, could not contain the more polarized class politics that emerged in the wake of Winnipeg.


87 A branch of the Dominion Labour Party had been established in Port Arthur specifically for the municipal election. Rod Young ran for mayor, Sid Wilson, Jas. Dubar, and J.B. McArthur for aldermen. Sam Wright and George Bell ran for utilities and J. Robertson and J. Faithful for trustees. See FWDTJ, 1 and 8 November 1919.
Chapter 5
“The Hog Only Harms Himself if He Topples His Trough”: The One Big Union, 1919 to 1922

As the events surrounding the Winnipeg General Strike reveal, the end of the First World War brought with it a sense of resentment on the part of many workers. It was a sentiment turned not only against the various levels of government in Canada but also against the Trades and Labor Congress (TLC). The position of the congress towards the war and conscription led to the creation of a secessionist movement rooted in Western Canada. The defeat of the western-based James Watters by the craft-oriented Tom Moore in the race for the TLC presidency and the subsequent rejection of a proposal to reorganize the TLC along industrial lines at its 1918 conference in Quebec City resulted in the fracturing of the Congress, in part, along geographical lines.\(^1\) One direct consequence was the formation of the One Big Union (OBU) at the Western Labour Conference held in Calgary in March 1919.

Like the IWW, the OBU was organized along industrial rather than geographical lines. Unlike the IWW, the OBU never renounced participation in politics. In essence, the OBU, to follow the lead of Larry Gambone, was both a “child of impossibilism” and the offspring of syndicalism.\(^2\) As Gerald Friesen argues, the SPC saw the OBU as the means

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both to unite the working class and to educate the workers. This stance was reflected in the prominent role many Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) leaders took in organizing, and later leading, the organization.\(^3\) The OBU provided a distinctive unifying role by filling the vacuum created by the Canadian government’s ban of the Social Democratic Party of Canada (SDPC), the IWW, and other socialist organizations. The local OBU cadres, for example, were made up of former SPCers, SDPCers, Wobblies and leading supporters of the Winnipeg Strike such as Harry Bryan. Members of the Finnish Organization of Canada (FOC) had also begun to search for a new left wing-party to affiliate with after the SPC, SDPC, and ILP proved unsuitable.\(^4\) The Russian Revolution arose as a symbol of solidarity, the antithesis of the class collaboration and Liberal-Labour (Lib-Lab) centrism so evident in some Lakehead responses to Winnipeg 1919. The OBU provided a natural if temporary home for many of these radicals.

The OBU has been extensively studied from various perspectives.\(^5\) Yet, it has not as often been studied intensively in specific regions.\(^6\) This examination of the Lakehead

\(^3\) Gerald Friesen, “‘Yours In Revolt:’ the Socialist Party of Canada and the Western Canadian Labour Movement,” *Labour/Le Travail* 13 (Spring 1984): 146.

\(^4\) The Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada had been renamed in 1919 after being allowed to reform following its ban under the war measures act in 1918.


\(^6\) Examples of regional studies include, but are not limited to, James R. Conley, “Frontier Labourers, Crafts in Crisis, and the Western Labour Revolt: The Case of Vancouver, 1900-1919,” *Labour/Le Travail* 23 (1989): 9-37; Gillian Creese, “Exclusion or Solidarity? Vancouver Workers
evidence suggests some changes in the accepted interpretation of the OBU. In essence, it argues that although many radicals were drawn into the OBU and that it did indeed further some of the spirit of the Russian Revolution and Winnipeg General Strike, the new organization did not articulate a coherent alternative to labour centrisn. Tensions between radicals and moderates within the OBU were not resolved. Many of the OBU’s early supporters were “sold” on the pragmatic arguments for a new form of unionism, but not persuaded by the case for impossibilist socialism. Between 1919 and 1922, as traditional trade unionists and apostles of the OBU fought each other for influence within the working-class movement, many of the weaknesses of the latter body came to the surface. It proved especially vulnerable to more clearly-developed and prestigious radical alternatives – especially those identified with a re-emerging IWW and with a strengthening Communist Party.

Without seeking to separate the OBU from the legacy of Winnipeg, it seems important to remember that the events culminating in the OBU preceded the Winnipeg Strike. Although the post-Strike trials were mounted with the obvious intention of linking the OBU with Winnipeg, much of the movement’s history and trajectory was not directly derived from the Strike itself. Rather, it was influenced by longstanding

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Confront the ‘Oriental Problem,” in Canadian Working Class History: Selected Readings, ed. Laurel Sefton MacDowell and Ian Radforth (Toronto: Canadian Scholar’s Press, 1992), 311-332; No single note could encompass all of the works dealing with the One Big Union and the events of 1919. The following are the major works consulted for this study. See Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men; Peter Campbell, Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999); Craig Heron, ed., The Workers’ Revolt in Canada, 1917-1925 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Larry Peterson, “The One Big Union in International Perspective: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism 1900-1925,” Labour/Le Travailleur 7 (1981): 41-66; and Peter Warrian, “The Challenge of the One Big Union Movement in Canada, 1919-1921” (MA thesis, University of Waterloo, 1971).

8 Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg, 51. See also Bercuson’s “Labour in Winnipeg,” (Phd.
critiques of the narrowness of craft unionism and the huge gap, blatantly obvious in the Lakehead, between the interests and achievements of the urban craft unionists and the often-desperate plight of the unorganized and stigmatized resource workers in the bush. Had the OBU not existed, there would have been other attempts to organize the unorganized workers of the woods – as the IWW, the OBU’s nemesis and successor, demonstrated so clearly.

One of the major unexplored themes in the history of the OBU is the extent to which the movement undermined itself through factionalism. The Finnish proverb, “The Hog Only Harms Himself if He Topples His Trough,” best encapsulates the period between 1919 and 1922.9 The OBU was toppled from power in the Lakehead more because of its own internal wrangling than because it was defeated by its enemies. The Lakehead – the major centre of the Lumber Workers’ Industrial Union (LWIU), comprising a substantial amount of the OBU’s membership in 1920 – was the decisive battleground in which the OBU’s marginalization within Canadian labour was settled.10 Many of the movement’s difficulties – lack of ideological clarity, unresolved regional tensions, the enduring legacy of ethnic rivalries and chauvinism – were showcased as nowhere else in the Lakehead.

As the 1920 convention held in Port Arthur reveals, not only did the

diss., University of Toronto, 1971).
predominantly Finnish LWIU branch at the Lakehead become the “unopposed master of
the lumber camps,” but also in the end determined the fate of the OBU.\footnote{Bercuson, \textit{Fools and Wise Men}, 136.} Bryan, as in the
years before the war, would also play an important role in ushering the changes that
occurred at the Lakehead during this period. As William Holder, a former organizer for
the OBU remarks, Bryan was “a guiding light” for many during this period.\footnote{Lakehead University Archives (hereafter LUA), Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society (hereafter TBFCHS), MG8, Series b, 7, 10, Item 2, Tape 2, Interview with William Holder, 31 March 1977.}

It is perhaps telling that of those who met in Calgary to discuss the formation of a
new industrial organization intended to free western Canadian workers from the eastern-
based Trades and Labor Congress, the only representatives to attend from East of
Winnipeg were two workers from the Lakehead.\footnote{Although it is clear delegates attended, who exactly they were remains unknown. A letter from William Checkley, later a prominent OBU organizer in the region, seems to indicate that J.P. Harris, a Street Railway worker, attended. See Provincial Archives of Manitoba (PAM), One Big Union fonds (hereafter OBU), MG10, A3, p. 647, William Checkley to Unknown, 20 May 1919.} As early as late December 1918, the
Fort William Trades and Labor Council and its secretary, Fred Moore, had been
interested in attending the “Western inter-provincial Convention” in Vancouver and
Calgary.\footnote{PAM, OBU, p. 24, Fred E. Moore, Secretary Fort William Trades and Labor Council to V.R. Midgley, Secretary Labor Temple, Vancouver, 14 December 1918. One such individual was Fred Moore, a local printer and former city councilor whose business was responsible for the printing of political materials for not only socialist organizations such as the SPC, SDPC, IWW, ILP, and OBU, but also the Liberal and Conservative parties. For his association with socialists, the RCMP suspected Moore of being a Bolshevik. See “Register of Bolshevist & Agitator Investigations 1920,” p. 6. 175/943, 17/10, 18/10, “Fort William, Fred E. Moore, Suspect,” \textit{R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929}, ed. Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker (St. John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1994), 675.} In fact, it was decided that the referendum question on severing “affiliation
with the international organizations as a first step to form an industrial organization of all
the workers,” would be segregated at Port Arthur “as the dividing line between East and
The presence of representatives from the Lakehead, and the subsequent affiliation of many regional unions in the month following, reveals the commitment of many in the Lakehead to industrial unionism and social advocacy. In Port Arthur, over 1,380 workers and almost all of the unions affiliated to that city’s Trades and Labor Council joined the OBU under the leadership of William Checkley and J.P. Harris. However, the appeal does not appear to have united workers in both cities. While sympathetic, workers and unions affiliated to the Fort William Trades and Labor Council appear to have been much more cautious in their support.

The popularity of the OBU in Port Arthur no doubt had to also do with its adoption of many of the IWW’s principles. As a result, it appealed to the large number of Wobblies in the region who, due to government restrictions, could not operate in the open. The OBU’s decision to adopt, in contrast to the IWW, a political policy also brought former Wobblies together with former members of the SDPC and SPC in the twin cities and the surrounding region. Especially appealing to the many Finnish socialists in the region were the conference’s support for the “aims and purposes of the

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16 J.B. McArthur, secretary of the Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council, reported that it was reported that this included, with membership in brackets, the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen #344 (70); Sheet Metal Workers #580 (10); Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees (17); Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite, and Paper Mill Workers #40; Steam Operating Engineers (50); Plumbers and Pipe Fitters #378 (60); Brotherhood of Boiler Makers and Iron Shipbuilders (600); Bricklayers and Masons #25 (50); United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners #498 (206); Amalgamated Section of Carpenters #2610 (80); Electrical Workers #360 (10); Structural Iron Workers #33 (25); Machinists #820 (80); and Amalgamated Postal Workers of Canada (20). See PAM, OBU, p. 114-115, J.B. McArthur, Secretary Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council to V.R. Midgley, 31 March 1919.
Russian Bolshevik and German Spartacist revolutions” and its demand that Canadian and allied troops withdraw from Russian territory. The perception that the Winnipeg General Strike had been “perpetuated by the Bolshevik radicals behind the One Big Union” and the local ILP’s and trade unionists’ lack of support for action also prompted local radicals to seek another vehicle for their politics.

With the IWW now operating underground and the OBU attaining great stature due to its supposed connection with the Winnipeg General Strike, former Wobblies at the Lakehead elected to join this new organization en masse in order to have at least some vehicle for their activism. As Hill later recalled, the decision by the FOC to affiliate managed initially to solidify “the Finnish socialists and the IWW supporters.” However, most importantly, what the former members of the IWW in Northwestern Ontario brought with them to the OBU were the LWIU support circles established by A.T. Hill before the war and, combined with those members in British Columbia who had already joined, a membership that totaled over 12,000 by early 1920. Issues to be resolved included what was to be done about those who initially supported the OBU, but had since “retreated,” and those workers who supported its goals but still belonged to the Internationals and paid dues to “those who are co-operating with the enemy, the master-class through the government.” One commentator suggested that the first lot were obsessed with respectability and the second unable to move without a leader and “are

17 Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 175.
18 Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 181.
20 Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, 136.
21 OBUB, (hereafter OBU), 27 December 1919, p. 3.
waiting for Moses to give them the lead.”

The OBU viewed industrial unionism as the successor to the trades unions. Inspiration was found in the early days of the Russian Revolution and the establishment of the Soviets.

Unlike most of their brothers and sisters in eastern Canada, socialists in both Port Arthur and Fort William wholeheartedly embraced the creation of the OBU. By October 1919, all of 160 Starch Workers, all of the bakers, and 18 general workers in Fort William united with the members of the IWW’s LWIU in Port Arthur and joined. The FOC’s decision to declare itself a propaganda organization of the OBU created an auxiliary in Port Arthur that gained control of the Labour Temple by assuming its debt.

In the midst of the election campaign of October 1919, local newspapers reported that the OBU had established branches in the region, and that an OBU-affiliated Central Labour Council (CLC) had been established in Fort William. The Council adopted the structure, constitution, and by-laws of the Winnipeg Council. Well-attended by workers

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22 OBUB, 27 December 1919, p. 3.
23 See, for example, OBUB, 20 September 1920, p. 3.
24 For example, one OBU member remarked, “The most important point to observe about them [the Soviets] is that they were industrial and had no relation to territorial divisions of society except in so far as geographical and climactic conditions imposed a certain limit to the industrial organization.” See M. Phillips Price, “The Truth About Soviet Russia,” OBUB, 20 September 1919, p. 4.
from all nationalities and a variety of unions, the council heard predictions that the local trades and labour councils would disappear within the next few months. The newly formed executive board of the CLC reported that both the coal handlers of Fort William, responsible for a number of the strikes before the First World War, and the pulp and paper mill workers, were engaged in discussions that would see them join the OBU within the next few weeks. The Brotherhood of Carpenters’ local, consisting of 250 members, had already gone over to the OBU. The General Workers’ Unit reported sixty new members in the last week alone.

The OBU thus appealed to a variety of strata within the working class and, in principle and to a point in reality, transcended the region’s deep-seated ethnic divisions. Yet, Finnish workers nonetheless made up by far the largest ethnic group within its ranks. Well aware of this fact, and in order to discourage their further radicalization, police in both cities began a campaign of repression and harassment that, not incidentally, coincided with the 1919 election. Soon after the establishment of the first OBU branches in Port Arthur, for example, a series of raids shook the Port Arthur “Finnish quarter” (the area immediately around the Finnish Labour Temple on Bay Street). Both local and Royal Northwest Mounted Police admitted to having searched on 9 October seven homes described as “propaganda depots,” confiscating a large amount of “Bolshevik” literature and arresting seven “Finlanders.” These arrests were accompanied the next day by the search and seizure of “red” material at the Fort William bookstore of Edward Ollikkala,

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28 The Executive Board consisted of J. Lyones (Port Arthur), Harry Bryan (Port Arthur), R. Christie (Port Arthur), W. Arnberg (Port Arthur), M. Cerutti (Fort William), S. Janatuinen (Fort William), H.M. Eames (Fort William), and E.E. Sykes as Secretary. LUA, CTKL, Series C, 4, 1, “Executive Board,” n.d.
including a large amount of IWW literature. The Royal North West Mounted Police (RNWMP) was quick to point out that “of the three centers of foreign population,” the Fort William coal dock section remained quiet and those arrested were not “enemy aliens,” merely “aliens.” They cautioned local residents that, despite the recent “limelight” placed on the Finns, the “Austrians” living between the two cities were the worst “foreign” section.

The presence of the OBU at the Lakehead worried the TLC so much that it sent William Varley, an AFL organizer from Toronto, to the Lakehead in late October to address the local trades and labour councils and General Workers Unit of the OBU in Fort William. With rumours circulating that Varley intended to call for a “show down” with local unions and, “if necessary, to appoint new officers, or withdraw the charter” of the trades and labour councils, the meeting in Fort William attracted “record breaking attendance.” Moore questioned Varley about his allegedly being in the region “to call upon the Council to move a motion of allegiance to the Congress,” on pain of expulsion. Varley denied the accusation – even after a representative of the Street Railway Union produced a letter from its International Secretary proving that the TLC had been in direct contact with the SRU’s International body over such a decision. Varley devoted much of

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30 FWDTJ, 10 and 11 October 1919 and Port Arthur Daily News-Chronicle (hereafter PADNC), 11 October 1919 Ollikkala was eventually fined $2,000. He did, however, appeal his conviction. See PADNC, 17 November 1919.
31 FWDTJ, 10, 11, 14 October 1919 and PADNC, 10, 17, 18 October 1919. According to the RNWMP, the searches had come after a prolonged period of surveillance and the recent movement of the prohibited material from the hall to houses in the region to avoid confiscation. Those arrested in the Port Arthur raid included: Allie Kiovisto, Karl Hyman, William Koivu, John Nelson, Carl Nyman, Andrew Pannanen, and Victor Saikula. All eventually were eventually convicted and fined amounts ranging from $500 to $2,000. See FWDTJ and PADNC, 31 October 1919.
32 FWDTJ, 20 October 1919.
his subsequent tirade to the Winnipeg General Strike and the “hopelessness of this form of action.” He contended that the AFL “had done much for the workers and was the only form of organization.” Not surprisingly, his comments were met with ridicule, contempt, and often laughter.33

Attacking the Winnipeg General Strike in a city where sympathy had run so high was foolhardy. Many workers present, Bryan foremost among them, possessed intimate knowledge of the local labour movement and knew that the success of locally-elected representatives of labour had little to do with assistance from the ALF or the TLC. Lakehead labour leftists critiqued the TLC representatives’ apparent desire to wreck the newly-unified OBU and their willingness to attack it in the public press. Delegates questioned what business the TLC had “in butting into the business of the Council, why the Council could not do its own business in its own way, as it always had done.”34

Such questions were all the more pertinent as Varley in his condemnation of the OBU had extolled the virtues of the Congress as a legislative body respecting local desires. Yet, upon questioning, he stated that he had been instructed to take “drastic action” against the Fort William Trades and Labour Council if need be. Fred Moore declared to those present: “Mr. Varley is repeatedly whispering in my ear, to move this and move that. If he wants a show-down, let him have it. What power had he? I want to know where we stand?” The response by Varley, that he had the power and could take the chair if required, led many delegates to express resentment at the gall of the TLC. When questioned over the growing autocracy of the TLC, Varley responded that the local Councils had dictated the need for refusing in the past to allow the president of the TLC

33 OBUB, 8 November 1919, p. 2.
34 OBUB, 8 November 1919, p. 2.
permission to attend their meetings. By criticizing the local councils and by defending the Congress’s brutal rationalizations – “to preserve itself, or the rebel body would destroy it” – Varley alienated any support he might have enjoyed at the meeting.\textsuperscript{35}

Rather than promoting a discussion about bridging the growing division between the region’s unions and the TLC, the meeting intensified the general hostility against the distant labour centre. ILP Alderman Dennis, for example, contended that the TLC and it alone was to blame for the division that existed both locally and nationally among workers. As he suggestively remarked, “Labor had shown by the elections in Fort William, what they could do when it got together.” The Congress, he suggested, “was out of harmony altogether with the workers,” and it no longer represented “the workers any more than the Government did the people.”\textsuperscript{36} The OBU, the majority present agreed, was a necessity because of the past actions of the Congress and the AFL. It appears at this point that both leftists and centrists at the Lakehead supported the OBU and identified it as the carrier of regional interests against the aloof bureaucrats of the TLC. As one delegate, tired of the double-speak and manipulation demonstrated by Varley, declared: “Well, if that’s what you want, let’s hand in our charter.”\textsuperscript{37}

The Fort William Trades and Labour Council never did hand in its charter, although a motion put forward by Fred Moore to reaffirm the independence of the Council and its resentment of the meddling on the part of the Congress passed unanimously. Likewise, predictions that the Council would disappear within months

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{OBUB}, 8 November 1919, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{36} In the case of the Fort William rejection of Varley, he had appeared with a known secret service man. Varley claimed he did know the man. He had met him in France, again in England, and then in the War Veterans’ rooms in Fort William.

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{OBUB}, 8 November 1919, p. 2. Varley’s meeting with the Port Arthur TLC met with the same scorn and ridicule. See \textit{FWDTJ}, 8 November 1919.
proved premature. In the aftermath of the meeting, the Fort William council, although adamant in its rejection of Congress meddling, also opted to distance itself from the OBU. It appears the more centrist element backed by the trade unionists and led by Moore reasserted itself. A resolution at the next meeting to “completely and forever purge the council” of OBU business was passed, even though Fred Moore indicated that no OBU business had transpired at the council since the formation of the CLC.  

Fort William now had two labour councils. The CLC was affiliated with the OBU. It soon had the support of the longshoremen, coal-handlers, and carpenters. In addition, over 100 members also affiliated through the General Workers’ Unit. Through his adamant campaign on behalf of the TLC, Varley had essentially undermined its support in the region. As one correspondent to The Bulletin remarked, “If Varley will only stay here for about three months, we won’t have many Internationals by that time.”

Labourites in the twin cities used their column in the Fort William Daily Times-Journal to quell increasing reports that a “split” had occurred in the labour movement at the Lakehead. “Nothing could be further from the truth,” wrote the weekly columnist “Liberator.” “Almost perfect harmony and universal satisfaction prevails.” The Trades and Labor Councils in both Port Arthur and Fort William were described as having “up until recently cared for the business of the [OBU].” Despite the withdrawal of a number of OBU units from the labour councils following the establishment of the CLC, harmony existed as they did not “function industrially.” The recent election of Harry Mills, described as “by no means a satisfactory candidate,” was nonetheless used as such an

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38 The total votes for was 16 in favour and 2 against. See FWDTJ, 15 November 1919 and PADNC, 14 November 1919.
39 OBUB, 8 November 1919, p. 4.
example of the solidarity present at the Lakehead.\textsuperscript{40}

The early support for the OBU in Fort William was mirrored in Port Arthur. In addition to the Finnish lumber workers who had joined en masse, by mid-November the Port Arthur railroad workers had organized a Unit and formed an executive made up of long-time agitators. This new unit of the CLC began to organize the Fort William railroad workers who historically had a much closer connection to the labour councils as evidenced by the continued prominent role of one of their own, former Mayor Louis Peltier, at the national level. The civic employees in both cities also began to hold meetings discussing the formation of a joint unit, and by December, A.E. Kettridge, former member of the local SDPC branch, reported that they, along with the workers in four barbershops, were ready to join.\textsuperscript{41}

The TLC did continue to send organizers to the region to combat the growing strength of the OBU. Much of their attention focused on those workers who had not yet gone over to the new organization. Even workers who had little interest in joining the OBU rebuffed the TLC’s overtures. At a meeting with the 600 workers employed by the car shops in late November, only three men attended and two of them already carried OBU cards. The third, the \textit{Bulletin} reported, was a returned soldier who showed up to the meeting inquiring about how to join the OBU!\textsuperscript{42}

Unlike the labour councils and the ILP during the war, the OBU described the Finns of both cities as “good citizens” who, although because of custom “arbitrate their personal differences in their own way,” had a “love for their land and wished to see it

\textsuperscript{40} FWDTJ, 25 October 1919.
\textsuperscript{41} OBU\textit{B}, 15 November, p.1 and 13 December 1919, p.1.
\textsuperscript{42} OBU\textit{B}, 29 November 1919, p. 1.
well governed.” Their native radicalism was seen as a natural response to Czarist oppression and its manifestation in Canada was a result of the similar authoritarianism of the Canadian government – a regime, the OBU Bulletin argued in October 1919, that “does not understand these people, has turned an ignorant constabulary to harry them under the theory that this radicalism is re[v]olutionary activity tending to subvert the Canadian institutions… [if the Finns had] been left undisturbed by the minions of the law they would have believed that Canada was a land of good government. Now they are sure, in their own way of thinking, that Czarism is duplicated in Canada.” 43

The twin cities of Port Arthur and Fort William acted as a central meeting place for the thousands of workers participating in the resource-based economic activities that dominated much of the regional economy. The two cities, while not the location of organizing efforts or striking picketers, was home to the offices of many unions and socialist organizations and often became the centre of public displays of solidarity or protest for issues raging throughout the District of Thunder Bay. In particular, the Finnish Labour Temple on Bay Street in Port Arthur became the centrifugal force for many Finnish socialists.

The industry in which Finns were most involved was the lumber industry. Within the study of Canadian labour history, the woodsmen of Northwestern Ontario have received close attention. Ian Radforth has demonstrated that the OBU’s success in the region can clearly be understood as a function of its ability to organize and absorb the previously IWW-controlled Finnish lumber unions, as the turnover of the Finnish Labour

temple from IWW to OBU control in late 1919 indicates.\textsuperscript{44} By mid-1920, however, the LWIU had “become the unopposed master of the lumber camps” in Northwestern Ontario.\textsuperscript{45} Finns in British Columbia and Northwestern Ontario joined the LWIU because they believed it would incorporate “revolutionary socialism and militant unionism.”\textsuperscript{46} In fact, as Ahti Tolvanen’s research reveals, the FOC had begun incorporating the policies of the Third International into its own programme shortly after its formation in March 1919. By January 1921, it had proclaimed “its support for ‘class Unionism’ before ‘industrial unionism.’”\textsuperscript{47} Its leadership critiqued the OBU programme as “one-sided” and declared “that it was not possible to build direct action industrial unions to replace the old existing trade (craft) unions.”\textsuperscript{48} As a result, in 1920 the FOC did not directly join the OBU, instead opting to declare itself a propaganda organization.\textsuperscript{48}

Numbering in the thousands, the Finnish lumber workers of Northwestern Ontario were of special interest to the OBU. Due to their strong past connections to the IWW, workers within the region were seen as sympathetic to the OBU’s type of radicalism.\textsuperscript{49} Workers in the region had experienced much worse conditions and tyranny than their British Columbian comrades. As one worker wrote in the \textit{Bulletin}: “lumber camps in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[44] Ian Radforth, \textit{Bushworkers and Bosses: Logging in Northern Ontario 1900-1980} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 116-118. More recently, Bruce Magnuson has produced a general study of the lumber industry in Ontario, but due to the scope of his work provides little detail on the OBU that has not already been discussed in Radforth’s works. See Bruce Magnuson, \textit{The Untold Story of Ontario’s Bushworkers: a Political Memoir} (Toronto: Progress Books, 1990).
\item[47] Tolvanen, \textit{Finntown}, 47.
\item[49] Library and Archives of Canada (hereafter LAC), Canadian Security Intelligence Service fonds (hereafter CSIS), RG146, vol. 2, file 1025-9-9018. The IWW had remained a factor in the British Columbia lumber industry throughout 1919.
\end{footnotes}
B.C. are not anything to write home about, but they are a palace when compared to the
‘Hog Pens’ of Ontario.” With promises to improve conditions, 500 new members signed
OBU cards in the month of November alone.\textsuperscript{50} By mid-December, this number had
reached almost 1,000. This early success was not limited to the lumber camps.
Memberships also grew in related industries. Pulp mill employees, for example, enlisted
so many of their numbers in the General Workers’ Unit that the CLC considered allowing
them their own unit.\textsuperscript{51} By the end of 1919, the OBU had come to dominate Port Arthur to
such an extent that the Trades and Labour Council ceased to function as a separate entity
and the local AFL affiliates joined the OBU en masse.\textsuperscript{52} In Fort William, however, where
support for the TLC and ILP remained strong and Finnish socialists less numerous, the
OBU had lost its support. Some trade unionists, led by Fred Moore and A.H. Dennis, now
refused to have anything to do with the OBU.\textsuperscript{53}

Part of the allure of the OBU for the Finns stemmed from its similarities with the
IWW, which had long attracted militant bushworkers on both sides of the border.
Although, as Bryan Palmer observes, the OBU and the IWW shared a common interest in
the general strike as a tactic that would leave workers in control of production, the two
movements were in fact not identical.\textsuperscript{54} The IWW did not agree with the OBU’s
continuing interest in the socialist political movement, and it believed itself to be the
more authentic voice of working class emancipation. By the fall of 1919 organizers for

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{OBUB}, 29 November 1919, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{51} \textit{OBUB}, 13 December 1919, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{52} These included unions consisting of bakers, coal handlers, starch workers, carpenters, civic
employees, and lumber workers. See Bercuson, \textit{Fools and Wise Men}, 164.
\textsuperscript{53} Jean Morrison, “The Organization of Labour at Thunder Bay,” in \textit{Thunder Bay: From Rivalry
to Unity} (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1995), 130.
\textsuperscript{54} Bryan D. Palmer, \textit{Working Class Experience: The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian
the IWW began touring throughout the lumber camps and harvest fields of Northwestern Ontario speaking against the leaders of the OBU and signing up members. Specifically targeted were those areas that had previously been strongholds of the LWIU.

It seemed, to some alarmed authorities, a situation recalling the stark class polarization of 1912 and 1913. In response to the OBU’s growing presence in the region, authorities renewed raids on the homes, businesses, and meeting places of workers in both Port Arthur and Fort William. In keeping with the growing resentment nationally toward non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants, local authorities specifically targeted the “foreign” workers they considered to be at the root of the growing radicalism. By October, membership in the newly-established General Workers’ Unit (established by the OBU for those workers in no established union) numbered in the hundreds and the Street Railway workers were reported to be going to work all sporting OBU buttons. Although the civic employees and shipbuilders had yet to join, organizers believed their recruitment was only a matter of time.

In response, the RCMP and OPP flooded the region with undercover officers in an attempt to infiltrate the movement and stem the flow of information and individuals coming from the United States. For instance, in June 1919 OPP officers in Fort Frances reported that well-known IWW agitators William Salo, Guss. Henderickson, Vaino Pelto, and Viano Rallio (or Kellio) had entered Canada in May. These men were known to have

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been active in agitating workers in Northwestern Ontario throughout the war. Henderickson (thought to be going under the alias Robertson), Pelto, and Rallio quickly established themselves in Port Arthur and, using the city as their base of operations, began to move through the lumber camps in the District speaking to workers and advocating better wages and working conditions.  

By September, the IWW had established a headquarters in Port Arthur and had begun to send organizers throughout the region. Located in Port Arthur, the OPP were cognizant of the IWW in both Fort William and Port Arthur. A branch of the IWW’s LWIU had been established and a man named Pelto was receiving 25 dollars a week from the IWW to act as an organizer. Finns at the Lakehead were drawn to the IWW for reasons similar to those which made many of them sympathetic to it before the First World War. The revitalization of the organization within Canada, however, can also be attributed to the general dissatisfaction felt by many workers over the decision by most trade unions to support the war effort. The IWW, like the SPC and many members of the SDPC, had remained firm in its anti-war stance even in the face of prosecution.

The efforts of the IWW met with success as their members soon came to

58 AO, OPP, Series E, E30, Campbell to Major J. E. Rogers, Superintendent of Provincial Police, 8 June 1919.
dominate the OBU’s LWIU and its leadership.\(^6^0\) As the vast majority of lumber workers and IWW agitators were Finnish, it is not surprising that they became the focus of the OBU’s ire. Both the RCMP and the OBU believed the Finns “were trying to obtain control of the O.B.U. for furtherance of I.W.W. or Socialistic schemes of such a Radical complexion as to conflict with the policy laid down for O.B.U.” As one informant in the Sudbury region commented: “The Finns are the most dangerous part of the O.B.U. in this district, they have associations within themselves of a revolutionary nature and are only using the O.B.U. for their own purposes.”\(^6^1\) Rumours also continued to persist that the Finns were in “close touch with European Bolshevists” and that “a good deal goes on among the Finns that is closely associated with European politics.”\(^6^2\) In the eyes of authorities the boundaries separating the socialist organizations at the Lakehead, all now suffused with a shared Finnish radicalism, seemed to be alarmingly fluid. Even some Anglo workers seemed susceptible to the new dispensation.

Because Finns predominated on the far left of the labour movement, their shared cultural and political ties could mitigate the antagonisms between rival organizations and leaders. The relationship between the OBU and the IWW was not always antagonistic largely because the Finns predominated in both organizations. The IWW’s General Executive Board (GEB) kept track of the spread of organizations referring to themselves as the “One Big Union” throughout the world and reported their success in the various


Wobbly papers. In May 1919, for instance, it reported, “labor unions of Western Canada from Fort William, Ontario to the Pacific Coast, have in regular conventions decided to sever connection with the American Federation of Labor and to form ‘One Big Union.’” Space was given in the IWW organ *The One Big Union Monthly* to list “the most important resolutions [of the meetings in Calgary], as a matter of record, and to allow of comparison with our own movement and similar movements in other countries.” It was suggested that the resolutions, in their entirety, would meet with a good response in the United States and provide an example of the success industrial unionism could have.  

Yet, the GEB also advanced some criticisms of the OBU. The program of the Canadian One Big Union, it argued, was “sufficiently like the I.W.W. program to make us forget the small differences.” A core principle of the IWW remained its resistance to political action. The Canadian (and Australian) adoption of political activism was seen as a characteristic of their newborn status. The GEB believed that over time, this political focus would be abandoned as it had been in the United States, “to save [their] life as an industrial organization.” Until that day, the OBU in Canada and Australia, having “both declared for industrial unions by means of which to take over the means of production and distribution,” could be regarded as allies.

Wobblies viewed Bolshevism as “a great popular uprising against the upper class of the old world.” They looked to the continuing fight in Russia, as well as events in Germany and Eastern Europe, as inspirations for the fight in North America. However, the Bolshevik revolution, they argued, was still a political revolution and the culmination

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63 *The One Big Union Monthly* (hereafter *OBUM*) (May 1919): 7 and 13.
64 *OBUM* (May 1919): 7.
65 For more on the IWW’s response to the Russia Revolution, see chapter 3.
of political socialism. The method by which power had been obtained in Russia – the
capture of the government and the replacement of Czarist officials with socialists – still
fell within “the institutions we call ‘the state.’” The GEB argued that while the
Bolsheviks and IWW used the same expressions – “the abolition of classes,” “the
abolition of capitalism,” “the socialization of the means of production,” “the
establishment of the socialist republic” – they did not actually use them to mean the same
things.66 Even the Soviets, the central pillars of the new system in Russia, were viewed as
“hasty” and, as a result, unable properly to take over the means of production. The
growing tendency of the ruling party to resort to cooperative movements and direct state
control was, the IWW argued, the root of the problems in Russia. “In short,” the GEB
argued, “the Bolshevik revolution in Russia has not resulted in Industrial Democracy, but
in a makeshift or temporary arrangement without stability, without any pretense of a final
solution.”67

The Bolshevik revolution did serve as an opportunity for the IWW to argue that
“economic reconstruction of society cannot be accomplished by a government trying to
order things with a high hand through laws and regulations, but has to be an organic
outgrowth from the bottom, through the industrial organization of the workers at the
place of work.” “Bolshevism,” it contended, “is the fire that clears off the old vegetation,
‘the brush.’ To plow, sow, reap among the charred stumps will be the immense task they
will bequeath to us, the industrial organizers, the builders of the One Big Union.”68

Understandably, supporters of the Bolsheviks in the United States viewed the

67 OBUM (May 1919): 7 and 8.
68 OBUM (May 1919): 8.
IWW as essentially revolutionary, yet “starting at the wrong end.” Their position was that the “revolutionary proletariat must first seize the power of the state.” The IWW countered by arguing that it would rather see “a gradual transition than a ‘revolutionary’ shock.” The IWW evidently believed that “as industrial evolution progresses the parliamentary state will become more and more inadequate for handling the problems of society.” The apparatus established by the IWW would assume control of these functions.69 Other left organizations in the United States, oriented more to the achievement of the dictatorship of the proletariat, advanced very different analyses.

Contradicting its pre-war policy, most post-war intellectuals of the IWW viewed the “shocks of revolution” as “undesirable, because they cause bloodshed and suffering. On the other hand, we do not consider it advisable to destroy social organs, before we have the new organ ready which is to take its place. We think it is about time that men disabuse their minds of the idea that violence is absolutely necessary or desirable for social change.” Public consent, these Wobblies argued, would be the necessary precondition of radical change—and not vanguard-orchestrated mass action “à la Bolshevik.” Socialists and workers, it was argued, need only look to Canada and Australia and to the 15 unions the IWW had organized “over the last 12 years” to see success. In addition, where were the revolutionists to come from? Did any plans exist as to how the revolution would progress and what would be the next step for power to be obtained? “Social changes are not made,” the GEB argued, “in the wink of an eye, like changing your shirt.”70

Initial support for the OBU had much to do with the IWW’s positive reaction to

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69 OBUM (May 1919): 10.
70 OBUM (May 1919): 10.
the Winnipeg General Strike. For Wobblies in the United States and Canada, the Winnipeg General Strike was seen as an inspirational event that socialists in North America could take heart from and even emulate. “It was plain from the start that the affair,” The One Big Union Monthly stated in July 1919, “[that it] was something more than a common scrap over small differences between workers and their employers. Everybody feels and knows that it is a general muster of the two opposing world forces today preparatory to the final battle.”

The AFL’s failure to support the Winnipeg strikers confirmed the Wobblies’ long-standing opposition to that body and its leader Samuel Gompers. It was even reported that Gompers had assisted in the agitation against the strikers. Following the Strike, reputed strikers toured the United States and spoke of both the strike and the One Big Union Movement in Canada. Exactly which OBU was discussed at these presentations remains unclear. However, the message remained the same: “Canadian workers stand shoulder to shoulder with the labor prisoners of Winnipeg. But we want the united support of all American workers, regardless of which side of the boundary line they live on. This is not a Canadian matter only, but concerns the working class of all America. If the employers are successful in crucifying the militant workers of Canada it will encourage the employers of the United States.” By April 1920, the IWW reported that a Canadian local existed with nearly a thousand members.

While these numbers cannot be substantiated (and are no doubt an exaggeration), the activities of both the OBU and the IWW in the region did lead to increased

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71 OBUM (July 1919): 13.
72 OBUM (July 1919): 15.
73 OBUM (September 1919): 13.
74 OBUM (April 1920): 14.
surveillance by federal, provincial, and municipal authorities. The existence of the
*Monthly* and other publications in the declassified files of American and Canadian
archives indicates that authorities in both countries watched both organizations carefully.
The RCMP and the Ontario Provincial Police were keenly aware that IWWism was
indifferent to borders. Minnesota was an IWW stronghold in the U.S. The Lakehead
Finns were especially suspected of being influenced by cross-border radicalism.
Suspected agitators were often arrested on both sides of the border. Worried about the
possibility of a repeat of Winnipeg in Northwestern Ontario, authorities identified the
Lakehead as the centre of any potential problems and began to clamp down on the
activities of all groups. Anything and anyone even remotely suspected of being
revolutionary fell under surveillance. Suspected agitators were often arrested.\(^\text{75}\)

Provincial police in Northwestern Ontario worked closely with their American
and RCMP counterparts in investigations regarding the OBU and IWW. The proposed
strike of January 1920, for example, saw RCMP, regional OPP, and District Intelligence
Officers from St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Duluth all working together. These officials
shared intelligence and coordinated their activities in an attempt to disrupt these
organizations and to arrest workers. OPP officers in Fort Frances provided the American
District Intelligence Officers with the secret code being used by IWW members in
correspondence in the region. From these and many other observations, the OPP
concluded that the OBU and IWW were the same (even if they were in fact two separate
bodies). They noted that most of the OBU organizers in the region had in fact come from

\(^{\text{75}}\) Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada: A History* (Toronto: McClelland and
Stewart, 1975), 14; Avery, “Dangerous Foreigners” 86-89; and William Rodney, *Soldiers of the
International: A History of the Communist Party of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto
British Columbia and Minnesota. A plan was adopted on both sides of the Minnesota-Ontario border that if a strike did occur, lumber companies would shut down and “try, and starve the strikers out.”

Canadian and American authorities worked together to stem the flow of socialist material moving between the two countries. Following a tip from American authorities, the RCMP, for example, arrested William Salo of Fort William for possessing “socialist” literature. His Winnipeg lawyer E.J. McMurray described Salo’s actions as merely “stepping outside of the iron band that the government proposed to put around his mind, and desired to find out what was being done in the outside world, which the government endeavors to keep hidden from the eyes of the people of this country.” For McMurray, this was an issue of liberty and freedom from the growing intolerance of the Dominion government, which he compared to pre-revolutionary Russia. The case against Salo, he argued, was “a case of brainless police court jurisdiction, a performance by an immature mind on the magisterial bench that has made the justice of this land in many cases an object of contempt and enmity rather than a respected institution.”

McMurray was also involved in the deportation case surrounding Sava W. Zura, a leading member of the Ukrainian League formed in April 1919. A resident of the Lakehead for over seven years, Zura’s bake shop had been searched in late September.

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76 AO, OPP, Series E, E30, Campbell to Major J. E. Rogers, Superintendent of Provincial Police, 18 December 1919. The strike, it appears, never materialized and, despite the best attempts of the police, the OBU remained highly active in Northwestern Ontario, in particularly in the lumber camps formerly organized by A.T. Hill and the IWW around Fort Frances and elsewhere in the Port Arthur District such as Ignace. See *Le Travailleur/The Worker* (Montreal), 15 May and 15 June 1920. In Fort Frances, much of the radical activity could be found in the Shelvin Clark Lumber Mill.

77 AO, Fred E. Moore fonds (hereafter FEM), MV 2160, F 1284, E.J. McMurray to Fred E. Moore, 29 January 1920.
and, after being apprehended by police at the border, he had been arrested and convicted for possessing “Bolsheviki” and IWW literature. Police in Fort William considered him the “main promoter” of “prohibited literature among the foreign element.”

Workers in both cities rallied behind Zura, with Bryan being the most notable voice. However, despite no prior transgressions and the testimony by many local residents to his good character, Zura was sentenced to two years in Stony Mountain Penitentiary in Manitoba. Mrs. Zura, later apprehended by Immigration Department agents in Winnipeg, was also interrogated with respect to the evidence.

Contrary to the views of authorities during the period, the OBU and the IWW headquarteried in Chicago were not the same organization. In fact, while the IWW viewed the establishment of the Canadian One Big Union with enthusiasm, the OBU had worked quickly to distinguish itself from the older organization. Even shortly after its formation, the OBU’s leadership began to argue that the industrial unionism of the OBU was not synonymous with “I.W.W.ism, but the direct opposite.”

“The O.B.U. of Canada differs from the I.W.W. in that it endorses political action in theory,” proclaimed the One Big Union Monthly. The advocates of the OBU further argued that the two organizations differed in terms of their respective structures. The OBU, instead of allowing separate affiliated organizations to develop separate treasuries, proposed to pool all the members’

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78 AO, FEM, Mrs. Zura to Hon. the Minster of Justice, 4 August 1920. The specific works in his possession included: Novyi Svit 1918, The Russian Workers’ Union, Rabotchy, Narod, Nove Evangelie, Russian Social Revolutionist, Rovitnyk, Khller Volja, Vsemrny Soyuse, and twelve copies of an unnamed IWW publication. See FWDTJ and PADNC, 29 September 1919.

79 FWDTJ, 25 October 1919.

80 AO, FEM, E.J. McMurray to Fred E. Moore, 29 January 1920. Eventually released, Zura and her child were destitute with no means of support. They had to rely on what was granted from the City Relief Committee to survive. See AO, FEM, Mrs. Zura to Hon. the Minster of Justice, 4 August 1920.

81 OUBU, 29 November 1919, p. 4.
funds in one common pot, thus enhancing the unity among its units.\textsuperscript{82}

These differences, and the preexistence of the Wobblies within Northwestern Ontario, laid the foundation for factionalism. Further, unlike the OBU, the IWW during the period immediately following the First World War sought inspiration from the activities of their fellow syndicalists in Finland, Germany, and Scandinavia who actively fought against both Social Democratic and Bolshevik forces.\textsuperscript{83} At the Lakehead, this international syndicalist vision both attracted and repulsed workers. For the Finnish workers, who comprised the largest single group in the OBU’s LWIU, Social Democratic tendencies ran high for some, while recent immigrants had become disillusioned with events in Finland. Moreover, the Bolshevik Revolution, as we have seen, had inspired many. Hence, lines that clearly separated syndicalists from revolutionary socialists in the eyes of IWW advocates were not as clearly or neatly drawn among Canadian proponents of the OBU.

In early 1920, the Port Arthur local of the FOC turned over its majority shares in the Finnish Building Company (which controlled the labour temple) to the OBU and, in keeping with the decision of the FOC’s national executive, declared itself a propaganda agency of the OBU. The decision to join the OBU was not much of a leap for Finnish socialists already inclined toward industrial unionism. Most of the newly formed locals throughout Ontario had in fact previously been support circles for the Industrial Workers of the World. The decision of the Port Arthur branch of the FOC and former IWW locals to support the OBU, however, was not without controversy. Evert Maki of Sudbury, for example, in his June 1920 report of district secretaries, suggested that the Finnish

\textsuperscript{82} \textit{OBUM} (January 1920): 58.
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{OBUM} (May 1919): 8.
Socialist Party of Canada “was a great hinderance [sic] to the activities of the O.B.U. that is if some quick changes do not take place in said organization.” As speeches by leading Finnish socialists such as J. Ahlqvist revealed, much of the concern came over the amount of control the OBU executive would have over Finnish affiliates, their cultural and educational activities, and the newspaper *Vapaus*.

In fact, Ahlqvist received the brunt of the criticism for comments, such as those reputedly made in Toronto, that the OBU defends “itself with social revolution now, when hitherto you have preached it in order to oppose industrial unionism.” Henry Puro (a.k.a John Wiita), editor of *Vapaus*, replied that negotiations with the OBU for *Vapaus* to become the Finnish organ of the union had been going on for some time. Further, he contended that Maki’s real reason for being dissatisfied with both the paper and the Finnish Socialist Federation was that “we [*Vapaus*] do not agree with him that the I.W.W. and its methods are the only means which lead the workers to freedom.”

While differences of opinions may have been aired, the Port Arthur District convention of the LWIU of the OBU, Bryan reported, had been amicable. All those who attended had placed the best interests of the OBU before their own personal concerns. However, growing support for the dismantling of the lumber workers union and the reorganization of the OBU along geographical versus industrial lines led to a number of

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84 *Le Travailleur/The Worker* (Montreal), 15 June 1920.
85 *Le Travailleur/The Worker* (Montreal), 15 June 1920.
86 See *Le Travailleur/The Worker* (Montreal), 1 July 1920 for some responses to E. Maki’s 15 July article.
87 Those who attended the conference included: Salmon Ahola, Laurie Witassari, Herman Matson, Eric Pennaanen, Hugo Morrell, Ed Stanley, Andrew Haugaard, Arthur Tailgreh. The executive members present were R. Lockhead, Harry Bryan, and N. Hatherly. Also in attendance was William Arnberg of the Railroad Unit who acted as a translator. Harry Bryan was elected chairman of the meeting and Hatherly the recording secretary. See *Le Travailleur/The Worker* (Montreal), 1 September 1920.
disputes at the district level.\textsuperscript{88} Divisions, pitting the eastern membership against the western, over the very nature and structure of the organization were surfacing. The decision to choose Port Arthur as the location for the OBU’s Second National Convention in 1920 was clearly then not arbitrary.

One of the main foci of the convention was to impress upon workers the inefficiencies present in the system advocated by the AFL. Speakers included Beckie Buhay, of the general workers’ committee of Montreal, who spoke on the inefficiencies of the AFL and argued that the “salvation” of workers lay with the OBU.\textsuperscript{89} Many delegates saw the convention as an opportunity to bridge the growing rift between the rank and file and the leadership. They saw the Port Arthur convention issuing an appeal to the Eastern-based trade unions that, so far, had failed to join the movement.\textsuperscript{90} Nationally, the OBU continued to suffer financial difficulties. Less than half of the 70,000 workers who had signed membership cards actually paid their dues. Some Finns were, police agents said, leaving for more revolutionary alternatives.\textsuperscript{91}

The growing conflict between the lumber workers in British Columbia and Northwestern Ontario and the Winnipeg leadership came to a head at the convention.\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{88} Disagreements at the February convention of lumber workers in the Port Arthur district, for example, had led to a referendum on the issue and a break from the Vancouver headquarters in March. See Radforth, 118. The Winnipeg Central Labour Council, for example, discussed the issue of industrial versus geographic organization and the issue of the lumber workers’ fee in earnest in August. See PAM, RBR, #15, “Special Meeting of Central Labour Council,” 31 August 1920.
\textsuperscript{89} FWDTJ, 22 and 24 September 1920 and PADNC, 20, 21, 22, September 1920.
\textsuperscript{91} Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, 167.
\textsuperscript{92} For overviews of the convention, see Robin, Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 193; Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, 166-169; and Logan, Trade Unions in Canada, 327-329. See also
This tension resulted from a number of interrelated internal squabbles. One that had been simmering in the background for quite some time was the personal conflict between E.E. Winch, head of the LWIU, and Victor Midgley. Each man thought the other was trying to oust the other from the leadership. Midgley viewed Winch’s attempts to extend the LWIU as a direct threat to the power of the central offices and a way to deprive them of much needed financial resources. Winch, on the other hand, viewed Midgley’s desire to move the LWIU headquarters to Winnipeg to extend its reach into the East as merely a pretense to weaken the union and centralize power. Winch, despite the large number of lumber workers in the region, “tried unsuccessfully to have the meeting moved to a more westerly point” than Port Arthur because he wanted to send as many western delegates as possible. One reason for this bitter personal rivalry may have been the inherent differences that had developed between the BC lumber workers and those in Northwestern Ontario. Although an IWW stronghold before the First World War, the lumber camps of British Columbia had not flocked back to the IWW in the same numbers


93 For an overview of Winch’s life and career, see Peter Campbell, Canadian Marxists and the Search for the Third Way (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999), 31-72.


95 Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, 167.
as their Northern Ontario comrades.\textsuperscript{96} Another element in this dispute was an underlying difference in organizational perspective. Should the OBU be a geographically-based or industrially-based organization?\textsuperscript{97}

Those who advocated an industrial-based organization (that which was in place in 1920) favoured a model similar to that used by the IWW. Delegates to conventions represented workers belonging to a specific industrial union. The total number of delegates a union could send was determined by membership strength. In contrast, the geographically-based model called for delegates to represent predetermined regions and the number of delegates allowed to sit at conventions was dictated by the total number of members (regardless of union affiliation) found in the region. Many western-based lumber workers as well as non-English members opposed such a geographical strategy as it would only serve to weaken the power of the LWIU, the union to which the majority of non-Anglo workers belonged. Finnish members in particular, with their long ties to the IWW and the industrial union movement, were the most vocal in opposition. Finnish and non-Finnish lumber workers were also aware that the only chance to implement a move from industrial to geographic lines would involve undercutting the power of the lumber workers. The leadership of the OBU appears to have also come to the convention unprepared to relinquish power to the representatives of the LWIU because of its strong

\textsuperscript{96}For more on the activities of the IWW in Canada before the First World War, see Mark Leier, \textit{Where the Fraser River Flows: The Industrial Workers of the World in British Columbia} (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1990).

\textsuperscript{97}See Avery, 119. The question of the nature of the One Big Union had been formally discussed as early as January 1920 in Winnipeg. See One Big Union. \textit{What is the OBU? Constitution and Laws amended at Winnipeg Convention, January 1920} (Vancouver: OBU, 1920); Ottawa: Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions, CIHM/ICMH series no. 65198, 1997.
ties to the IWW of the Finnish radicals.\footnote{Bercuson, \textit{Fools and Wise Men}, 166-167.}

An attempt was first made to hamper the participation of the Finnish majority by deciding to hold all meetings in English (not incidentally the language spoken by the majority of the leadership).\footnote{Avery, \textit{‘Dangerous Foreigners’}, 119.} Secondly, the LWIU and its local representatives were denied, in direct violation of the OBU constitution, proportional representation.\footnote{\textit{OBUB}, 19 February 1921, p. 4. For detailed discussions of the convention, see 2 October 1920. The Convention Credential Committee’s report can be found at LAC, Communist Party of Canada (hereafter CPC), MG28-IV4, volume 51, file 90.} LWIU delegates, including Winch, were denied representation on the basis that they were in arrears of per capita dues payments (this delinquency was hardly unique as an examination by the Credentials Committee had discovered that almost all units had failed to pay the August tax and many had been inconsistent in their payments since the last convention in January).\footnote{A decision was made to determine representation based on the July receipts of the per capita tax. This, though, resulted only in 12 delegates representing a fraction of the OBU’s total units. Winnipeg, the seat of the General Executive Board, held the balance of power with 5 of the 12 delegates and a decisive command of the voting strength as they controlled 4925 of the 7359 members represented. See \textit{OBUB}, 2 October 1920, 1. Interestingly, a member of the Winnipeg Central Labour Council suggested in June that if the Railroad Workers’ Unit in Winnipeg had taken same position as the lumber worker concerning paying the per capita to the General Executive Board, then “the Council would have been out of business long ago.” PAM, MG 10, A14-2 #15, “Meeting of Central Labour Council,” 15 June 1920.} Not surprisingly, the LWIU “demanded their full representation by the payment of their arrears in per capita.” They noted “failure upon the part of the Convention to concede to them this request would involve serious consequences.”\footnote{\textit{OBUB}, 2 October 1920, 1. Carl Berg, the Labour Council of Edmonton delegate, was the only non-LWIU representative to accompany them (although he was also a member of the LWIU).} The Credential Committee’s report was accepted and the LWIU refused credentials. In protest, all LWIU delegates, with the exception of one, joined those who had been refused standing and left the hall. In effect, the movement was
irrevocably split.

Although David Bercuson suggests that the convention itself proceeded as if nothing had happened, the exit of the LWIU undermined the OBU’s power and the legitimacy of the resolutions under discussion. It was not lost on many present that the Credentials Committee’s decision to seat delegates by districts rather than by union was, _de facto_ (even although this core issue had not been debated or resolved), a move towards geographical versus industrial representation. Winch and other LWIU representatives advised the committee, and through it the wider OBU, that they were violating the OBU’s own charter and practicing blatant discrimination. The withdrawal of the LWIU undermined the legitimacy of the movement’s new leadership and fatally injured the OBU in general. Some units, such as that of Port Arthur, were allowed to sit at the convention, even though they were far behind in their dues. Through such devices, a region that represented a huge proportion of OBU members was marginalized. Most OBU supporters in the region were alienated from the movement, and prospects for an alliance with the IWW were also damaged.

The split at the convention had an immediate impact on organizing efforts in Northwestern Ontario. For example, the organization of lumber workers in the Thunder Bay District “ground to a halt” during the winter season of 1920-21. The stance taken

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103 Bercuson, _Fools and Wise Men_, Chapter 6.

104 Radforth, _Bushworkers and Bosses_, 118. During the Central Council’s annual election of officers in December, many of the leadership such as J. Dixon declined to run again. Although J. Lysness, secretary of the Building Trades’ Unit, was elected chairman and E.E. Sykes, Secretary Treasurer, H.M. Eamer, Recording Secretary, and William Arnberg, Vice-Chairman, a change in leadership had occurred. See _OUB_, 8 January 1921, p. 3. For trouble in Edmonton, see Royal Canadian Mounted Police Security Bulletin No. 39, “Notes of the Work of the C.I.B. Division for the Week Ending 14th October,” 14 October 1920 in _R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins, The Early Years, 1919-1929_, 210-211.

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by the CLC against the bulk of its membership and affiliates contributed to the anemic state of the OBU in the region. In the months following, members questioned the leadership and openly pondered leaving the union. Local members of the Finnish Organization of Canada also supported their national executive’s decision to discontinue support for the OBU. In part, this appears to have been merely a result of the ongoing debates between Finnish socialists over the nature and characteristics of socialism.

Despite the growing regional turmoil, the CLC continued, seemingly undaunted, with the task of organizing workers in the region. Under the leadership of Bryan, a “Council of Action” consisting of three delegates elected from the CLC was formed. These three men were charged with acting in case of an emergency and commanded “to devise ways and means for more energetic propaganda: to arrange public propaganda meetings of all members in the district.” While the Council of Action was intended to be “subject at all times to the approval of the Central Labor Council,” in practice, it put the remaining elements of the OBU in the region into the hands of a relatively few individuals.105 As Bryan explained, these changes were designed to counteract the efforts of “police and stool pigeons.”106

Because many of the local lumber workers refused to participate in the OBU, the two largest unions in the CLC were now the Starch Workers (connected to the pulp and paper mills and starch plants) and railway unions. It reported that workers were “suffering from a severe attack of fear” as “the masters here [at the Lakehead] have a fine organization and are supporting each other in a thoroughly class-conscious manner.

105 Obub, 6 November 1920, p. 3.
106 Le Travailleur/The Worker (Montreal), 15 November 1920.
Special police, watchmen, and stool pigeons are the order of the day.” Increasing unemployment in the region also hampered organizing efforts. For example, much of the CLC’s membership was soon unemployed. While meetings in Port Arthur remained relatively well attended, those in Fort William declined to such a point that joint meetings with the Port Arthur membership became a necessity.

The regional leadership of the OBU also began a campaign to dissipate any controversy. An open letter written by Joe Naylor, a member of the new national executive, perhaps best demonstrates the failure of the OBU’s leaders to truly grasp the plight of the union. While declaring that he “did not like giving our internal squabbles away to our enemies, the master class,” he attacked the leadership of the LWIU, and Winch in particular, as being “sick, sick with a drunken orgy after power, and the squandering of money like capitalist politicians, while your black-listed delegates were roaming the country for a job.” Not to be outdone, the LWIU engaged in a vigorous campaign to undermine the position taken by the Credential Committee at the convention and the new General Executive Board. At the Lakehead, the LWIU continued to operate but it is unclear how many of the Finnish lumber workers were still closely connected with it. The decision to establish the headquarters of the CLC away from the

107 OUB, 6 November 1920, p. 3.
108 Le Travailleur/The Worker (Montreal), 15 November 1920. Those unemployed included F.W. Sykes, the financial secretary of the Central Labor Council, and F.W.M. Eamer, the recording-secretary of the council. This was exacerbated by the decision in late November for the CPR to reduce its staff by 40 percent.
109 On the second Thursday of every month meetings were held in the Finlayson Street Labour Hall in Fort William and the fourth Thursday of every month in the Port Arthur Finnish Labour Temple at 314 Bay Street.
110 OUB, 23 October 1920, p. 1.
111 For example see BC Federationist, 15 October 1920 and OUB, 30 October 1920, 2 for a response by F. Woodward.
Finnish Labour Temple on Bay Street, the former heart of OBU support in the region, is highly suggestive.

While all units continued to report increases in membership, many more, such as the Starch Workers’ Unit, became largely inactive because of their industry’s sharply elevated levels of unemployment, generated by over-production and declining markets. Continued attempts to organize lumber workers were largely unsuccessful. Although the District leadership casually dismissed these workers for having “no backbone,” the fact remains that the union was losing ground to other organizations, both socialist and non-socialist in nature.

There were some OBU successes. The Building and Trades Unit led a two-day strike by carpenters at the Kaministiqua Pulp and Paper Company. Over 20 new members joined the General Workers’ Unit in November 1920. Yet, essentially, the OBU wave was receding in the Lakehead almost as fast as it had arisen. The CLC, for example, faced continual difficulties organizing and retaining its members. An attempt to organize the women telephone operators foundered amidst bitter charges of backsliding. An attempt to organize a women’s auxiliary generated little support. A protest against the Fort William council’s concessions to a local pulp and paper company was ignored. Finnish and Ukrainian members were increasingly isolated from their ethnic compatriots. Even the Nipigon Finnish Dramatic Club’s production of a “working-class” play dealing with “the gun and spy methods of the master class” played to a largely English audience.

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112 OBUB, 6 November 1920, p. 3 and 18 December 1920, p. 1.
113 OBUB, 18 December 1920, p. 1.
114 OBUB, 6 November 1920, p. 3.
115 OBUB, 13 November 1920, p. 4.
116 OBUB, 27 November 1920, p.1; 25 December 1920, p. 2; and 15 January 1921, p. 3.
117 OBUB, 13 November 1920, p. 4 and 27 November 1920, p.1.
Bryan had to explain the plot before the curtain was raised.\textsuperscript{118}

The meetings held during November and December 1920 did little to address either the internal problems facing the local units or the immediate regional issues facing workers. Having little in the way of an actual plan of action, all the Council could tell fellow OBU units was that it would “enforce our demands when we are thoroughly organized and not before. The master class are making the conditions, let us explain them.”\textsuperscript{119} These presentations, though, had little to do with actual experience. As in the case of Bryan’s “Labor Laws of Soviet Russia, in Contrast with Labor Laws of Canada,” the content of the presentations came from OBU propaganda, an assortment of IWW publications, and reactions to local news coverage.\textsuperscript{120} From the evidence available, socializing and the presentation of dramatic productions began to outweigh any interest in addressing the growing unemployment in the region.\textsuperscript{121}

These problems no doubt contributed to Bryan’s loss to Richard Lockhead (or Loughhead) for the position of secretary-treasurer at the December 1920 Lumber Workers’ District convention in Port Arthur. Lockhead’s win concerned many within the CLC as he was seen as an IWW sympathizer.\textsuperscript{122} As a concerned member of the OBU wrote to E.E. Winch, “It seems that Lockhead, or Doughhead, or whatever thay [sic] call that ‘Mush-Eating Fakir they appointed in P.A. is neither able or willing to do the work…

Probably some of those guys on the Coast who are in the habit of throwing secretaries

\textsuperscript{118} OBUB, 4 December 1920, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{119} OBUB, 13 November 1920, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{120} OBUB, 11 December 1920, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{121} OBUB, 4 December 1920, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{122} The District Executive Committee results were: William Brown, 147; Hugo Morrell, 145; Edward Stanley, 143; and J. Jaakkola, 130. See also OBUB, 19 February 1921, p. 2. Results for the position of secretary-treasurer were Richard Lockhead, 144; Harry A. Bryan, 54; and Adam Beck, 16.
down stairs, might make a start on this boob… He must be a genuine ‘Wobbly.’”

Despite the change in leadership, Bryan continued to be the glue that kept the OBU in the region together. He traveled extensively during this period and used every connection to the labour movement at his disposal to keep workers engaged and personally arranged for speakers such as Joe Knight to come to the area. While many Finnish lumber workers had become dissatisfied with the OBU, Bryan persuaded many others to remain and encouraged members of the Fort William Ukrainian community, such as Eric Holm, to fill vacant positions on the district executive. Bryan also arranged for individuals to speak on issues relating to Soviet Russia. He also facilitated the creation of collections to be taken in both Port Arthur and Fort William for relief initiatives such as the Soviet Russia and Ukraine Medical Relief. Bryan himself frequently spoke on issues dealing with Soviet Russia and its comparison to Canada.

So pronounced had problems become by the end of December 1920, that reports of the growing internal strife within the OBU had reached the GEB of the IWW in the United States. The growing internal divide was viewed by Wobblies as one between those advocating a militant form of the organization and others for “a geographical (district) beans and soup association” – one separating a militant lumber workers from the “city ‘home’ guard element.” In contrast to those who belonged to trade unions in the towns and cities, the migratory nature of the lumber workers, the GEB argued, had exposed them to the “bitter school of actual life” which had informed their knowledge and assisted in their development of a class consciousness. “City slaves,” on the other

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123 LAC, CSIS, volume 2, file 1025-9-9019, p. 152, RCMP “Investigation Committee,” p. 2. According to the RCMP, the incident occurred to E.E. Winch when he was forcibly thrust into his seat after continuing to speak after being ruled out of order at a meeting in BC.

hand, “got their training from the A.F. of L. and in other yellow institutions that serve to build up the capitalist system and now function to brace and patch it up.” Clearly, from this perspective, a growing difference in how city-dwelling unionists and bushworkers viewed the struggle had developed.

These growing differences did not stop the CLC, after having not supported the local LWIU during the convention, from extending an olive branch by exempting each local unit from paying the per capita tax to “assist them in financing their organization.” Bryan also undertook to tour the lumber camps in the region, report on the prevailing conditions, and shore up support for the union. He frequently attended other regional LWIU conventions as the Port Arthur District fraternal delegate.

By January 1921, nonetheless, it appears the Central Labour Council had realized just how important the LWIU was to the continued operation of the OBU in the district. Unfortunately, it was too late. At a conference held in Vancouver that same month, the vast majority of the LWIU locals voted in favour of secession from the OBU. In the weeks following, a series of meetings were held in branches throughout Ontario and Western Canada at which workers discussed rejoining the OBU, joining the IWW, or creating an entirely new organization. Others in the region followed Hill and joined the newly-formed Communist Party of Canada. Many of the lumber workers refused seating

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125 OBUM (December 1920): 41.
126 OUB, 18 December 1920, p. 1.
127 See, for example, a report in OUB, 25 December 1920, p. 3.
128 Bryan was often also accompanied by other members of the Port Arthur District LWIU. During the Fort Frances LWIU convention in December 1920, he was accompanied, for instance, by John Ursin. See OUB, January 1921, p. 3.
129 Many Finnish lumber workers supported joining the IWW, one worker suggested in a letter to his father, as a recent influx of workers originally from the Mesaba Range had occurred at the Lakehead. See LAC, CPC, volume 52, file 21, Jakka Toivar to Dad, 8 July 1921.
at the Port Arthur Convention, for example, joined Hill in forming the Communist Lumber Workers’ Industrial Union of Canada (LWIUC). The FOC in Port Arthur became heavily involved in organizing on behalf of the American Communist Trade Union Educational League (TUEL).

Although Midgley dismissed the loss of the lumber workers, stating they had only been loosely attached to the OBU, the actions taken against them during the previous year ultimately sealed its fate. The loss of most of the lumber workers involved an estimated one-quarter decline in total membership. The loss of Northwestern Ontario was of especial concern as the eastward progress of the union effectively stalled without the connections of regional unions and the support of the Finnish and Ukrainian language organizations. The OBU did retain a small presence in Northwestern Ontario. Lumber workers in Fort Frances and Kenora rejoined the OBU’s LWIU shortly after leaving it for the IWW. Yet, generally, “throughout the winter of 1920-1,” as Ian Radforth writes, “the OBU and Lumber Workers in Ontario and the west watched members abandon ship in droves.” Those lumber workers who had remained in the months following the convention were supported financially from “the thriving social clubs in Port Arthur, Nipigon, the Sault, Timmins, and Sudbury,” but remained relatively weak, ineffectual,

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131 Organized in both the United States and Canada in 1921, the TUEL was created to spearhead action among the trade unions in the hopes of compelling the American Federation of Labor to pursue policies of a more militant nature. See Tom McEwen, The Forge Glows Red: From Blacksmith to Revolutionary (Toronto: Progress Books, 1974), 138-141.
132 Midgley referred to the lumber workers as “a mass of undigested syndicalist propaganda,” and, according to David Bercuson, “predicted the Lumber Workers’ experiment would fail because ‘an effective working class organization cannot recognise divisions of either craft or industry.’” See Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, 169. His source for this quotation is PAM, OBU, Midgley circular letter, 2 February 1921.
133 See, for example, OBUB, 19 March 1921, p. 1 and 26 March 1921, p. 4.
and subject to successful undermining by the IWW.\textsuperscript{134}

The problems stemming from the split in 1920 and the exodus of the lumber workers in 1921 were only accentuated by general decline in the economy in the resource sectors. As Peter Warrian argues, the inability of the OBU to consolidate its position after the Winnipeg General Strike coupled with the economic downturn resulted in the working class sinking “back into passivity.”\textsuperscript{135} Even though the events of 1919 were inspirational, the actions of socialists between 1920 and 1922 signaled to some that “none in Canada are worthy considering from a revolutionary political standpoint. If there is need of one, then it must be started outside of the O.B.U.”\textsuperscript{136} The FOC’s support for the OBU was just as fleeting. According to J.W. Ahlqvist and A.T. Hill, “the Finns lost their enthusiasm for the OBU as quickly as the rest.” By the end of 1921, the FOC ceased to be a supporting organization of the labour central.\textsuperscript{137}

The decision by the LWIU in January 1921 to withdraw from the One Big Union was a pivotal moment in the history of socialism in the region. For all its obvious limitations, the OBU had been a movement with a vast potential to unite workers from many cultures, living in both the twin cities and their hinterlands, even across ideological barriers. It had seemingly foreshadowed a much more cohesive and effective regional working-class and socialist movement. Yet, its success was short-lived and its promise never achieved. Nationally, the OBU’s membership dwindled from 41,000 to 5,300 in

\textsuperscript{134} Radforth, \textit{Bushworkers and Bosses}, 118; Bercuson, \textit{Fools and Wise Men}, 169; \textit{One Big Union Bulletin}, 20 March, 17 April, 1 October, and 6 November 1920; and \textit{Le Travailleur/The Worker}, 1 July, 1 October 1920.

\textsuperscript{135} Warrian, “The Challenge of the One Big Union Movement in Canada, 1919-1921,” 103.

\textsuperscript{136} \textit{The One Big Union Monthly} (December 1920): 41.

three short years.\textsuperscript{138} Regionally, the movement was a spent force by 1922. Even its most ardent organizers, including Bryan, were by then looking for alternatives.\textsuperscript{139} Despite some limited participation in a few strikes during the 1920s, the OBU both nationally and locally had become little more than “a weak protest movement, a symbol of a revolutionary threat, and after 1929 something even less.”\textsuperscript{140}

The decline and fall of the OBU in the region brought to the forefront the underlying issues of Lakehead socialism. Ethnic differences, especially those pitting Finns against Anglos, were substantial. If centrist labourism had lost much of its appeal, and the mainstream trade unions had proven unable to reach much beyond their craft citadels in the cities, the OBU’s stormy years had also suggested how hard it would be to organize effective alternatives. Two buildings in Port Arthur suggested the distinct possibilities open to those who wanted to persevere in building Lakehead leftism. One, at 314 Bay Street, the Finnish Labour Temple, once more became a focal point of IWW agitation – for, to an extent that was highly unusual in all of interwar North America, the Wobblies were able to capitalize on the collapse of the OBU to mount a series of powerful labour struggles. The other, at 316 Bay Street, was the headquarters of the newly-formed Communist Party of Canada, which had bought and renovated the former Työkansa building in 1922. From 1922 to 1935, Lakehead socialism would be shaped and re-shaped by the overlapping and often rival strategies emanating from these two centres.

\textsuperscript{139} Many of the OBU’s leadership, including R.B. Russell attended the founding convention of the Communist Party of Canada even if they eventually did not support the new organization. See Warrian, “The Challenge of the One Big Union Movement in Canada, 1919-1921,” 103-104.
\textsuperscript{140} Logan, \textit{Trade Unions in Canada}, 328. For information on the OBU’s role in the Freight Handler’s Strike in 1922, see \textit{OUBU}, 24 August; 31 August; 7 September 1922; and \textit{PANC} and \textit{FWDTJ}, 22 August to 8 September 1922.
Chapter 6
“Into the Masses!”
The Communist Party of Canada at the Lakehead, 1922-1925

“At the beginning we were small sects and we stuck close to the Party Line...
We inherited ideas.”
~ Fred Rose

The years following the Winnipeg General Strike and the heyday of the One Big
Union (OBU) – from 1922 to 1925 – were much more critical than any other period to
the changing nature and characteristics of socialism at the Lakehead. From the frustration
of those radicals thwarted in their efforts to demonstrate their solidarity with their
Winnipeg brethren, to those disillusioned with the OBU and the internal divisions that
had torn it asunder, a search began for an alternative that promised to bring about the
change so desired.

As historian William Rodney observes: “For Marxists in Canada the real outcome
of the strike was the realization that ‘the sectarian passivity of the Socialist Party of
Canada… [and] the syndicalist confusion and political sterility of the IWW [Industrial
Workers of the World] and the OBU’ held out no promise for them.”1 As Ian Angus has
suggested, the establishment of the Third International in Moscow provided the impetus
for Canadian socialism to undergo another profound and dramatic change.2 “A truly
revolutionary movement shifted to central Canada,” Rodney argues, “and with the
displacement eastward, Moscow became not only the source of inspiration but also the

1 Fred Rose quoted in Merrily Weisbord, The Strangest Dream: Canadian Communists, the Spy
3 Ian Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada (Montreal: Vanguard, 1981), 76.
catalyst which enabled the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) to be born.”

The period between 1921 and 1925 has been described as the “classic period of the united front.” Socialists in Canada were greatly influenced by Vladimir Il'ich Lenin’s *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, in which he argued that “Communists in western countries must participate actively in parliaments and trade unions, and not shrink from the compromises inherent in such participation.” During this period, “the CPC,” argues John Manley, “operated almost exclusively as a left wing faction inside Canada’s dominant trade union federation, the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC).”

Communism, at least the variant that evolved out of the Third World Congress in 1921, also advocated the United Front as one of its core principles. This ethos of cooperation advocated through the United Front also appealed to the syndicalist and social democratic threads that existed within the Canadian Finnish socialist movement. The Comintern supported the development of language organizations in recognition of the specific

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8 Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class During the Great Depression,” xiii.

cultural characteristics of the Communist movement in North America. As Donald Avery observes, Finns and Ukrainians were attracted to the CPC because of their familiarity with, and continuing links to, European left movements. Communism also appealed to both groups because the Russian Revolution, in ending Czarism in Russia, had eliminated a force that had been oppressive to both nationalities. Communism provided opportunities for Finns to improve not only their working conditions, but also their political situation at home and abroad.

The central contradiction of Leninist trade union policy, however, becomes apparent when it is studied in the context of the Lakehead. In contrast to many other areas such as coalfields and urban centres, the most important workers in the region did not have a stable union. Those unions that did develop in the 1920s were not conservative craft unions, but experimental industrial unions such as the Lumber Workers’ Industrial Union (LWIU), linked first to the One Big Union and later the IWW. The Lakehead had the paradoxical result of encouraging Communists to enter into alliances (both short- and even longer-term) with their enemies the syndicalists. In other settings, Communists and syndicalists would never have been in bed with each other. In large part, this resulted from the fact that at the Lakehead, the IWW and OBU unions were the largest established

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10 Norman Penner, Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond (Toronto: Metheun, 1988), 272.
labour bodies. The strict application of the strategy recommended in *Left-Wing Communism* required that Communists work alongside them, even though in other contexts they were sworn enemies.

As this chapter explores, two competing organizations dominated the activities of socialists in the region at the Lakehead during the first half of the 1920s. The first was comprised of remnants of the OBU and a revitalized IWW (whose members were often referred to as Wobblies). The second, comprised of disillusioned socialists from a host of organizations, would eventually become the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). With the virtual collapse of the OBU in the region at the end of 1922, the IWW and the newly established CPC “all made bids for the former members.”13 This chapter, and the two that follow, builds upon Rodney’s classic analysis of the CPC and its relationship with the Communist International during the 1920s. It improves upon it, though, by addressing the CPC’s relationship, at least at the Lakehead, with other socialist elements.

The story of the formation of the CPC is a thing of lore more than fact in the annals of Canadian labour history. Contradictory and often exaggerated recollections have appeared since the fateful day in May 1921 when a host of individuals representing a number of socialist organizations met in a Guelph, Ontario, barn to discuss the formation of Canada’s newest revolutionary socialist party. This meeting resulted from a gradual shift in the nature and characteristics of socialist thought in Canada. In the years following the Winnipeg General Strike, many had become disillusioned with existing organizations that had failed to affiliate with the Communist International or the communist Red International Labour Unions (RILU). The leadership of the IWW and

OBU in particular had alienated many.  

The activities of A.T. Hill during these years provide an example of how many socialists at the Lakehead reacted to the changing circumstances in Canada. Like many, Hill had re-evaluated his ideological position following the end of the Winnipeg General Strike and during the tumultuous years when the OBU and IWW fought for hegemony in the region. By early 1920, he no longer believed that either the syndicalism offered by the IWW or the variation espoused by the OBU would result in the social change he desired. Traveling to Superior, Wisconsin, where he had worked in the past as a harvester and lumber worker, he enrolled in the American Finnish Socialist Federation’s school. There he and fellow future prominent Finnish-Canadian Communists fell under the influence of Emeli Parras, editor of Työmies and Secretary of a local unit of the American Communist Party. Parras’s courses spurred Hill to join William Z. Foster and Charles Ruthenberg’s United Communist Party. Shortly after, he became one of its many members who flooded

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14 Contrary to popular lore, this was not the first attempt to form a communist party. Between 1919 and 1922, a number of organizations operated in Canada purporting in name or through their actions to be communist. None, however, affiliated to the Communist International formed in March 1919. The Anglo-American Colonial Group of the Communist International, for example, recognized that an illegal communist party with an auxiliary legal body known as the “Canadian Labour Alliance” was at work in Canada in 1921. This organization spent its first couple of months “straightening things out” and appears to have folded around the time of the May meeting. Influenced by the American communist movement, these early parties shared in its divisive nature. This changed, however, when the Communist International began to pressure the North American organizations seeking affiliation to amalgamate and form unified national parties. For the early attempts, see Library and Archives of Canada (hereafter LAC), Communist International fonds (hereafter CI), MG10-K3, Reel 3 [K-271], 495, 98, 1, “Report of Organizer Atwood to the American Agency of the Communist International,” 18 April 1921; Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks (2004); Rodney, Soldiers of the International, 31-36; and Tim Buck, Thirty Years: The Story of the Communist Movement in Canada, 1922-1952 (Toronto: Progress Books, 1952), 21.

15 Hill was not alone in his movement towards the Communist movement. As Donald Avery argues, over the course of the first few years of the WPC, many of the country’s leading socialist activists joined. See Avery, ‘Dangerous Foreigners’, 119.
the Canadian borderlands speaking to workers about Leninism and the Communist movement.

At first, the efforts of Communists were focused on the former strongholds of the IWW and those towns and regions where growing dissatisfaction with the OBU was greatest. Hill began agitating in Fort Frances, Ontario. Gradually, building on his earlier reputation as an organizer throughout the Lakehead area, he became a leading radical throughout the region.¹⁶ Often pitting himself against William Arnberg, a former organizer for the OBU and now a Wobbly agitator, he argued that the Soviet state, as constructed by Lenin and the Bolsheviks, was a necessary precondition for the transformation of capitalism into socialism.¹⁷ Such SDPC activists as Richard Loughead (also referred to as Lockhead), William Checkley and Harry Bryan followed Hill in seeing the Communist Party as a way to preserve and develop the radicalism they had developed before 1918.

When the clandestine group of socialists met in Guelph, the alternative many

¹⁷ A.T. Hill, “Highlights of Labor History – Lakehead, Canada & World,” 3 and LUA, CTKL, Series D, 8, 10, “A.T. Hill Biography,” nd., p. 13-14. These debates, contends Ahti Tolvanen, were “accompanied by the arrival of refugees from the Finnish Civil war of 1918 and had a divisive influence.” As early as January 1919, prominent Finnish socialists such as J.W. Ahlqvist were in the area raising funds for relief for Canadian refugees from the Finnish Civil War. Many in the region, though, were cognizant of both the wartime restrictions and the position taken by many Finns in both Finland and Canada during the war years. As a result, “interrogation committees screened newcomers at the Finnish Organization of Canada (FOC) halls and those who had opposed the socialist cause,” Tolvanen states, “were required to make a public apology.” Results of these “interrogations” were published in Vapaus. See LAC, Canadian Security Intelligence Service fonds (hereafter CSIS), RG 146, vol. 21, file [1025-9-9019] 92-A-00099, part 2, p. 018-019, p. 027-028, and p. 039-040; Ahti Tolvanen, Finntown: A Perspective on Urban Integration, Port Arthur Finns in the Inter-war Period: 1918-1939 (Helsinki: Yliopistopaino, 1985), 30; and Ravio Yrjö, Kanadan Suomalaisten Historia vol. 1 (Sudbury, 1979), 464-482.
were seeking was born. Largely prearranged through the Comintern representatives, the meeting agreed upon a plan to form a single Communist party in Canada and formally approach the Communist International for entry into the Third International. Upon the Comintern’s unanimous decision to grant the CPC entry into the Third International in December 1921, the SDPC, OBU, and various ethnic organizations, such as the Finnish Organization of Canada (FOC), were invited to plan a unity convention.18 A subsequent convention in February 1922 formally established the Workers’ Party of Canada (WPC). However, due to the restrictions against socialist organizations still in place under the 1918 invocation of the War Measures Act, the legal party, the WPC, and an illegal underground section, the CPC, were created. According to Ian Angus, however, the underground party never seemed to function.19 The five-point program adopted by the WPC differentiated it from its predecessors such as the OBU and SDPC, and its adoption of a policy of political action distinguished it from the IWW.20

According to John Manley, Communists were influenced by Vladimir Il’ich Lenin’s writings, in particular his pamphlet “Left Wing” Communism: An Infantile

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19 For Angus’s discussion of the underground party, see Canadian Bolsheviks (2004), 89-93.
20 Canada’s Party of Socialism, 19-20. In particular, this was in keeping with Lenin’s 21 conditions for entry in to the Communist International. See V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 31 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960-1970), 206-212. According to William Rodney, this distinction was actually meaningless as the underground party was the driving force and made all the decisions for the legal party. See Rodney, Soldiers of the International, 53-54.
Disorder.\textsuperscript{21} For them, “the essence of the united front line in industry,” contends Manley, “was the struggle for immediate working class demands and a clean break from both anarcho-syndicalism and ‘ultra-left’ abstentionism – the view that partial demands were on principle reformist and had to be shunned.”\textsuperscript{22} The CPC’s belief in the imminence of “the overthrow of capitalism and capitalist dictatorship by the establishment of the working class dictatorship and the workers’ republic”\textsuperscript{23} and its emphasis on the decisive role of a vanguard party guided by Marxist-Leninist theory made its socialism significantly different from previous versions espoused in Canada.\textsuperscript{24} What had been created, essentially, was intended to be a “highly centralized organization composed of a disciplined proletarian vanguard whose mission was to destroy the bourgeois state machinery, to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, and to replace the capitalist system with a communist society.”\textsuperscript{24}

The structure of the WPC consisted of groups of five to ten members, which when numbering ten formed a branch. Two or more branches formed a local that belonged to a sub-district within a larger geographically-designated District. Theoretically, each group possessed an elected “Organizer,” and these in turn formed the “Branch Executive Committee.” This committee elected a “Branch Organizer,” who in turn formed a “Local Executive Committee.” The committee’s representative, a “Local Organizer,” joined with others to form a Sub-District committee that, along with any “Language Section District Committees,” acted on the District Committee that sent a representative to the Central Committee.

\textsuperscript{21} Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class During the Great Depression,” 6.
\textsuperscript{22} Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class During the Great Depression,” 9.
\textsuperscript{24} Rodney, \textit{Soldiers of the International}, 41.
Executive Committee of the party.\textsuperscript{25} Unfortunately, this structure rarely worked as planned. The highly centralized structure envisaged by the CPC came up against the deeply-rooted realities of ethnic and regional politics. Adequate organizers were often difficult to find and the more successful ones tended to be moved around by the party to those regions deemed most important. In addition, factionalism emerged almost immediately. Rooted in the differences that had existed among the organizations before the founding convention, factionalism would form a consistent thread through the 1920s and early 1930s.\textsuperscript{26} It often manifested itself in the ethnic differences that existed within the new party. These tensions were not the creation of the WPC. They were merely new variations on old problems that had first divided the Socialist Party of Canada in 1910 and later the Social Democratic Party of Canada and the OBU.\textsuperscript{27}

The first few years of the legal and illegal groups’ existence were spent attempting to meet the Comintern’s Executive Committee’s instructions to be diligent in its work with the labour movement, agitating but also working towards the CPC’s theoretical and practical goals.\textsuperscript{28} In fact, the Anglo-American Secretariat considered the CPC’s activities to be of passing interest only. Records reveal that they were much more

\textsuperscript{25} Rodney, \textit{Soldiers of the International}, 41.
\textsuperscript{26} Rodney, \textit{Soldiers of the International}, 42-44.
\textsuperscript{27} This also applied to the CPC’s leadership during its first decade. For example, John MacDonald had been heavily involved in the Independent Labour Party in Ontario, William Moriarty the Socialist Party of Canada, Maurice Spector was on the executive of the SDPC, and A.T. Hill a leading member of the Industrial Workers of the World in Canada. A number of officials had also been involved in a variety of socialist organizations in Europe. Interestingly, aside from MacDonald and Tim Buck, none of the early leadership had much actual experience in the trade union movement. See Avakumovic, \textit{The Communist Party in Canada}, 11.
concerned with issues dealing with the Party in the United States, Britain, and even Egypt.\textsuperscript{29} As William Rodney suggests, the Anglo-American Secretariat often treated the Canadian party during these early years as a mere extension of the American one.\textsuperscript{30}

The CPC leadership focused its attention on consolidating its position within the Canadian left and establishing party unity. Such an initiative was no small task considering the disparate elements brought together under its umbrella.\textsuperscript{31} “By 1922,” according to Ian Angus, “a majority of SPC members had joined the new Workers’ Party of Canada, which was communist in all but name.”\textsuperscript{32} Disillusioned members of the OBU, the SDPC, and the IWW joined from all parts of the country.\textsuperscript{33} The backbone of the WPC very early became the various ethnically based language organizations that had once been associated with the SDPC and the OBU. Owing to their strength, language sections with a certain level of autonomy were established to stave off the divisions in both the SPC and the OBU.\textsuperscript{34} One of the earliest language sections to be formed, and the one with the most


\textsuperscript{30} See LAC, CI, Reel 1, [K-269], 495, 72, 1-176 and Rodney, \textit{Soldiers of the International}, 61.

\textsuperscript{31} Decisions and Activities of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Canada, June-July 1921 cited in \textit{Canada’s Party of Socialism}, 20. See also pages 18-20. According to Ian Angus, the conference was comprised of 63 delegates (43 from Ontario, 16 from Western Canada, 5 from Quebec, and a host of fraternal delegates from organizations such as the Finnish and Ukrainian language groups). See Angus, \textit{Canadian Bolsheviks} (2004), 88-89.


\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Canada’s Party of Socialism}, 18. English-speaking members were not considered to form a language group despite from the beginning being numerically one of the smallest groups. In fact, at times during the next 10 years, paid English language members would have been hard pressed to meet the minimum requirement for the formation of a section.
influence at the Lakehead, was Finnish.

Hill’s election to the nine-person provisional executive in December assured both the illegal and legal parties of affiliation with the FOC. He figured prominently in the formation of the first Finnish Socialist Section of the WPC, was integral in the FOC’s decision to affiliate directly with the WPC in 1922, and assisted in its reorganization on a club basis.\(^3\) In the months following the formation of the WPC, Hill and other well-known socialists such as Alf Hautamäki began making periodic trips to Northwestern Ontario speaking of the virtues of the Communist International and scouting locations for potential branches.

Hautamäki is an intriguing character who, in many respects, is symptomatic of the Finnish socialist experience. Nothing is known of his life before he appeared in Ontario lumber camps as an organizer in the early 1920s for the fledgling Lumber Workers’ Industrial Union of the One Big Union. Like many Finns, he appears to have migrated from Finland in search of work, but with a strong belief in socialism and, in particular, that version emanating from revolutionary Russia. Following the OBU split in 1920 and the formation of the CPC in 1921, Hautamäki joined as an organizer. He quickly rose to prominence, as a leading member of the FOC and editor of the Toronto-based Finnish-Communist newspaper *Metsätyöläinen (The Lumber Worker)*. He became head of the

CPC’s powerful lumber workers’ union, and the leading Communist figure at the Lakehead. Within the twin cities and in the surrounding countryside, he was just as well known for his worker-poetry and plays focused on topics including lumber camp life, love, strikes, and alcoholism. His plays were frequently performed in Finnish halls from Sudbury to the Manitoba border. Hautamäki’s story ends just as mysteriously as it began. He disappears from the record in the mid-1930s, like so many migrant Finnish workers during the period.\textsuperscript{36}

In keeping with his personality, the meetings organized with Finnish socialists at the Lakehead by Hautamäki in the early 1920s were open and frank. They included members from the Finnish Support Circle of the OBU with which many of the Communists had joint memberships. In February 1921, through a morphing of the Finnish Support Circle of the OBU and the Finnish Association, a branch of the FOC was formally reestablished and immediately affiliated with the WPC. While the FOC would join “in its entirety as the Workers’ Party Finnish Section in February 1922,”\textsuperscript{37} many Finns preferred in 1921 to affiliate only with the Trade Union Education League, a “non-partisan trade union auxiliary, interested only in the ‘renovation’ of a declining trade union movement.”\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{36} See Ian Radforth, \textit{Bushworkers and Bosses: Logging in Northern Ontario 1900-1980} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 110; 120; and 123-126.


\textsuperscript{38} For the quotation, see Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class During the Great Depression,” 14. For a discussion the TUEL and its activities, see Angus, \textit{Canadian Bolsheviks} (2004), 104-105, 118-122, 159-160, 163-164, and 253-259; Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class During the Great Depression,” 14-16.
The Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA) also eventually affiliated with the WPC and, although smaller in number regionally than the Finns, it constituted the second largest ethnic section. Formed in late 1917 by Matthew Popovich and other Ukrainian socialists as the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party, the Winnipeg-based organization had established by 1919 a number of branches in Northern Ontario and Western Canada. Its strength, however, remained in the Rocky Mountain mining region and in the cities of Winnipeg and Edmonton. The spread of the ULFTA had been hampered during the final years of the First World War as the Canadian government declared it an “illegal Bolshevik Organization.” When it reemerged in the early 1920s, it did so slowly and cautiously choosing often to infiltrate existing organizations.

Such was the case at the Lakehead. During the late 1910s and early 1920s, Ukrainian socialists chose to work through the Winnipeg-based Workers’ Benevolent Association (WBA). In a matter of months following the establishment of the WBA in Winnipeg, a branch appeared in West Fort William. A second branch followed in April 1923 and a third in Port Arthur by April 1926. As indicated by Popovich’s role as its president, a connection between the WBA and the ULFTA existed from the start. Not surprisingly, shortly after the ULFTA’s affiliation with the WPC, the WBA was used as a beachhead within the Ukrainian community at the Lakehead for the party. As Mike

40 Avery, ‘Dangerous Foreigners’, 79 and 120-121.
Shimko, one of the founders of the West Fort William branch, would later recall:

When the Ukrainian Labour Temple Association was organized in Winnipeg in 1918, members of the West Fort William society began to think in terms of joining the [ULFTA]. They wanted to become part of a national network of Ukrainian cultural societies, rather than remain in isolation. Thus it was that in February 1922, at the third national convention of the [ULFTA] in Winnipeg, fraternal delegate Steve Kuzyk announced the decision of the West Fort William society to join the Ukrainian Labour [Farmer] Temple Association.42

Ukrainians associated with the ULFTA at the Lakehead would reflect the national composition of the CPC and form the second largest regional group next to the Finns. Ian Angus has argued that the WPC “gathered into its ranks a clear majority of the organized left.”43 The claim largely depends upon what is meant by the “organized left.” It is undoubtedly true that the WPC, and through it the Communists, became the largest single political party on the Canadian left in the 1920s. The SDPC disappeared, and the SPC shrank in numbers. Various labour parties, organized federally or provincially, were often not “left” in a very rigorous sense, and the Communists would eventually penetrate many in any event.44 The adherence to the Workers’ Party by the ULFTA and FOC gave the Communists the prospect of a mass base. At the same time, the Lakehead evidence suggests the continuing power of alternative forms of leftism, such as those associated with the IWW.45 Overall, the “organized left” as a movement declined rapidly in the 1920s, in the face of economic crisis and right-wing reaction.

43 Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks (1981), 75.
The delicate situation among the organizations was well known to Harry Bryan. He had been at the centre of the conflict within the OBU at the convention in 1920. Even before breaking his ties with the OBU, the events and ideology emanating from Russia and the failure of the past organizations to make a lasting impact on the working class had caused him to reconsider what he believed. Bryan had been integral in the establishment of a short-lived lumber workers’ union in Sudbury in 1920. Although this union disappeared during the winter, Bryan along with Hill met other like-minded workers that spring in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario and formed under the aegis of the newly established WPC the Lumber Workers’ Industrial Union of Canada (LWIUC). Bryan was appointed its first secretary-organizer. However, a period of inactivity followed when longtime Eastern Ontario lumber worker Ed Kuusela replaced Bryan for yet undetermined reasons months later. Kuusela’s efforts focused mostly on the Sudbury region and little organizing occurred in Northwestern Ontario.

Communist activities at the Lakehead received a boost when Bryan moved back shortly after being relieved of his duties in Sudbury. During the spring and summer of 1921, much of the organizing at the Lakehead had been performed by traveling organizers who spent one or two days in the twin cities and visited select lumber camps.

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46 OBU Bulletin 4 December 1920, p. 3.
47 Radforth, Bushworkers and Bosses, 120.
49 Organized in both the United States and Canada in 1921, the TUEL was created to spearhead the action among the trade unions in the hopes of compelling the American Federation of Labor to pursue policies of a more militant nature. See Tom Ewen, The Forge Glows Red: From Blacksmith to Revolutionary (Toronto: Progress Books, 1974), 138-141.
before returning south or moving on to larger centres in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.\textsuperscript{50}

With Bryan now in the region more or less permanently, it was hoped much more substantial gains would be made.

It remains unclear when the WPC officially established a branch at the Lakehead. Arnold Beck, a leading member of the Finnish Building Company (the entity that controlled the Finnish Labour Temple in Port Arthur), recalled in the late 1970s that the party’s first regional committee was multi-ethnic in composition. Beck himself claims to have been the first regional secretary. Einar Nordstrom describes the committee as having been comprised of Anglo-Saxon workers Doug Boom, Angus McLeod, and Finley McLeod; Finns Beck and Arne Skarra; a Ukrainian named Boiko; and a number of unnamed Italians.\textsuperscript{51} Bryan, no doubt, was also a member, as he appears to have played a lead role in speaking out against both the OBU and the IWW.

Considering his position as former head of the OBU-dominated Central Labour Council and a well-known, if not always well-liked, member of the working class at the Lakehead, Bryan’s conversion was a coup for the WPC in the area. His speeches provide an indication of what attracted regional workers to the CPC. Typically, they attacked syndicalism and the IWW’s refusal to become politically active. The demands of workers, he often argued, could not be realized solely through concessions wrung from employers. Political participation was necessary for lasting changes in Canadian society. One of his favorite means to get the central issue across was a simple example, traceable

\textsuperscript{50} LAC, CI, Reel 3 [K-271], 495, 98, 4, p. 22, Minutes of CEC Meeting, 5 August 1921. Interestingly, the organizer was moved from Fort William after the CEC notified him that it actually was not in his territory. For more on the Communist Party of Canada reports to the Comintern about the OBU during this period, see Reel 3 [K-271], 495, 98, 6, p. 12, William Moriarty, Report on Canada, August 1922.

\textsuperscript{51} LUA, TBFCHS, B, 7, 1, I3, p. 2.
to his early involvement with Daniel De Leon, which he shared with hundreds throughout Northwestern Ontario. Bryan told the story of a man going down a street with his hands behind his back. On his walk, the man meets a police officer who, because the man is a labourer, wants to club him or arrest him. The man would have no chance in the same way that the working class would have no chance if it relied only on its industrial arm and neglected its political arm.\(^5^2\)

A number of factors continued to complicate attempts by Bryan and others to organize workers at the Lakehead during this period. First, a decision by the party executive resulted in the bisecting of the area, with Port Arthur placed in District 2 and Fort William in District 3.\(^5^3\) Most likely, this reflected the geographic provincial and federal political division of the region. Second, the region possessed neither an organizer nor, after the apparent collapse of the first one, a branch until 1923. As a result, despite the best efforts of Bryan and Hill, recruiting efforts in the region were largely unsuccessful by February 1922. While hundreds of workers in the twin cities and surrounding countryside belonged to the FOC and the ULFTA, total direct membership in the WPC amounted to only 6 in Port Arthur (all Finnish) and a mere 19 in Fort William (10 Ukrainian and 9 Finnish).\(^5^4\) This would seem to indicate that many socialists

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\(^{52}\) LUA, Jean Morrison Labour History Collection (hereafter JMLHC), General Series 186a, Tape 5, Harry Bryan Reminiscences, 1972.

\(^{53}\) LAC, CI, Reel 3 [K-271], 495, 98, 4, p. 18, CEC Minutes of the CPC, 3 July 1921, p. 3. District 2 consisted of Manitoba, Alberta, and Ontario West of Fort William. This included many of the small Finnish communities such as Finland, Ontario, and larger centres within the influence of Port Arthur and Fort William such as Fort Frances. District 3 consisted of branches in Ontario from Fort William to the East and west of Ottawa.

\(^{54}\) See LAC, CI, Reel 3, [K-271], 495, 98, 4, p. 109, “To Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern,” August 1922 and Reel 3, [K-271], 495, 98, 3, p. 6. These numbers, though, are not entirely accurate. The total of Ukrainian members in Fort William is derived from estimates, as the party had received no definite figure. In several cases figures received from district and
in the region remained hesitant about the WPC and possibly about communism in general, preferring to work solely through their language organizations.

Decisions made by the WPC Central Executive Committee in March would also have not helped the situation. The appointment of Tim Buck as the organizer for District 3 (Ontario, from Port Arthur to Quebec but excluding Ottawa) and H.M. Bartholomew to District Four (Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario up to Port Arthur) ensured that organizing activities would be centred only in the major metropolitan areas. As a result, organizational efforts in the region would be sporadic at best over the next year.55

Many in the language federations were reluctant to throw themselves into the activities of the WPC. For example, Ukrainians from the Lakehead attended as delegates to the Third Convention of the ULFTA held in February to decide whether the association would participate in the formation of the WPC and send their delegates to the convention of the Party.56 “All the delegates, with the exception of two, were instructed by their organizations to support participation in the formation of the WPC and send delegates to the convention of that party.”57 Support, though, was conditional upon “a

local organizers did not match. Figures given by district organizers were more often used; however, in the case of those reporting Finnish members, the figures of their bureaus were used according to the documents consulted as they reported members in several places not previously reported both District 2 and 3.

55 The Worker, 15 March 1922 and Rodney, Soldiers of the International, 51. See also Information Access Section, Canadian Security Intelligence Service, File 88-A-25, “Political Activities, Maurice Spector.” I would like to thank Ian McKay for providing this information.
56 Cities represented included Winnipeg, East Kildonan, and Transcona from Manitoba; Fort Frances, Fort William, Sudbury, Espanola, Toronto, Hamilton, Thorold, Welland, and Timmins from Ontario; Regina, Saskatoon, and Moose Jaw from Saskatchewan; Edmonton, Drumheller, Calgary, Canmore, Coalhurst, Hillcrest, and Coleman from Alberta; Michel and Corbin from British Columbia. Source: John Kolsky, ed. and trans. Prophets and Proletarians: Documents on the History of the Rise and Decline of Ukrainian Communism in Canada (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press and University of Alberta, 1990), 114.
revolutionary platform and programme and an open declaration for the Third (Communist) International and a guarantee in the party constitution of democratic centralism in the party while allowing the sections the possibility of conducting their work without unnecessary hindrance or constraint.“As a result, while participating in the formation of a Ukrainian section of the WPC, the ULFTA did not immediately affiliate directly as the FOC had.

Like many Ukrainian socialists at the Lakehead, Mike Cosmishin would postpone joining the CPC until the late 1920s. Born in 1911 to a Ukrainian agricultural worker, Cosmishin had immigrated to Canada in 1922 with his family and joined the youth section of the ULFTA shortly after. According to Cosmishin, he joined because of the Association’s “progressive” nature and its dedication to culture, language, and the immediate problems and issues facing workers. Coming from a “foreign country,” he also saw the association as a necessity to “get acquainted with life and conditions in Canada.” The WPC, while appealing, was ill-equipped to help him in these areas.

The lack of a district branch at the Lakehead apparently did not stop the party executive from including Communists in the region when it chastised members and branches for their lack of support for The Worker. The party’s organ, they suggested, was the vehicle through which the battle against capitalism must advance. The criticisms were addressed especially to the non-English members who were encouraged to subscribe

M.Popowich, I. Navizivsky, V.N. Kolisnyk, M. Shatulsky and D. Lobay were put in charge of organizing the Ukrainian section of the WPC. Elected as delegates to the convention of the WPC were I. Hlady, J. Zradowsky, I. Boychuk, I. Hobatiuk, I. Lilitsak, R. Komar, S. Prokopa, I. Marchak, Gelych, and Kachala.

60 LUA, JMLHC, Tape 6, Interview with Mike Cosmishin, 1972.
“irrespective [of] his language. If the member cannot read English, he can pass it on to someone who does.” The WPC appears to have not attempted to publish information in *The Worker* in any other language than English. Instead, it preferred to leave such things up to the language sections and the affiliated organizations.

In fact, the WPC and the underground group appear to have increasingly taken the membership of non-English workers for granted. As an example, when the Organizing Committee of the Administrative Council led by J. MacDonald and William Moriarty began to issue instructions to branch Officers and Executive Committees that “great care must be exercised in advertising and organizing mass meetings,” and that “English-speaking districts must receive preference on all occasions.” Recommendations such as these typically ended, somewhat ironically, with a declaration that “no matter what the difference may be developed in party discussion on question of policy, once a decision is made, it shall be considered binding upon all members.”

By August 1922, both the WPC and the underground section reported that they were still fraught with internal difficulties stemming from the existence of two identifiable fractions. One group consisted of those who had been the more radical elements in the SPC and SDPC. The other group comprised those who had belonged to those language organizations declared illegal in 1918. Factional disputes across the border also affected the Canadian party’s operations. As William Moriarty concluded in

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61 LAC, Communist Party of Canada fonds (hereafter CPC), MG28-IV4, Reel M-7376, 1A 0003, [unclear], “To All Part Branches and Members,” c. 1922 [date unclear].
62 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0004-0005, J. Macdonald and W. Moriarty “To Branches of the W.P. of C.,” c. 1922.
63 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0004-0005, J. Macdonald and W. Moriarty “To Branches of the W.P. of C.,” c. 1922.
64 LAC, CI, Reel 3 [K-271], 495, 98, 3, “The Communist Party of Canada Brief sent by A. Kent
his August report to the Anglo-American Secretariat:

we do not consider that the Party is as yet a well developed Party of record. However, we do believe that we have made a good start in the right direction. We also recognize clearly that, because of our youth, the Party is lacking in comrades who possess the necessary ability for organization and executive work. But experience is fast teaching the leading elements of the Party and we are anxious to make progress. We appeal to you, therefore, to advise and assist us in every way possible, so that we might become real factors in the revolutionary struggle.  

Yet, despite the ongoing problems, substantial gains in membership for both the WPC and the illegal section had occurred nationally.  

In Port Arthur and Fort William, hundreds of workers flocked to May Day celebrations in 1922. Yet, few were recruited into the Party. Why? One possible explanation lay in the unpopularity of the organizers sent to address non-English-speaking workers. The issue of unsuitable or unpopular organizers amongst the Finns became a real concern as approximately 2,000 of the CPC’s 6,000 affiliated members were now Finnish.  

By 1923, while overall party numbers decreased, Finnish representation had increased to 2,028 of 4,808 members. As a result, they contributed, according to William Rodney, two-thirds of total revenue.

The Party’s ideology may also explain some of its early mixed results. Despite advocating United Front action with other organizations (something favored by the Finns), the WPC also stressed that its platform was in no way reformist, even if other

65 LAC, CI, Reel 3 [K-271], 495, 98, 6, p. 12, William Moriarty, Report on Canada, August 1922.  
66 For membership breaks downs by district for both the A and the Z sections, see LAC, CI, Reel 3 [K-271], 495, 98, 4, p. 109, “To Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern,” August 1922.  
68 Rodney, Soldiers of the International, 55 and 68.
groups seemingly shared its goals. “A reformist platform,” the Executive Secretary of the WPC argued, “is one based on the theory that the establishment of same will secure for the capitalist class a definite degree of equilibrium, for its form of society.” Essentially, the WPC held the position that reformists were under the delusion that stable conditions would lead to better security for the working class. “Marxists,” it contended, “reject such theories as being unsound, and will recognize that our program will not succeed in minimizing the class struggle, but will intensify it.” The “justness” of workers’ claims, and the intrinsic inability of capitalists to grant them, would lead to “the fight which inevitably must arise.”

Socialists at the Lakehead appeared to have not been sure how to respond to the WPC’s position. Finnish workers were wary of a complete rejection of the past. So too were many Anglo-Saxon workers who had a long, and often successful, tradition of independent labour politics in the region. As a result, the small membership at the Lakehead became increasingly despondent and factionalized as regional realities appeared to be out of step with party decisions. Fearing the worst, organizers were sent into the area in late November 1922 to head off another split such as that which had occurred in 1910 with the SDPC and 1920 with the OBU. The “secessionists” in the

69 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0008, “General Instructions to Districts for Guidance in Municipal Elections,” 25 September 1922.
70 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0008, “General Instructions to Districts for Guidance in Municipal Elections,” 25 September 1922. This position was rooted in Lenin’s pamphlet Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder (1920). Written for the Second Congress of the Communist International, it criticized the leftists in Germany and Britain for neglecting parliamentary tactics. More important, it also argued that, in lieu of the current movement towards world revolution, Communist parties were expected to model themselves after the Russian Party and adopt the structure and organization that had brought it to power.
region, *The Worker* reported, received a “trouncing” that apparently “acted as a tonic.”

In the aftermath of this struggle, the Finnish section in particular made substantial gains in no small part through the efforts of Hill and Hautamäki. Both men had spent much of the winter lumber season speaking on behalf of the Finnish section, the WPC, and the LWIUC. In Northwestern Ontario, the Finnish section had also been highly active in the cultural aspects of the Port Arthur community, especially among the children and youth. An indication of their success is evident in the number of theatrical plays, sporting events, subscriptions to Finnish newspapers, and overall new membership. For example, the Finnish section by early spring 1923 was comprised of 89 branches with a total membership in excess of 2,000. Stability at the Lakehead, though, continued to be challenged by the “the old traditions of syndicalism,” particularly within the lumber camps.

The situation at the Lakehead was not necessarily the fault of organizers. The WPC had inherited many of the problems that had faced both the SDPC and the OBU during the previous decade. The IWW, in particular, posed by far the most pronounced problem. Sensing the growing threat represented by the CPC, when wartime restrictions were repealed in 1923, the IWW quickly moved to re-establish itself in Northwestern Ontario and elsewhere in Canada. Much of its renewed strength resulted from the decision by many former members of the OBU’s LWIU to affiliate in early 1923. This included the former strongholds in Northwestern Ontario of Fort Frances, Fort William,

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71 *The Worker*, 1 and 15 December 1922.
72 *The Worker*, 15 March 1923.
73 *The Worker*, 15 March 1923.

The ongoing problems facing the WPC in the region continued despite the best efforts of members such as Bryan, who toured the region attempting to recruit members without receiving pay or compensation. By the time of the Second Annual Convention of the WPC in late February 1923, neither Port Arthur nor Fort William still possessed an official branch.\footnote{LAC, CI, Reel 3 [K-270], 495, 98, 9, “Report of the Second Annual Convention of the Workers Party of Canada (22 February 1923),” 3 April 1923 and \textit{The Worker}, 15 March 1923.} Part of the blame rested with the local Ukrainian and Finnish socialists who continued to refuse to become fully involved in the party. The Finns in particular were singled out, as their reluctance for not having responded to the call for union activity was blamed on the prevalence of syndicalism among them. This was problematic as over half of the WPC’s 4,808 members were now Finnish (2,028) and Ukrainian (880) in nationality, but did not belong to any of the WPC’s mass organizations.\footnote{LAC, CI, Reel 4 [K-271], 495, 98, 13, “Report of the Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Workers’ Party of Canada, 22-25 February 1923.” For a discussion of the convention, see also Rodney, \textit{Soldiers of the International}, 54-55.} Nationally, the party was little better either financially or organizationally, with only District 2 and 3 reporting solvency and a stable party apparatus.\footnote{LAC, CI, Reel 4 [K-271], 495, 98, 13, “Report of the Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention of the Worker’s Party of Canada, 22-25 February 1923.”}

In response, Maurice Spector spent much of April and May touring Western Canada discussing the Comintern, the United Front policy, and the Canadian Labor Party (the political apparatus of the WPC) in an attempt to win over workers. Specifically, he targeted those regions where the OBU, the IWW, and various other socialist parties had
been previously or continued to be most active. For example, he used his April presentation in Port Arthur to condemn “the capitalistic system and urged the workers to form a united front against their enemies.” Such a strategy, he argued, “was necessary not only in taking power into the hands of the workers, but it was absolutely necessary in securing temporary improvements in the conditions in which the workers were living.”

However, despite being sponsored by the local branch of the FOC, only 20 people attended his presentation in Port Arthur, nearly all of whom were Finns, along with the obligatory government spy.

Given this mediocre record of accomplishment among the Finns, the Communists could take some heart in the activities among the English-speakers of Port Arthur. Two labour activists named Gibson and Long, who had recently resolved to fight both the OBU and the IWW in their campaigns to organize the region, founded the largely English-speaking local there. Both worked through the still-functioning Thunder Bay District Central Labor Council and the Port Arthur Trades and Labor Council. The Worker was encouraged and the CPC’s Executive Committee resolved to bestow special attention upon the “new local.” By June, Port Arthur and Fort William had become

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79 LAC, SOP, Suomalainen Osasto of Port Arthur Minute Book, 30 March 1923.
81 Jean Morrison, “The Organization of Labour at Thunder Bay,” in *Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity*, 133. For more on early communist attacks on the One Big Union, see “O.B.U. Bulletin and Industrial Unionism,” *The Worker*, 1 August 1922.
82 City of Thunder Bay Archives (hereafter TBA), Fort William fonds (hereafter FWF), Series 4: City Clerks Files (hereafter FWCC), 4, File 209, H.P. Hansen, Secretary, Building Trades Unit to the OBU Fort William to Mayor of the City of Fort William and members of the City Council, 28 February 1923.
regular stops on the tours of Communist leaders through the country, and Hill often arranged for such visitors to venture out to address area lumber workers. Evidence of growing CPC popularity could also be found in the emergence of an Italian section in Port Arthur.\footnote{LAC, CI, Reel 4 [K-271], 495, 98, 14, p. 10, “Minutes of the CEC Meeting,” 24 March 24 1923; The Worker, 8 December 1923 and p. 28, “Minutes of the CEC Meeting,” 27 June 1923. Very little is actually known about the activities of Italian communists at the Lakehead. Due to the stigma and repression experienced during the First World War, the majority of Italian workers in the twin cities preferred to keep within their ethnically-based fraternal organizations. Often nationalistic and cultural in orientation, such organizations were dedicated to showing patriotism to Canada. As a result, the bandiera rosa, as they were often called, were “marginalized and considered to be nuisances as they had ‘funny ideas.’” See John Potestio, The Italians of Thunder Bay (Thunder Bay: Chair of Italian Studies, Lakehead University, 2005), 88-89, fn. 32. For a first hand recollection of the activities of Italian Communists in Port Arthur, see Penny Petrone, Breaking the Mould (Toronto, Buffalo, Lancaster: Guernica, 2001), 87.}

Yet, there were also setbacks. Organizers did not stay put. Harry Bryan’s candidacy in the provincial election – the first openly Communist candidate to run in the area – netted only 200 votes (the moderate railway-union-backed candidate polled over 1,600).\footnote{The Worker, 20 June 1923.} Communists, though, remained undaunted and redoubled their efforts during the summer. They were rewarded with the establishment of a WPC branch in Port Arthur and increasing regional membership, including a substantial number of Finns. As delegates to the Enlarged Session of the Central Executive Committee of the Workers’ Party of Canada held in Edmonton were informed, “Port Arthur and Fort William had shown a better appreciation of the Party Program of late and we had progressed in the Twin Cities.” Specific mention was also made of the Finnish section, which “in particular was making steady progress in the region much like in the rest of the province.” “After a long fight in Port Arthur,” one delegate declared, “they had been successful in getting a firm
Some of this success had to do with the decision to reorganize the FOC with the support of the Finnish section of the WPC. Like the majority of former FSOC locals, the Port Arthur Suomalainen Osasto had turned over its property and assets to the FOC. Although concerned primarily with the cultural and educational work amongst Finnish socialists and remaining a distinct and separate entity, it shared a common membership with the Finnish section of the WPC. According to Edward Laine, the FOC was also established to ensure the continuation of activities when, as many thought inevitable, the government declared the CPC illegal. Another factor, and perhaps the immediate concern for many, was to ensure that control over its property and activities remained in the hands of its membership and not the non-Finnish CPC leadership. This autonomy, paralleled by similar developments south of the border, would eventually be the cause of much consternation within the North American parties and the Comintern in the second half of the 1920s.

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86 For examples of the discussions, see LAC, SOP, Suomalainen Osasto of Port Arthur Minute Book, 13 and 30 March 1923.


The situation within the Ukrainian community of Fort William was even more contentious. By the spring of 1923, it became clear that many Ukrainians, both socialists and nationalists, had become concerned over the increasing role played by Communists in their organizations. For example, a small group within the WBA had voiced their opposition to greater integration between them and the ULFTA. Members of the nationalist Fort William East End Provista Society went so far as to take legal action against the ULFTA in April for what it perceived as its attempts to illegally transform it into a “Revolutionary, Communistic, and Bolshevik Society in affiliation with the Third International of Moscow.”

The Provista Society argued socialists were seeking to undermine it by “boring from within” and sought “to wrest its purpose from that of culture into the promulgation of the doctrines of Sovietism and Communism and to make a branch of the International Organization.”

Not surprisingly, the local press framed the fight as one pitting “pioneering conservatives” versus “bolsheviki.” Both the Manitoba Free Press and The Worker commented on the court case and used the incident as an example of the presence of a

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90 Avery, ‘Dangerous Foreigners’, 122.
strong Communist movement among the Ukrainian population at the Lakehead. In the end the Provista Society won and succeeded in blocking the ULFTA from gaining control of the hall. The negative press and now substantiated fears made it difficult for the ULFTA to rent suitable space for meetings and activities until it built its own temples in Fort William in 1925 and in Port Arthur and Current River in 1928. Organizing efforts were curtailed as its 200 members (circa. 1925) were forced to rely on the WBA for support.

While having taken a much more active role in the region and succeeding in increasing its membership, by the end of 1923, the WPC was far from flourishing. Most of the party’s non-Finnish and non-Ukrainian apparatus had ceased to operate. Even the children’s clubs established by the Young Communist League (YCL) in 1921 remained viable only through the efforts of the Finnish membership. While surely disheartened and at times frustrated, members of the WPC continued to fight on. Despite reports that the Port Arthur branch had become defunct, its former members under the direction of District organizer Checkley mounted a successful celebration of Liebknecht Day on 20 January 1924.

Vladimir Illich Lenin’s death in January 1924 also sparked a renewed dedication to the party’s activities. Hundreds of workers representing the Ukrainian, Finnish, English, and Italian sections of the WPC in the region attended the memorial held in Fort

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92 *FWDTJ*, 7 April 1923 and *The Worker*, 12 January 1924; 93 Epp, “The Achievement of Community,” 196. 94 Workers Benevolent Association of Canada, 102-104 and Rasporich, “Twin City Ethnopolitics,” 216. 95 LUA, TBFCHS, B, 7, 1, 13, page 2 and *The Worker*, 19 January 1924, p. 3. The early leaders of the Young Communist League were S. Lehto, J. Carlson, Lahti, Miss Hiltunen, Niemi, Miss Lukas, Mendellon, and Beck. 96 *The Worker*, 9 February 1924, p. 3.
William. The Fort William gathering opened with a rendition of the “Internationale” by
the Finnish section’s choir. Members of the Ukrainian, Finnish and English branches
made speeches. Bryan, in particular, “rose to a lofty height of eloquence as he feelingly
spoke of our departed comrade and leader.” His speech was punctuated by a declaration
that brought “many strong men and women” to tears: “When we gaze upon this black
drapery we are painfully aware that Lenin is dead; but when we lift the red we know that
Lenin lives with us forever.”

The ensuing year registered some significant gains by the Party. Organizer
William Checkley reported in March, for example, that 38 young workers had attended a
meeting organized by the Finnish members of the WPC on the goals and principles of the
YCL. So persuasive had the presentation been that these workers formed a branch at the
conclusion of the meeting, electing officers, and appointing a secretary-treasurer and
five-member executive committee. They also decided to organize a production of the
play based on the Winnipeg General Strike as part of their recruiting drive.

Responding to the growing needs of bush workers for inexpensive food, in early
1924, the International Co-operative was also established. By the end of its second year
of operation, nine branch stores existed in Port Arthur, Fort William, Westfort, Lappe,
Intola, Kaministiqua, Schreiber, and Kivikoski. The co-operative movement was
especially important for Finnish members of the CPC. They provided both a means to

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97 Michael Bininowsky represented the Ukrainian branches, Laiho, and Merikalliyo for the
Finnish ones. The Worker, 16 February 1924, p. 4. Local newspaper downplayed the meeting,
describing it as medium sized and provided no other details. See FWDTJ and PADNC, 4 and 5
February 1924.
98 The Worker, 29 March 1924.
99 Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society (hereafter TBHMS), Interview with Arvo Matson,
Finnish-Canadian Labour History Interview Project, 1979.
challenge the institutions and the nature of social relations within the capitalist system and provide members in rural communities with a means to better connect with the party centre in Port Arthur and Fort William. The co-operatives, while also playing a major role in the later conflict between the CPC and IWW, would play a significant role in the supplying of goods during strikes over the next decade.

The WPC Convention in April 1924 registered significant gains in the Lakehead, as in all of District 3. At the same time, the Party’s Central Executive Committee was unsettled by the decline in the English-speaking membership, which counterbalanced, in its estimation, successes in recruiting Finns. The district was even critiqued for not organizing effectively, even though the District Executive Committee had lost three secretaries in the past year.

The activities of the IWW were also a growing concern. The WPC’s policy towards independent unions (to build and strengthen the most powerful body in a locality) had in fact led it to support Wobbly-controlled unions. Representatives from the


Lakehead argued that this substantially weakened the Party, as the IWW would “use Party members for their own purposes, if they can, and when they have no further use for them they will stab them in the back.” As the District report contended: “They [the IWW] are more Jesuitical than any adherent of the Jesuit Order.”

By April 1924, the IWW had also gained complete control of the Finnish Labour Temple from the remaining Finnish OBU members. Following the split with those who joined the CPC in 1924, those Finns who remained formed a relationship with the IWW. After a period of coexistence, they were absorbed into the IWW Canadan Teollisuusunionistinen Kannatusliitto (the support league of Canadian Industrial Unionists or CTKL). While OBU faithful reported that only a few members in Port Arthur had gone over and propaganda had been working in their favour, this was a pipe dream. With them also came the controlling shares of the Finnish Building Company that owned the Finnish Labour Temple and the Hoito restaurant.

James Dixon, head of the CLC, had continually requested organizers and support from the Winnipeg executive to no avail. All finances were completely locally raised and used; however, the Coal Handlers Unit in Port Arthur and the Building Unit, the strength of the CLC after the departure of the lumber workers in 1922, had stopped paying dues. While R.B. Russell and other figures did periodically visit the region, no full-time

103 See PAM, RBR, #18, “Minutes of G.E.B. meeting,” 28 April 1924; Ibid., #19, “Joint Executive Board Meeting,” 12 September 1924; #18 “Meeting of the Resident Members of the G.E.B.,” 5 May 1924; #20, “Minutes of Central Labor Council Meeting,” 1 April 1924.

Something similar occurred in Sudbury later in the year when lumber workers decided to turn over all monies and property to the IWW. The Sudbury lumber workers were directed by the Winnipeg executive to instead transfer their assets to the Port Arthur branch. They ignored the directive.
organizer existed in neither Port Arthur nor Fort William. By the end of 1926, the OBU in the region had become so moribund that a new organizer for the region, a member of the Barbers’ Unit in Fort William named W. Howard, requested assistance to reestablish it. So pessimistic was his report that the Winnipeg Central Labor Council actually advocated censoring him for “making such a request, as he pointed out that it was a waste of money to send an organizer down there, when such conditions existed.”

Like the OBU and the CPC the IWW’s continued success relied heavily on its ability to embrace recently-arrived immigrants who had either been involved in socialist activities or had been Wobblies in Western Canada or overseas. Most were migratory workers in the lumber industry who, through fellow workers, were put in touch with the local organizers and cultural associations. Swedish worker L. Friberg, for example, had been a syndicalist before coming to Port Arthur in 1923. Upon his arrival, he searched for the closest thing and joined after a friend brought him to a meeting. What struck Friberg was that the IWW consisted of many nationalities, although the majority of them he later recalled were English- and Finnish-speaking. While this made meetings difficult to

104 For Russell’s report of his trip to Port Arthur, see PAM, RBR, #18, “Report of Trip to Port Arthur,” ca. 10 March 1924. Much of his trip, however, dealt with the recent suicide of a Finnish OBU member named Sam Holmes following his arrest and the order of deportation. For more on the Thunder Bay Council’s request for organizers, see “Minutes of the Resident Members of the Board’s meeting,” 30 January 1924 and “Minutes of meeting of Resident Members of the G.E.B.,” 10 March 1924. Not all Finnish socialists were happy with this turn of events. William Arnberg, best known for his debates with A.T. Hill in the early 1920s, continued to organize on behalf of the OBU despite the increasing loss of Finns either into the IWW or the WPC/CPC. See, for example, PAM, RBR, #18, “Meeting of G.E.B.,” 6 January 1924.

105 PAM, RBR, #21, “Minutes Winnipeg Central Labor Council Meeting,” 7 December 1926. During the previous year, a couple of organizers had been sent to the region. However, it was at the expense of OBU members in the region. Requests for teachers for educational purposes were refused. For mention of these requests and those of other members for organizers, see a variety of minutes found in Ibid., #22.

follow, he admired their attempt to involve all workers regardless of ethnic background.  

Similarly, Helmer Borg had been a member of the Social Democratic Party in Sweden and later a syndicalist group before immigrating to Canada in 1923. Becoming acquainted with the IWW while working as a harvester in Saskatchewan, Borg admired the Wobblies for their solidarity in the field, their commitment to direct action when necessary, and their ability to win the grudging admiration of many farmers. Borg moved to Fort Frances and organized for the IWW until eventually settling in Port Arthur. He describes the activities of the OBU during this period as more concerned with “selling tickets” and “running a lottery.” The CPC, while present in name, did little organizing until sometime after 1925, according to Borg.

Even the Royal Canadian Mounted Police was impressed by the impact of the IWW in Northwestern Ontario in the mid-1920s. The Wobblies’ presence was, the police noted, having a “good effect” because it confused the workers to the point of immobilizing them. For the CPC, the IWW was a constant irritant. William Checkley’s submission to the Third National Convention of the WPC in 1924 reveals that, while many of the Finnish members may have been willing to entertain the idea of possible union, the English members in the region viewed the IWW as ideologically incompatible. “They have proved to themselves to be the possessors of a great ability to tear down,” the District executive informed the convention, “but completely lacking in ability to build.” Further, “when trouble is on [Wobblies] flock to that point, fight until the battle is over,

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107 LUA, JMLHC, Tape 12, Interview with L. Friberg, 1972.
108 LUA, JMLHC, Tape 4, Interview with Helmer Borg, 1972.
and then leave the vicinity to repeat the performance elsewhere.”

While the United Front continued to be applied, the complexities of uniting with other organizations such as the IWW had not been thought out. “There is a very strong tendency,” Checkley argued, “to make this united front into a love-feast; a unity on the other fellow’s terms, and where Party members have not even the right to criticize.” This, above all else, was a major issue for workers at the Lakehead and in the West where the IWW existed as a force to be reckoned with.

The 1924 National Convention also resulted in the reorganization of the CPC from six to nine districts. Ontario was split into three new administrative districts: Fort William and Port Arthur formed the centre of the new District 6. As Avakumovic points out, “the geographical distribution of party organizations shows that between one-half and two-thirds of them were in Ontario. Thunder Bay and the Sudbury region each had as many as southern Ontario.” The convention also resulted in the dissolution of the illegal Z party and the Workers’ Party of Canada merged with it to become officially the Communist Party of Canada. Both decisions were in keeping with decisions reached by the Communist International at its Fourth Congress in 1922. Many within the party did not embrace the decision enthusiastically. According to William Rodney, it was

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William Moriarty and Trevor Maguire who, backed by the Ukrainian and Finnish section representatives Michael Boychuk and Hill, respectively, led the opposition. These men believed that the open association with the Comintern would lead to increased police surveillance and persecution. For the Finnish and Ukrainian affiliates, the memory of their persecution during the First World War made them much more sensitive than their English-speaking counterparts to what Canadian authorities could do to them.115

While the concerns of Finns and Ukrainians could not be entirely ignored, as they comprised the bulk of the Party’s estimated 4,000 members, the delegates were more interested in the growth of branches and membership elsewhere, which was attributed to the “building up of the Canadian Labour Party and the crystallization of the left wing in the Trade Union movement.” In addition, as Jack MacDonald reported to the convention delegates, “prevailing objective conditions in Canada have militated against the numerical increase in the party membership.”116 Increases in immigration and the belief that the CPC would find “much good material amongst the new comers” were being offset by the loss of many of the party’s “active and experienced members” to the United States due to the poor economic conditions within Canada. The dramatic increase in Finnish members was attributed to better conditions prevailing within the lumber, mining, and farming industries. In addition, like the Ukrainians, the Finns’ national societies were viewed as “rallying centres” through which the CPC could more easily approach the bulk of the workers.117

The May Day celebrations of 1924 demonstrate that deep schisms still existed within the left at the Lakehead. The Fort William and Port Arthur branches of the WPC were forced to hold separate meetings to celebrate the day as no other unions or labour organizations had answered calls to plan for mass parades in each city. Remnants of the OBU and Wobblies provided the most vocal rejection and each issued their own calls in response. Predictably, Communists at the Lakehead argued that this was merely another example of their “[un]willingness to co-operate in the struggle against capitalism.”

The small Communist-led demonstration in Port Arthur displayed the Party’s strengths – a new hall, an impressive turnout from the Ukrainians and Finns, and the singing and plays (including “The Strike” put on by the Young Communist League) that contributed to a sense of an emergent counter-culture. Leslie Morris spoke of the imminent destruction of the capitalist system and the organizational strength of the new Party. There were further speeches in Ukrainian, Finnish, Italian and English. By June, the city’s Communists had helped form an unemployed association, whose demands for work, food and clothing for the unemployed precipitated the arrest of three militants, who were, undoubtedly to the chagrin of Party loyalists, condemned as Wobblies in the courtroom and media.

The reorganization of the Communist Party also resulted in the appointment of MacDonald and Maurice Spector – two high ranking English-speaking members – as

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118 The Worker, 17 May 1924.
119 The Worker, 17 May 1924 and PADNC, 1 May 1924.
120 The Worker, 14 June 1924 and 21 June 1924. This may have been the same organization attributed by Captain E.M. MacBrayne to the One Big Union and whose formation he blamed on “outside agitators from Winnipeg.” See LAC, Department of External Affairs (hereafter DEA), RG 25, 2669, Captain E.M. MacBrayne, Military District No. 10, Report: Labour Unrest at Port Arthur, Ontario, 16 June 1924 quoted in Tolvanen, Finntown, 57.
executive members on the Finnish and Ukrainian committees. According to Ahti Tolvanen, “efforts by the C.P.C. executive to play down the extent of their Finnish membership may have caused concern among some Finns about their representation on the executive.” While Finns now made up approximately 60%, or 2,620 of 4,000, of the party’s membership in 1925, only Hill and J.W. Ahlqvist held executive positions. In addition, despite the overwhelming majority of the party’s membership residing in Northwestern Ontario, no one from the region could be found in the party’s upper echelons. Despite repeated calls for more organizers and better instructions from the party leadership, the Central Executive Committee appeared more interested in criticizing failure rather than facilitating success. Typical of the responses received by the District executive is that sent by the Central Executive Committee in early December:

Port Arthur had received considerable attention in comparison to what it had been possible to do as a whole. If Port Arthur could obtain a comrade for the work, the [Central Executive Committee] might be able to assist them for a little while as they had done in Montreal. This also applies to Winnipeg and other centres. It is physically and financially impossible for the [Central Executive Committee] to give organizers to all places that desire them. The Local comrades must try and do something for themselves.122

It was this attitude that led the IWW to claim 3,000 members in Ontario by 1924, most of them in Northwestern Ontario.123 The vast majority of these workers came from the ranks of the former OBU members in Northwestern Ontario and those workers who had joined the CPC only to find it less palatable than the available alternatives.

As this chapter has shown, by the end of 1925 socialists at the Lakehead

121 Tolvanen, Finntown, 74.
continued their move towards more radical organizations and were introduced to another alternative in the form of the CPC. As one military observer reported to the Department of National Defence:

The O.B.U. is practically dead in Port Arthur and the union will take any steps to try to get into strength again. At present the dominant party in Port Arthur is the Workers Party or Communist Party in Canada… the strongest aggregation are the Finns who the police at present classify as practically a separate unit – they joined the O.B.U. … [which] proved too pacifist for the Finns who believe that the best way to change the political status of the country is by war.¹²⁴

As the presentations by District Organizer William Checkley and Malcolm Bruce in late November revealed, no one organization completely controlled workers in the region. One worker reportedly asked Bruce, “Did he take his orders from Moscow?” Bruce replied, “Yes” to which the “questioner, a ‘profound Marxian of the district, sat down saying, “that’s all I want.”¹²⁵ The CPC was succeeding, both nation-wide and in the Lakehead, in drawing many immigrant workers to its banner. Yet, it also confronted, especially in the Lakehead, an unusually dogged revolutionary opposition in the form of the IWW, as well as perennial problems in recruiting top-notch organizers and in barely-subdued ethnic tensions. These patterns would persist well into the late 1920s.

¹²⁵ The Worker, 1 November 1924.
Chapter 7
Bolshevization and Party Reorganization, 1925-1927

Vladimir Ilich Lenin’s death in January 1924 ushered in significant changes within the Communist International that profoundly influenced the shape of not only the Communist Party in Canada (CPC), but also world socialism in general. According to Ian Angus, although the Comintern had not originally been intended to act as a propaganda machine for the Communist Party of Russia, under Joseph Stalin it became exactly that. The Comintern also underwent an ideological shift moving away from promoting world revolution towards Stalin’s much narrower “socialism in one country” – a policy favouring the policies of the USSR above all else. More specifically, the previous policy of forming coalitions and appealing to mass appeal was now deemed undesirable as Marxism-Leninism became interpreted as the only acceptable form of socialist doctrine.

Just as important for the Lakehead was the reorganization of the Comintern, and the international party structure, through a policy known as “Bolshevization.” According to John Manley, “[B]olshevization became the ‘watchword’ of the leading Russian group ‘and a central directive to every individual party.’ Parties threatened by heresies and deviations were instructed to [B]olshevize (purify) themselves.” By early 1926, the CPC

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1 Ian Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada (Montreal: Vanguard, 1981), 154.
3 Norman Penner, Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond (Toronto: Methuen, 1988), 73.
4 John Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class During the Great Depression: The Workers’ Unity League, 1930-1936” (PhD. diss., Dalhousie University, 1984), 27. For more on this period, see 62-93 and Penner, 89. Bolshevization preceded the accession to power of Joseph Stalin, but he undoubtedly refined and radicalized the doctrine. The most notable use of Stalin’s
had embarked upon the implementation of this policy and while units could still possess language fractions, this new direction sought to eliminate their autonomy within the Party. The Comintern hoped this reorganization would reinvigorate the revolutionary energies of the national parties through their reorganization along factory and industrial lines rather than geographic and ethnic ones. The decision to reorganize was not an abrupt one; rather, it was the result of a series of discussions that began at the Fifth Congress of the Third International in 1924 where the Executive Committee of the Comintern had adopted the proposal in principle.

The subsequent decision of the CPC to support the decision was not made lightly. In fact, according to William Rodney, its leadership initially resisted the idea, only paying it “lip service” at the Third Convention in April 1924. Prominent Communists advanced various reasons for their skepticism. Tim Buck opposed the proposal due to the lack of large-scale heavy industry or factory work in many parts of the country. Others, such as A.T. Hill and Matthew Popovich, opposed the measure as about 80% of the party was made up of non-English speaking members. The possibility of alienating the

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6 Interestingly, although Stalin and his proponents supported bolshevization, the United Front continued for sometime. See, for example, J.L. Black, Canada in the Soviet Mirror: Ideology and Perception in Soviet Foreign Affairs (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1998), 48.

majority of the party’s membership was their prime concern. The Comintern, though, cared little for the Canadian situation and, with the formal adoption of the policy, the CPC was directed to prepare for the change. The party was also told to direct its energy to specifically focus on English-speaking workers in the industrial regions of the country. The little opposition within Canada quickly disappeared and its leadership, Buck most of all, became unswerving in their desire to see the policy instituted.

While recognizing the importance played by Finns in the Communist movement in North America, historians such as Theodore Draper have viewed the policy of “Bolshevization,” although both “lasting and pervasive” as “hardly [meriting] all the fanfare” it has received. Not only is this view problematic for its inherent focus on the Anglo leadership of the party, but also it downplays the divisiveness of the issue amongst the mostly non-English rank-and-file in the United States. As demonstrated in the preceding chapter, language organizations within the CPC played an important role. They also, ironically enough, clearly were the cause of the Comintern’s belief in the chaotic

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9 Rodney, *Soldiers of the International*, 82-84.

10 Draper, *American Communism*, 154 and 159.

nature of the Communist movement in North America. The chief “culprit” was the continuing social democratic tradition amongst many European immigrants to North America who comprised the vast majority of the membership in the language organizations.

Doubtless most were aware that, although most party members were not native English-speakers, the leaders were. Perhaps some held prejudices similar to those earlier evident in radical organizations. Yet one should also recognize that, from a Leninist standpoint, a party divided into a variety of quasi-autonomous language-based groups, with but vestigial links between the periphery and the centre, posed very real theoretical and political dangers. In a world revolutionary organization that conceptualized each particular party as one component in a world army of revolution, a party warrened from within by “sub-parties,” each with its own identity and interests, was an affront to the principles of democratic centralism. As Beckie Buhay noted, a “centralized party leadership” was impossible without a thoroughgoing Bolshevization, i.e., the rooting out of ethnic and linguistic particularisms in the interests of party discipline.

Unsurprisingly, from the standpoint of the language federations themselves, such policies could be viewed as outright assaults on the rights and privileges of their members – many of whom might justifiably claim to constitute the Communists’ strongest

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12 Draper, American Communism, 159. See also Rodney, Soldiers of the International, 95 and Avery, ‘Dangerous Foreigners’, 128.
financial and political backers. Without the Finns, in both the United States and Canada, much of the Communist Party would have been little more than a rumour in many parts of both countries. Although acceptance of multiculturalism might seem to a contemporary eye to be a logical acknowledgement of cultural and social realities, it did not necessarily seem that way at the time, either in Toronto or in Moscow.

This chapter will explore these issues and will demonstrate that the period was one of multi-faceted engagement with a multiplicity of struggles and that socialists at the Lakehead were not merely spectators. Further, while by 1926 the CPC had displaced both the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and OBU as the prime concern of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, it had not come to dominate socialists in the region due to its continuing inability to adequately deal with its inherently multicultural nature. One of the ironic results of the CPC’s difficulties with regard to ethnic diversity was a new lease on life for the interwar IWW.

By 1925, the ongoing turmoil within working class organizations at the Lakehead had begun to take its toll. Socialists of all stripes became increasingly worried over the situation in Port Arthur and Fort William. As The Worker reported in February: “the apathy amongst the workers here is beginning to worry those who are interested in Unionism as well as in independent political action on the part of the working class.” To counteract this situation, socialists and trade unionists both began to bring in well-known

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speakers to mobilize the local working class. Receiving the most attention was a visit by Malcolm Bruce. On behalf of the CPC he spoke against the effort of the “reactionary officialdom to change the unions into mere fraternal, class-collaborationist organizations instead of making them mass instruments of class struggle.” He also urged the unions to pay more attention to the unemployed.17

While Bruce attempted to shore up support within the twin cities, Harry Bryan had been active in the surrounding countryside. Spending much of February speaking to branches throughout the district, he paid particular attention to establishing branches of the Young Communist League (YCL). Relying heavily on “the generosity of our Finnish comrades,” he took part in a number of cultural and social events. One of the most memorable incidents of the trip, Bryan reported, was a one-act play entitled “The Worker on Trial Before God.”

Finding it impossible to subdue the worker by earthly tyrannical courts, they bring the worker before God. The Capitalist, Landlord and Priest give testimony. God asking many pointed questions created many humorous and at the same time instructive episodes. Then the worker presents the case for his class and he sure was some pleader, moving the audience to tears, laughter, and cheers. Finally, God sends our enemies to Hell and tells the worker that he the worker is God (meaning all power) whenever he will exercise his power in his own behalf.

As was often the case with Bryan, he found himself with a splendid opportunity to use his own significant skills to stand on the same podium speaking of the Communist platform and “backing up God’s efforts to get the worker to go into action on his own behalf.”18

Another well-received speaker during the early months of 1925 was A.E. Smith. His presentations as head of the Ontario section of the Dominion Labour Party at the

17 *The Worker*, 14 February 1925.
18 *The Worker*, 21 February 1925.
Wobbly-controlled Port Arthur Labour Temple, the Orpheum theatre in Fort William, and the Fort William Auditorium focused on the subject of unemployment associations and the progress made “in forming educational classes in the East.” They were well attended. Once again, Fred Moore acted as the chair of the Fort William meetings. He used them to convince those in attendance that “the radical labor movements were converging toward ‘the day’ when a social revolution would bring about a complete change in system.” The main duty of a labor representative in parliament, he contended, “should be to weaken, hamper and embarrass the bourgeois parliament.” The process of social revolution, described as a “grim business,” was but a “natural evolution.”

Although the predominance of Finnish women within the CPC’s membership at the Lakehead and their allegiance to the Finnish Organization of Canada’s (FOC) women’s auxiliary had thwarted early attempts to establish a branch of the Women’s Labour League (WLL), in May one was formed in Fort William under the guidance of Fred Moore’s wife. It soon became quite active in its attempts to mobilize Anglo-Saxon

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19 The Worker, 30 May 1925. Moore’s lead role in these events is somewhat puzzling. It remains unknown whether he was actually a member of the Communist Party of Canada or, as in the past, a supporter of all working-class initiatives in the region. He remained the preferred printer of booklets, election manifestos, and placards for not only the Communist Party, but also the IWW, Liberals, and Conservatives parties at the Lakehead. Moore surely would have been the type of English-speaking resident that the CPC, and for that matter, the IWW would have attempted to woo. However, there is no indication that he ever fully embraced any faction.


women and Finnish domestic servants. The Fort William WLL also convinced the league’s executive to send a number of speakers to the region throughout 1925. One of the earliest speakers was Annie Buller who, to standing-room-only audiences in both the Port Arthur and Fort William halls, spoke at some length on the conditions of the workers in Nova Scotia and Canada.

The Lumber Workers’ Industrial Union of Canada (LWIUC) likewise undertook to reorganize itself during the spring of 1925 to better deal with the issues facing its membership. However, according to Tolvanen, reorganization “removed the centre of activity from the district office, which was closed most of the time, as delegate-organizers such as Alf Hautamäki and Kalle Salo toured the committees throughout the province.” In effect, the region was left susceptible for other influences.

While Salo and Hautamäki were traveling elsewhere in Ontario, the IWW sent Sam Scarlett to the region. He spent much of the summer of 1925 heaping plaudits on the Wobblies, condemning the CPC, and performing what the Industrial Pioneer described as "missionary work in the Canadian wheat fields." Scarlett’s preaching to the

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23 The Worker, 23 May 1925 and 30 May 1930. As late as 1923, Moore was still a member of the Thunder Bay Central Council. While little information has been found on the council’s activities between late 1922 and 1925, Winnipeg Central Labor Council minutes reveal that he was still involved. See, for example, Provincial Archives of Manitoba (hereafter PAM), Robert Boyd Russell fonds (hereafter RBR), MG10-A14-2, #18, “Minutes of meeting of the G.E.B.,” 14 September 1923.
25 Industrial Pioneer (July 1925): 5 and November 1925: 29. For reports of increased activity in Montreal, Calgary, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Timmins, Nova Scotia, and South
harvesters did profoundly influence the IWW’s fortunes at the Lakehead. Migratory by nature, many of the men working in the fields migrated east to secure jobs in the lumber camps during the winter. The most active in the area over the next few years, such as Holmer Borg, first became members of the IWW in Saskatchewan during an early tour by Scarlett and continued to agitate on their behalf once the lumber season began in Northwestern Ontario.\textsuperscript{26}

The activity of organizers from both the IWW and the CPC caught the attention of regional politicians and traditional labour leaders, who began to voice their opposition to immigration and the flood of radical workers into the country.\textsuperscript{27} Not all of the attention was negative. The recent success of the Communists, for example, caught the attention of Peter Heenan, the Kenora Labour MPP who had been elected in 1919 and again in 1923. Sensing a shift in provincial politics, he sought to tap into the CPC’s growing support despite having recently accepted the nomination for the Liberal party. He was refused a meeting.\textsuperscript{28}

Sensing an opportunity of its own, the CPC parachuted party stalwart A.E. Smith into Port Arthur to run in the riding of Port Arthur-Thunder Bay during the 1925 federal

Porcupine, see \textit{Industrial Unionist}, 25 April; 13 June; 4 and 18 July; 1, 8, 15 22, and 29 August; 5 12, 16 and 30 September; 7 October; 9 and 16 December; 4, 18 and 25 November; 9 and 16 December 1925; and 27 January 1926
\textsuperscript{27}See, for example, \textit{Industrial Unionist}, 12 September 1925.
\textsuperscript{28}\textit{The Worker}, 17 October 1925.
election. Smith and the CPC’s Central Executive Committee selected the riding because both felt that the support from the Finnish lumber workers might well carry the day. His candidacy also received the support of the local Canadian Labour Party (no surprise as Smith was President of the Ontario section) and from Alex Gibson and the Port Arthur Trades and Labour council. Once more Smith’s candidacy would reveal the mileage the Lakehead left could obtain from attempting to occupy at least some of the political space normally occupied by the centrists.

Much of Smith’s platform reiterated the speeches he had given in the region earlier in the year. Local newspapers described him as eloquent, with even normally skeptical journalists suggesting that “Oratory like his had not flown from the tongue of any speaker on the platform in Port Arthur.” Moreover, his politics were clearly enunciated. In front of 2,000 in the Port Arthur Armoury, for example, he addressed the crowd directly as a “deliberative assembly, a parliament of the people, who are the first factor… in political power.” Smith did well, garnering 1,363 of a total 9,068 votes in perhaps the best showing of any federal Communist candidate in the 1920s. Even the Port Arthur Daily News-Chronicle described the election as the “Most Vigorously Contested in the History

30 LUA, JMLHC, Tape 7, Interview with George Andrew Cotter, 1972.
31 PADNC, 24 and 26 October 1925. The quotations used are from 26 October. Just before the election, Smith made a last appeal to the working class in the riding. See PADNC, 18 October 1925. No labour or Communist candidate ran in the Fort William-Kenora riding.
of Port Arthur.”

The CPC considered Smith’s results as a clear indication of its growing stature in the region. As Anthony Rasporich’s work reveals, “near majorities were in fact recorded over the Conservative, Liberal, and independent candidates in the south end polls dominated by the Slavs and Finns, and in radical rural pockets of Finns to the north and west of Port Arthur.” However, it is revealing that Smith won no urban polls, won only three in the rural polls by narrow margins, and the Finnish vote was split almost equally between all candidates (see Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Finnish polls”</th>
<th>City Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>28.7</td>
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Clearly, the year 1925 may have begun slowly for the CPC in the region, but it

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35 Smith lost by one vote in two urban polls in the Bay Street area. The rural polls he won included McIntyre, Nakina, and Hydro. Significantly, the Finnish vote played a decisive roll. Tolvanen, *Finntown*, 106.
ended with a number of tangible successes. Building upon this, the LWIUC sent a number of organizers into the camps in Northwestern Ontario for the purpose of recruiting workers and to establish camp committees. It estimated that at least 2,000 Finns, 600 Swedes, and 300 workers of various ethnic backgrounds could be organized.  

How many of these new unionists became Communists is unclear. Yet the Party was showing such new vigour that, according to Donald Avery, it had displaced the IWW as the main worry of Dominion, Provincial and local officials.

Communists were also achieving success organizing workers and their children during this period. *The Young Worker* had proudly reported in April 1925 that the efforts of organizers had resulted in half a dozen branches of the YCL in Port Arthur and in Finnish communities in the surrounding countryside. By February 1926, membership in Port Arthur had increased so much that education classes for workers were offered on a regular basis. Malcolm Bruce, visiting the region in February, optimistically reported that inroads would continue to be made in the coming months. Bruce, it appears, had spoken too soon.

Although a successful women’s conference would be held in April and the May Day celebrations organized by the CPC were some of the best ever attended, most functions continued to be overwhelmingly comprised of Finnish and Ukrainian workers. While hundreds of Finnish and Ukrainian members turned out to the events,

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36 Radforth, *Bushworkers and Bosses*, 120-121.
38 *The Young Worker* (April 1925), 2.
39 *The Worker*, 20 February 1926.
40 *The Worker*, 27 February 1926.
41 Library and Archives of Canada (LAC), Communist International fonds (hereafter CI), MG10-K3, Reel 6 [K-274], 495, 98, 40, p. 9, “Minutes of the Organization Committee of the C.P. of C.”
only a “sprinkling” of English-speaking workers showed up. In fact, Italians and Scandinavian Communists, the smallest numerically in the region, had almost as many participants as their Anglo-Saxon comrades.\textsuperscript{42} Even a somewhat patriotically-based focus in Fort William on the recent general strike of miners and transport workers in Great Britain, coupled with the oft repeated mantra that local workers should “Look to England,” garnered few results.\textsuperscript{43} As a local correspondent to \textit{The Worker} commented: “it seems as if the English-speaking workers like to bow the knee to the boss, and are satisfied with the Labour Day handed out to them on the first Monday in September.”\textsuperscript{44} It is interesting to note that even so orthodox a voice of Communist opinion could not avoid attributing causal efficacy to cultural divisions.

At the Fifth Convention of the CPC in 1926, the Politburo fell in line with the Comintern’s decision to centralize power and counter the growing influence and dominance exercised by the various language federations. Its policy of “Bolshevization” amounted to an attempt to overcome the dominance of the Ukrainian and Finnish language federations.\textsuperscript{45} Bolshevization also affected the nature of the relationship between the CPC and the existing trades union movement. The policy of the CPC during the 1920s had been the infiltration and eventual control of the existing unions. This had been thought necessary, as the vast majority of workers likely to be supportive of the Communist cause had previously been organized by either the AFL or TLC. Tim Buck would later recall that the opposite occurred and the CPC’s involvement in the AFL and

\textsuperscript{20} 20 April 1926; \textit{The Worker}, 15 May 1926; and \textit{PADNC}, 1 May 1926.
\textsuperscript{42} See, for example, \textit{The Worker}, 17 July 1926.
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{PADNC}, 1 May 1926.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{The Worker}, 15 May 1926.
TLC unions led to a theoretical lowering of the Party’s ideological work and to the debasement of the fundamental principle of the revolution.46

Although compliance with the Comintern directive was not complete until 1929, as early as September 1926 Hill reported to Central Executive Committee that “Port Arthur and Fort William had shown a better appreciation of the Party program of late and we had progressed in the Twin Cities. More than half of the members of the Section were in the farming centres, while those in the industrial areas still showed traces of their antipathy to the older unions. The work among the women and youth had seen productive results.” The reality of the situation at the Lakehead, though, was that continuing participation by Finnish socialists was a necessity. As Hill also pointed out, all of the recent progress was due to the activities of the Finnish section of the party in the region.47

Upon returning from his tour of Northwestern Ontario in late September, William Moriarty painted a sobering picture of the activities in the region. He argued that the region was in dire need of more attention. While many workers were sympathetic to the Communist platform, the lack of an organizer left them largely without a connection to the party’s centre. For example, Moriarty told the members of the Central Executive Committee that the work in Port Arthur was “not all it could be” and even the work among the Finnish membership had become “very unsatisfactory.” The same situation could be found in other regional towns such as Nipigon where his meeting had been attended by almost no one. Much of the reason for these shortcomings, Moriarty

explained, rested with the failure of the District Six Executive Committee to function properly. Moriarty did report that “there were hopes” as “he was sure that the English membership could [sic] be increased.”

No doubt, it was this belief that drove delegates to the August convention of the Port Arthur branch of the Canadian Labour Party to unanimously nominate A.E. Smith as its candidate for the federal election in the riding of Port Arthur-Thunder Bay and local union organizer William Nasau Welsh for Fort William. The CLP, according to Ian Angus, was “a loose federation of provincial ILP’s formed initially in 1917 in reaction to the Trades and Labour Congress attempt to divert anti-conscription sentiment into electoral victory.” After the formation of the WPC, the CLP had become the mechanism by which the CPC typically contested federal elections.

The CLP’s program typically called for “demands for proportional representation, the abolition of the BNA Act, the nationalization of public utilities, and social legislation to improve the lot of workers.” Ultimately, the WPC would have limited success throughout the period, only managing to accumulate 9,000 members by 1926 as a result

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49 The Worker, 21 August 1926; FWDTJ, 27 August 1926; PADNC, 11 and 25 August 1926; and Royal Canadian Mounted Police, No. 333, “Weekly Summary, Notes Regarding Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada Report,” 2 September 1926, in R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929, ed. Gregory S. Kealey and Reg Whitaker (St. John’s: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1994), 345. At the time of his nomination, Smith was secretary of the City Central Committee of the CPC in Toronto. The RCMP reported that during his absence his wife would be performing his duties. Smith’s nomination was unanimous, in part, because he was the only name put forward. See PADNC, 11 August 1926.
of its affiliation to the Ontario section of the CLP. As Ivan Avakumovic argues, its low numbers never allowed it to become the Farmer-Labour Party envisioned by the Comintern.  

As Angus suggests, “the Canadian Labor Party, with its very tenuous, limited roots in the unions and its lack of popular support, was not even a pale reflection of the British Labor Party, let alone the Bolshevik Party!”

Could the Communists make an electoral breakthrough in the Lakehead in 1926? The CLP leadership was drawn exclusively from Southern Ontario. Yet, within the Lakehead region, the party had drawn such high-profile supporters as Bryan. It was also thought to be attractive to many Finns. In the days running up to the election, though, the simmering unrest in the lumber camps in Northwestern Ontario erupted into a series of strikes. According to Ian Radforth, “preparation had begun in the summer, when joint meetings of Wobbly and LWIUC camp delegates met to decide on wage demands.” Following the rejection by a number of companies of the workers’ demands, a “test of strength ensued.” Hautamäki and Bryan appear, from newspaper interviews and reports, to have been the strike leaders representing a joint LWIUC and IWW committee. When the strikes finally ended eight weeks later, over 30 companies and 3,000 men across Northwestern Ontario had become embroiled in the conflict.

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52 Avakumovic, The Communist Party in Canada, 52.
55 Tolvanen, Finntown, 31.
56 PADNC, 17 September 1926.
57 Radforth, Bushworkers and Bosses, 123.
58 FWDTI, 6 October 1926. Interestingly, the strikers, according to Bryan, were not asking for the recognition of their unions. Hautamäki and James Dixon, general secretary of the Trades and Labour Council of the Thunder Bay District, made it very clear that the strike had nothing to do with the One Big Union. See PADNC, 17 September 1926.
59 LAC, Department of Labour (hereafter DL), RG27, vol. 337, Strike 76, Alf Hautamäki to
Thunder Bay District, roughly 2,500 workers were involved, with protests occurring both in the twin cities and in the camps.\(^{60}\)

While the sheer number of participants makes the strike stand out, it was also a pivotal moment for the nature of socialism in the region. Described as “almost unique in the history of Canadian unionism,” the sheer number of participants in the strike (over 3,000) was felt to be a “splendid illustration that where the rank and file has the will, a united front of two union organizations can be satisfactorily made.” *The Worker* suggested that the strike in the Port Arthur District provided the clearest example yet of what could be accomplished by “the unorganized mass of workers,” if only they would unite.\(^{61}\)

The participation of the LWIUC, in what appears to have been its first industry-wide strike, demonstrated its continued willingness to form a united front with the IWW in the District.\(^{62}\) Initially, the CPC viewed the co-operation between the two organizations as an example of the strength and success that solidarity could achieve following the Comintern’s policy. During the first few weeks, for example, the mass organization committee had unprecedented success in persuading strikebreakers to join the strike.\(^{63}\) However, the fact that Wobblies held the most important positions on the

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60 *FWDTJ*, 6 October 1926.
61 *The Worker*, 13 November 1926.
63 See Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners*, 124-125. Reports of strikebreakers being imported can be found in the *FWDTJ* and *PADNC*, 22 October 1926. Finnish co-operatives also played a pivotal role. Throughout the strike, they made meals for workers and sold them at cost, with the LWIUC and LWIU paying half the cost for each worker. The Communist *Turmo and IWW Hoito* fed the
joint-strike committee concerned the CPC leadership as they entered into the arrangement on equal footing and often took the lead. The growing influence of the IWW at the Lakehead is evident in a petition by LWIUC members to the CPC Organization Committee asking to be allowed to hold joint membership in the syndicalist-oriented Lumber Workers’ Industrial Union (LWIU) linked to the IWW.  

Not surprisingly, the petition was rejected and, sensing the danger posed by the IWW, a campaign to undermine the role of the IWW commenced – despite the fact that during the strike its “claim to leadership was not disputed by the Communist Party’s paper *The Worker.*”  

During the final days of the strike, the CPC leaders were convinced their Party had become the preferred voice of socialists in the region.  

Certainly, the CPC had made gains. At the same time, as William Moriarty’s reception in the Lakehead would confirm, many lumber workers were not averse to subjecting CPC policies to skeptical examination. Many seemed convinced that they benefited when the CPC and IWW co-operated and lost when the two organizations struggled with each other for political supremacy.

Such dreams of left unity proved evanescent. The inherent contradictions within

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LAC, CI, Reel 6 [K-274], 495, 98, 40, “Minutes of the Organization Committee of the C.P. of C. held 13 April,” 9 May 1926.


See Hill, “Historic Basis and Development of the Lumber Workers Organization and Struggles in Ontario.”

*The Worker*, 16 October 1926.
the organizations and the desire of the LWIUC to control the camps led to increasing bickering on both the picket lines and in the joint-strike committee meetings. Tensions between the two organizations even spilled out into the streets when one drunken Finnish Wobbly reportedly stabbed a Finnish Communist in the face over ideological differences. On 28 October, the joint committee abruptly ended when the IWW moved that the strike take on a more active fight “in the I.W.W. tradition,” but lost “the vote to those supporting [CPC] affiliation.” Under the leadership of Communist organizer Alf Hautamäki, those remaining decided to enter into negotiations, resulting in an end to the strike shortly afterwards. The thirty-six-day strike did result in improved conditions and increases in pay for both monthly wages and piecework. Despite the inter-left squabble that occurred during its final days, “in the years following the 1926 breakthrough,” Radforth has observed, “no other strike involved as many pulp cutters or brought the unions such favourable results.”

While Smith’s federal election campaign had also attempted to capitalize on the LWIUC’s prominent role in the strike, it also featured a number of progressive initiatives meant to appeal to working class voters. His platform was essentially a commitment to

68 PADNC, 29 October 1926.
69 Tolvanen, Finntown, 52-53 and PADNC, 4 November 1926.
70 LAC, DL, vol. 337, Strike 76, A.E. Grant, Correspondent Labour Gazette to Department of Labour, 11 December 1926. The results were in fact a compromise. Workers had initially demanded $5 for a cord of 8 feet and $3 for a cord of 4 feet pulpwood. The final agreement set the rate at $4 and $2.50. Monthly workers had demanded a monthly rate of $60, but the strike committee negotiated a raise between $40 and $50. The strike ended as individual contractors signed agreements with lumber and pulp workers. See, for example, FWDTJ and PADNC, 27 October 1919. One unforeseen result of the strike was the shortage of labour afterwards. Many workers it appears had left the region to find work elsewhere during the conflict. Many of the companies involved had to import workers in the weeks following. See FWDTJ, 19 November 1919.
71 Radforth, Bushworkers and Bosses, 123.
fight for unemployment insurance, minimum wages for men and women, education of all children, safety standards, old age pensions, and free medical aid for workers. To support him, the CPC mobilized a number of its key organizers to work in the region. Smith’s campaign stressed that, as the recent strike had demonstrated, it was the CPC that “represents the true interests of the workers.” However, his campaign posters, while highlighting his connections to the CPC and his role as General Secretary of the Canadian Labor Defence League (CLDL), focused more on his “British” roots.

As in the 1925 election, to counter criticisms and deflect attention away from the party’s “ethnic” bases, Smith most often campaigned on his personal virtues, stressing his being “born in Canada [as] the son of a British soldier.” It certainly did not hurt that leading newspapers were describing him as a moderate. “What manner of man is the Rev. A.E. Smith, at once Methodist minister and red, who has been chosen as head of the Ontario Section of the Labor Party?” asked the Toronto Star. “Surely no man milder in appearance and manner was ever classed as a Bolshevik.” His nomination had been opposed by many labour unions in the region. Yet, Smith was able, to some extent, to present an image attractive to the mainstream Lakehead voter.

Sensing a division within the working class, the Liberals in Port Arthur approached both the loosely-defined progressive camp and Independent Labour Party

74 Toronto Star, 25 April 1925 and Edmonton Forum, 21 June 1925.
(ILP) to put forward a “Lib-Pro-Lab” candidate. Although the CPC had dismissed the ILP as “a few fossilized old timers, who years ago were on the Trades Council,” they could ill afford to lose even a handful of votes to them. For example, James Southern, a member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers and ILP supporter, spoke out against the CLP, describing them as a Toronto-centered party. The assessment was entirely accurate when one considers that Smith had been parachuted into the riding following his defeat in the Toronto civic election. For many voters within the riding, the irony of a candidate with no local connection criticizing his opponents as opportunistic was not lost.

In stark contrast to the previous year, Smith lost by over 1,746 votes to the Conservative candidate. While he did manage a very respectable 1,382 votes, the “victory” was marred by his inability to win a single urban or rural poll in the riding. In Fort William, William Welsh’s campaign for the CLP used pretty much the same message as Smith. However, what Welsh lacked in Smith’s national profile he gained in being part of the local working class. The potential success of Welsh and the CPC

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76 *The Worker*, 4 September 1926.
77 *The Worker*, 11 September 1926. Despite receiving the nomination in late August, he did not arrive and address voters within the city of Port Arthur until 8 September, five days before the day of the election. His time during the remainder of the campaign was split between Port Arthur, Kivikoski, a small rural community of mostly Finns sympathetic to the Communist cause, and Sioux Lookout, located hours away. See *PADNC*, 8, 9, and 13 September 1926.
79 *FWDTJ*, 20 October 1926.
spurred the Lib-Lab candidate to pull out to ensure a Communist defeat. While finishing a distant second to the incumbent Robert Manion, he did manage a respectable 2,400 votes.80

The end of the strike and Smith’s defeat did not see an end to the increased activity of the CPC at the Lakehead. The CPC flooded the region with speakers to capitalize on their self-promoted role in the strike and the “success” of Smith and Welsh. Beckie Buhay’s weeklong visit, in particular, succeeded in bringing together hundreds of Finnish, Ukrainian, and English men and women to hear her speak on Russia and the Communist movement. Her presentations to workers in both Fort William and Port Arthur led to invitations to meet with the membership of the local branch of the Ukrainian Labor Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA) and an additional speech to workers at the Lyceum Theatre. Harry Bryan and Alex Gibson, and a full orchestra, frequently accompanied her presentations.81 A year later in March 1927, the CPC would claim that 50% of the workers involved in the strike had joined the LWIUC due to organizing in the following months.82

Subsequent events held at the Port Arthur Workers’ Hall at 316 Bay Street and in Fort William to celebrate the ninth anniversary of the Russian Revolution met with equally large crowds. The Port Arthur event was so large that hundreds had to be turned away because of the lack of room. Those lucky enough to stay were treated to a multi-

81 The Worker, 20 November 1926.
lingual event filled with fiery speeches by Hautamäki and Bryan, music by the local Finnish and Ukrainian Orchestras, the Ukrainian Boys’ Band, and English musicians.  

As Buhay reported to *The Worker*, “the splendid co-operation of all comrades, particularly of the Ukrainians and the Finnish women comrades, and the English, helped to make this week a success.”

By this point, it had become clear to local and national officials within the CPC that the October 1926 strike had reinvigorated the IWW in the region. Owing to its appeal to the Finnish lumber workers, the largest element in the CPC’s LWIUC, this worried many. The CPC faced a paradox. If it cooperated with the IWW, it would win points with workers for effectively helping them to organize. Conversely, by cooperating with the IWW it also provided the means for its rival to make substantial gains. For their part, the Wobblies viewed their role in the strike as a success. Prompted by a strike-induced growth in membership, the LWIU headquarters moved from Sudbury to Port Arthur and a local organizer, Nick Viita, became its general secretary. The offices of the Canadian news bureau for the weekly American-based Finnish newspaper *Industrialisti* also accompanied the move.

The IWW’s lack of a rigid hierarchy and commitment to rank-and-file democracy appealed to many non-English-speaking socialists in the Lakehead. Although the CPC’s work within unions often entailed practices that were no less democratic and open,

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83 *The Worker*, 27 November 1926.
84 *The Worker*, 13 November 1926.
86 For a summary of Wobbly activity in Vancouver during the first few months of 1926, see LAC, CI, Reel 6 [K-274], 495, 98, 40, Minutes of the Organization Committee of the C.P. of C. held 13 April, 9 May 1926.
its general image was that of a highly-disciplined, top-down party. Like many, Holmer Berg, a Swedish immigrant who had been an organizer for the IWW in Saskatchewan and Port Arthur during the strike, supported the IWW because, unlike the Communists, they organized through their membership and expected everyone to participate, whether they were part of the leadership or a member of the rank-and-file.\(^\text{87}\) The IWW also appealed to many in the mid-1920s, Donald Avery argues, because it was not preoccupied with “sterile ideological controversy: despite their syndicalist underpinnings their attention was focused on specific grievances.”\(^\text{88}\)

While *The Worker* described the strike as illustrating “the fine spirit of solidarity,” the CPC was not long in attempting to turn the real tangible gains into partisan ones. While a joint committee consisting of the two unions was responsible for seeing the agreement be honored by the signatories, the LWIUC immediately undertook a campaign to undercut the contribution of the IWW. The LWIUC used the strike as an opportunity for strengthening itself. In fact, more was made of the opportunity for gain and the CPC’s efforts than the actual outcome of the strike itself. Rather than continuing the fight in other camps or other industries, attention turned to “a big organization campaign” amongst the workers who had just gone back to work.\(^\text{89}\)

The IWW was in reality no different. During the strike they had sent out appeals to various Wobbly branches and to both *Industrial Solidarity* and *Industrial Worker* asking for donations. Readers were informed by a Canadian organizer named J.A.

\(^{87}\) LUA, JMLHC, Tape 4, Interview with Holmer Borg, 1972.
\(^{88}\) Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners*, 53.
\(^{89}\) *The Worker* (Toronto), 13 November 1926. See also LAC, CPC, vol. 143, file 6, “Lumber Workers Industrial Union of Canada, Annual Report March 8, 1926 – March 5, 1927,” 5 March 1927.
MacDonald that the funds would not only ensure a victory for the strikers in Northwestern Ontario, but also meant the organization of the lumber industry into the IWW. Shortly after the strike, the Port Arthur branch issued a bulletin both praising the co-operation among itself, the LWIUC, and the unorganized workers but also arguing that only organizations along its own principles would ensure the continued recognition of what had been won.

The Wobblyes were not the only ones to criticize the Communists. Workers in Cochrane, Ontario, for example, complained to the Department of Labour that they had been forced to provide funds during the strike or cease to work. If they had refused, their names would be “published in the Finnish paper ‘Vapaus’ as strikebreakers.” Such threats were hardly something to be trivialized as the Communist-sponsored Vapaus was one of the most widely-read Finnish newspapers in North America and such a public indictment would have resulted in those listed being barred from employment and ostracized within the Finnish community.

Responses from various parts of the country to these types of requests reveal the trouble facing both Communists and Wobblyes. For example, when the IWW’s campaign for aid to the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council was debated, a number of delegates argued against support. Some suggested that funds should not be sent, as the unions were not international. Others argued that money should not be sent east when workers in the West were in as much need. Ultimately the western workers sent $50. Their generosity

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90 *Industrial Solidarity*, 6 October 1926.
91 LUA, Canadian Teollisuusunionistinen Kannatus Liito fonds (hereafter CTKL), MG10, F, 15, 10, “Lumber Workers Organize Camp Committees in Every Camp.”
paralleled the many contributions of Lakehead unions to West Coast struggles.\textsuperscript{93}

Interestingly, neither union during the strike sought recognition. Speaking to reporters early in the strike, joint strike committee spokesman Harry Bryan had adamantly denied rumors that the LWIUC or the LWIU were seeking recognition of their unions as part of the strikers’ demands. Not only did this reflect an attempt to allay concerns raised by many citizens within the region, but also the reality that the vast majority of workers did not belong to either union and continued to express a desire to remain independent. As Bryan himself commented: “all [the] men want is the granting of their wage demands and with an agreement made with the contractors along those terms the men are willing to go to work at once.”\textsuperscript{94}

There can be no doubt that the LWIUC needed the IWW during the strike of 1926. Compared to the Communists’ network in the region, the IWWs’ Finnish support circle was both better organized and more financially stable. Its halls were the natural gathering points for the lumber workers (the majority of whom were Finnish). In fact, due to its size and the large number of Wobblies involved in the committee itself, most strike meetings were held in the much larger IWW Labour Temple at 314 Bay Street. The decision to appoint LWIU member Thomas Hill as the treasurer of the joint strike committee also reflected the greater resources the Wobbly Finnish auxiliary could mobilize. The apparent differences, for example, are apparent in fund raising efforts. While both unions appealed for funds through national and international organs, local entertainments were put on with all proceeds being donated to the strike committee. Typical were the events held on the evening of 27 September at both 314 and 316 Bay

\textsuperscript{93} LAC, DL, vol. 337, Strike 76, and Vancouver Labor Statesman, 8 October 1926.
\textsuperscript{94} FWDTJ, 6 October 1926.
Street. While the Communists took in $28, the Finnish auxiliary raised over $188.\textsuperscript{95} So successful had the IWW become that four Wobbly-supported schools were operating in Northwestern Ontario, with one in Fort William run by a man named David Aho and another in Port Arthur serving 200 children run by William Arnberg. Two other schools operated close by in Intola and Nipigon.\textsuperscript{96}

The CPC’s situation was no less rosy according to Tim Buck in his January 1927 report to the Comintern’s National Secretary of America and Canada. He described a party on the brink of massive expansion, even though membership had actually decreased between 1924 and November 1926 from 4,500 to 3,150.\textsuperscript{97} This decline, in Buck’s interpretation, did not “reflect so much a loss of influence by the Party” but as the difficulties experienced following the decision by the Comintern to reorganize in 1925.\textsuperscript{98} The CPC leadership claimed to have abolished the language sections, established national language agitprops, and to have reorganized “the Central Executive Committee into a Political Bureau and department for Agitprop, Trade Union work, Organization, Women’s Work, Youth and Press.”\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Industrial Solidarity}, 6 October 1926.
\textsuperscript{97} LAC, CI, Reel 1, [K-269], 495, 72, 21, p. 5, “Report of Comrade Tim Buck to the National Secretary of America and Canada,” 12 January 1927, p.3 and 495, 72, 34, p. 50, “Report of the Communist Party of Canada for the Period of 1927,” 6 March 1928, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{98} For commentary on the reorganization of the party, see, for example, \textit{The Worker} 25 December 1926 and 26 March 1927.
\textsuperscript{99} LAC, CI, Reel 1, [K-269], 495, 72, 21, p. 5, “Report of Comrade Tim Buck to the National Secretary of America and Canada,” 12 January 1927, p.3 and 495, 72, 34, p. 50, “Report of the Communist Party of Canada for the Period of 1927, 6 March 1928, p. 11. Buck took credit for the successful activity amongst the language members in the various “non-party language organizations” such as the Ukrainian Farmer-Labor Temple Association, the Finnish Organization of Canada, various Jewish organizations, and the co-operatives in many of the lumber and mining areas.
The party remained approximately 85% non-English speaking. In part, the CPC leadership claimed, this was based on the large number of immigrants, most notably from Finland. In response to questions from the National Secretary of America and Canada, they also explained that the pattern could be attributed to the loss of over 300 English-speaking members through emigration to the United States during the last three or four years. “Whole branches are dissolved,” Buck stated, “because of this emigration… We have been able to increase our foreign born membership because they are easier to organize and also for the fact that they cannot emigrate to the United States as easily as the English speaking people.”

Tim Buck’s report also outlined a list of successes in the development of a united front. Figuring prominently were the activities of the CLP’s approximately 54,000 affiliated members and its electoral results, including Smith’s at the Lakehead. The CPC took credit for 18 of the 20 labour/farmer candidates, who ran in the 1925 federal election with support from the CLP, and for the success in the recent civic elections of the 46 labor candidates, only a few of them Communists, who had won. The CLDL, under the direction of Smith, claimed to possess 46 branches throughout the country while the WLL had 18 locals operating under party direction and had established an official organ, The Woman Worker. In the realm of trade union work it was reported that it “has been particularly successful in the basic industries: coal mining, lumbering, and on the railways.”

100 LAC, CI, Reel 1, [K-269], 495, 72, 21, p. 5, “Report of Comrade Tim Buck to the National Secretary of America and Canada,” 12 January 1927, p. 3 and 495, 72, 34, p. 50, “Report of the Communist Party of Canada for the Period of 1927, 6 March 1928, p. 11.

101 LAC, CI, Reel 1, [K-269], 495, 72, 21, p. 5, “Report of Comrade Tim Buck to the National Secretary of America and Canada,” 12 January 1927, p. 1. See also Reel 6 [K-274] 495, 98, 49
In reality, the CPC continually had problems throughout 1927 recruiting district organizers. At the time of its annual report, the party informed the Comintern that only two district organizers existed in the nine districts. While acknowledging that the Central Committee of the party needed to give more attention to this issue, much of the blame was placed on the shoulders of the district committees. “Instead of functioning as political organs,” the report states, “district committees merely act as administrative bodies. Too much of the work of the [District Committee] in a political sense, is undertaken by the CEC.” The CEC also argued that its general weakness during 1926 and first half of 1927 reflected the “general apathy in the trade union movement and the necessity of properly establishing and organizing Communist trade union factions.”

Yet, notwithstanding such limitations, the growing prominence of Communists in Port Arthur became clearer and clearer through the course of 1927. When members of the Eastern section of the LWIUC met in Port Arthur in early March, it boasted 1,500 members with branches throughout Northern Ontario. Members from the Lakehead dominated the executive with Alf Hautamäki as secretary and Harry Bryan as president. The union’s organizers won the respect and admiration of the workers: “It was tough,” comments Edwin Suski, an LWIUC militant between 1926 and 1927. “There’s not much friendliness. You have to walk from the railroad 28 to 30 miles

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102 LAC, CI, Reel 1, [K-269], 495, 72, 34, p. 45, “Report of the Communist Party of Canada for the Period of 1927,” 6 March 1928, p. 5. This report is also found on Reel 6 [K-274] 495, 98, 49, pp. 11 and 14-22.
103 The Worker, 26 March 1927 and LAC, Department of Immigration (hereafter DI), RG76, Volume 219, File 95027, List of Fort William Finnish Members c. 1927-1928. This item also contains lists for Fort Frances, Port Arthur, South Porcupine, Timmins, Porcupine, Nipigon, and Port Arthur. In Northern Ontario, branches could be found in Port Arthur, Nipigon, Sault St. Marie, Beaver Lake, Wanup, Cobalt, Rosegrove, Kirkland Lake, Connaught Station, Pottsville, South Porcupine, and Timmins.
through the bush, and when you get there you get a very cold reception from the camp foreman if he happened to be there.”

As in the rest of the country, good organizers, especially English-speaking ones, remained difficult to find at the Lakehead. This increasingly became problematic as the CPC almost obsessively began focusing on increasing the total number of English-speaking members. The apathy towards the CPC on the part of the majority of Anglo labour leaders in the region and their tendency to favour traditional trade unionism and British-style labour politics contributed to the party reaching into the past to find a populist type of organizer who had preexisting ties with the community. To that end, in April Beckie Buhay wrote to Harry Bryan wondering if he would be willing to become more active.

While Bryan had been involved with the CPC during its first few years, he had not taken a direct role aside from the 1926 strike. A longtime friend of Buhay, he had recently hosted her at his home, where she had taken the opportunity to see if he was willing to become the literary agent for the District. Buhay soon after encouraged Bryan to be more involved, admitting that the leaders of the CPC “were very anxious” to have him do the work. Buhay also attempted to appeal to Bryan’s wallet by suggesting he would be able to “make it go financially as well.” In the end, he agreed; however, his instructions from the leadership went beyond merely assisting with organizational efforts in the region. The party had also charged him with keeping an eye on the lumber workers and, in particular, on Hautamäki.

105 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7378, 5B 0458, Beckie Buhay to Harry Bryan, 19 April and The Worker,
Bryan would figure prominently in the Port Arthur and Fort William celebrations of the Paris Commune and the anniversary of the CPC. On a number of occasions, the Workers’ Hall in Port Arthur and the Robertson Street Finnish Hall in Fort William were filled to capacity to hear him speak of the party’s past struggles and of the difficulties it currently faced.  

Bryan also involved himself in the early co-operative moment started by Finnish farmers in the rural areas surrounding the Lakehead in 1927.

Bryan’s efforts and an increase in CPC propaganda in the region led to a resurgence of the party. In particular, this was apparent in the renewal of a branch of the WLL in Port Arthur. An outgrowth of the Finnish Women’s Federation section established by Sanna Kanasto during the previous year, it held a successful conference in April at the Worker’s Hall with branches from Alpila, Intola, North Branch, Finland, Nipigon, Nolalu, Fort William, and Port Arthur in attendance. The WLL had also been integral in the organizational efforts of the Young Pioneers and YCL in the twin cities and the surrounding region. The Young Pioneers in particular reported significant gains in membership and the creation of educational courses at the Lakehead. In Fort William alone, over 40 new Pioneers were reported to have joined in the final months of 1927. Following the departure of Kannasto, the branch became an extension of the LWIUC. A reflection of the links between the union and the youth organization can be found in the

16 April 1927.

106 The Worker, 16 April 1927.


108 Having organized a branch of the Canadian Working Women’s Federation among the Finnish women in Port Arthur, Sanna Kannasto spent 1927-1928 in Sudbury organizing women in the nickel district. See Lempi (Makela) Maki, “Activities of the Women of the Labouring Class in the Nickel District,” nd. Originally published in Suomalaiset Nikkelialuella (np., 1937) and translated to English by Mr. V. Rinne. My source for this document is the Shebandowan Films research files for the National Film Board of Canada’s “Letters from Karelia.”

109 The Young Worker (December 1927), p. 3.
election of Ailiane Hautamäki, the wife of Alf Hautamäki, to the position of secretary of the branch of the YCL.  

During this same period, the Ukrainian community of Fort William appears to have become much more active within the CPC. It would not be too much of a stretch to link this growth to Bryan’s renewed involvement. As his efforts before the First World War reveal, Bryan had previously been successful in bridging the ethnic divides between worker organizations at the Lakehead. In addition, it was well known that his role in the 1920s split had to do with ideological rather than ethnic differences. Led by a labourer named Michael Biniowsky, an acquaintance of Bryan’s, the Ukrainian Agit-Prop became the most active next to the Finns.

Bryan’s talents were also used to tackle the growing problem of the IWW. Despite claims by the CPC that its rival was on the road to extinction, the Wobblies in April issue of the “Port Arthur Branch” newsletter reveals an organization undergoing revival. Since the movement of the LWIU’s headquarters from Sudbury to Port Arthur in July 1926, it had improved both financially and in membership. Wobbly agitation committees and several of its auxiliaries had “swamped northern and western Ontario with leaflets, papers and pamphlets.” The LWIUC’s own annual report for 1926-1927 acknowledged the presence of the IWW in the lumber camps and warned CPC leaders

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110 The Worker, 4 June 1927.
111 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7378, 5B 0464, Michael Biniowsky to The Worker, 11 February 1927 and 5B 0473, George Eleudiuk, Secretary, Ukrainian Agitprop of Fort William to Business Manager of “The Worker,” 11 April 1927. The Ukrainian Agitprop operated out of an office located at 612 ½ Simpson Street. George Eleudiuk acted as the Secretary.
that nothing could be accomplished in the region as long as two unions existed. While the CPC blamed the LWIUC’s inexperience for the general lack of progress at the Lakehead, no excuses for the IWW’s growing influence in other aspects of the region’s economy were forthcoming. By April, the IWW appears to have expanded beyond the lumber industry, as members of the Marine and Transport Union were actively agitating when the shipping season began.

Increased activity was not without its problems. IWW attempts to establish a Construction Workers’ Unit confronted significant hurdles as “few real live… delegates who properly understand this industry and the problems of its workers” could be found. Unlike Vancouver, which benefited from its close proximity to the Seattle branch during this period, the Lakehead was left without a direct connection to other branches owing to a police crackdown at the Minnesota-Ontario border. The only correspondence received typically contained reminders to remit dues and invoices for cards, buttons, and stamps. As a result, by 1927, the Port Arthur branch operated largely autonomously from the General Executive Board in Chicago, taking the initiative on a number of matters and consulting headquarters only after changes had been made.

One such initiative was represented by the repeated attempts by the Port Arthur branch of the LWIU to convince the Work People’s College in Minnesota to establish a branch in Canada. It was felt that such a move was necessary due to the increasing

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115 LUA, CTKL, F, 14, 25, Ed Peterson [?], Secretary-Treasurer, LWIU No. 120 IWW to Thomas Hill, 25 June 1927; 1 July 1927; 11 July 1927; 17 October 1927; and By-Laws Committee to The Members, L.W.I.U. #120, I.W.W., 18 April 1927.
116 LUA, CTKL, F, 14, 25, Ed Peterson [?], Secretary-Treasurer, LWIU No. 120 IWW to Thomas Hill, 22 October 1927; 24 October 1927;
number of problems workers were experiencing trying to get across the border to attend the school. In addition, such a move was necessary to meet the demand existing within Northwestern Ontario, as the proposed Port Arthur location would easily have an annual attendance larger than that in Duluth. Ultimately, the Work People's College did not establish a school in Port Arthur but agreed to arrange for courses to be taught in the city when instructors were available.\textsuperscript{117}

Despite the difficulties experienced between 1925 and 1929, it is clear that the Lakehead possessed two very active socialist organizations. Both the IWW and the CPC sought the allegiance of the mostly Finnish lumber workers in the region, while at the same time attempting to fight for better wages and conditions for the working class more generally. While the Wobblies had made substantial inroads over the past few years, by the end of 1927, the District 6 Executive Committee of the CPC also reported that its membership included representatives from sub-committees located in Port Arthur, Nipigon, Intola, Fort William, and Nolalu. Financially, the District Executive Committee was also much more stable.\textsuperscript{118} Robust Finnish and Ukrainian Agitprops could also be found in Port Arthur, Fort William, and the outlying communities.\textsuperscript{119} While the CPC’s membership continued to be primarily non-Anglo-Saxon in origin, a source of persistent tensions within the party, modest gains in English membership and the establishment by Fred Moore of an English branch of the CLDL provided some hope for the CPC.

\textsuperscript{118} LAC, CPC, Reel M-7380, 8C 0092, “D.E.C. No. 6 C.P. Minutes of Meeting Held on Dec. 13\textsuperscript{th} 1927.”
\textsuperscript{119} In December 1927, this included Bininowsky, Stenrees, Kari, Neimi, Stolberg, Antila, A. McLeod, Lewis. See LAC, CPC, Reel M-7380, 8C 0092, “D.E.C. No. 6 C.P. Minutes of Meeting Held on Dec. 13\textsuperscript{th} 1927.”
leadership.\textsuperscript{120} Communists could also be found amongst reported 28 branches of trade unions in Fort William and the 27 branches in Port Arthur. \textsuperscript{121} The Communists’ fortunes were clearly on the rise.

\textsuperscript{120} LAC, CPC, Reel M-7380, reverse of 7B 2033, “Canadian Labor Defence League,” 16 December 1927. For his efforts, Fred Moore was appointed by the CPC as the local CLDL’s pro tem secretary.

\textsuperscript{121} Total unions membership (25 of 28 branches reporting) was 1,673 in Fort William and 1,643 in Port Arthur (22 of 27 branches reporting). See Ibid., 7B 1892, “Trade Unionists Increase: Report Issued by Department of Labour Shows Gain in Membership in Canada in 1928,” p. 2.
Chapter 8
Turning to the Left
1928-1930

When Communists from around the world gathered in Moscow in the spring of 1925 for the Fifth Plenum of the Communist International, few knew that their national parties and the International itself were about to embark on a new path. The ascension of Joseph Stalin would lead to the gradual change of the nature and characteristics of the Comintern. Policies of Bolshevization which had preceded Stalin, and which had remained largely a dead letter in Canada, would now be given a new emphasis. Between 1928 and 1929, a new Canadian leadership came to terms with what John Manley has called the “New Line.”¹ The infamous “Third Period” in the world communist movement was now underway.

“In 1928,” according to Ivan Avakumovic, “the Comintern reached several crucial decisions which affected the fortunes of all its sections, including the one in Canada.”² At the ninth Executive Committee of the Communist International Plenum held in February that year, a new line was adopted to reflect the prevailing belief that “capitalism was now moving back into crisis” and the movement had entered the Third Period.³ The central thesis of Third Period political theory was that the Communists’ rivals on the left were social fascists. Other socialist parties, such as social democrats throughout much of the west, were predestined to act as the “‘last reserve’ of the old order” and it “was the duty

¹ See John Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class During the Great Depression: The Workers’ Unity League, 1930-1936” (PhD. diss., Dalhousie University, 1984), 94-157.  
of the Communists to unmask the role being played in the labour movement by socialist leaders, including left-wingers, and to win over the socialist rank-and-file.” According to the Comintern, the slogan “class against class” now characterized “the struggle throughout the world.”

Historians have described the Third Period as the abandonment of the United Front with other socialists and a turn to the left. The new line, E.H. Carr writes, was “a natural result of the breakdown of conciliatory tactics in Soviet diplomacy, as well as in the relations of communist parties to other Left parties in capitalist countries.” Within the Comintern and in the Russian party, this pitted Stalin against Bukharin and Trotsky. In Canada, this pattern manifested itself, Ian Angus suggests, in the “takeover of the Communist Party of Canada by the [Tim] Buck-[Stewart] Smith faction in July 1929.” As Angus contends, Tim Buck’s ascension “was no simple change of personnel, but a total change in the policies and program of the Canadian Communist movement.” In keeping with decisions reached in Moscow, the Communist movement in Canada became “more or less… subordinate to the foreign policy goals of the Stalinist leadership.”

“Class against class has usually been seen as a disaster,” write Tim Rees and Andrew Thorpe. In later years, even the CPC leadership, in particular Tim Buck, distanced itself from the policies of the Third Period, suggesting that they “were the result of errors made while the real leaders [of the CPC] were in jail.”

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6 Angus, Canadian Bolsheviks (2004), 233.
McKay writes, the “CPC was one of the last in the world to take Stalin’s side,” once it did, the new line exerted a profound influence over its strategy and tactics.9

As this chapter explores, the CPC’s efforts to enact the directives of the Comintern (in particular Bolshevization) had unexpected consequences. In part, it was responsible for the loss of almost half of the CPC’s membership between 1925 and 1929.10 The predominance of the lumber workers in the region and the large number of Finns and Ukrainians resulted in the majority of the District leadership being non-Anglo in origin, a situation exacerbated by the overall decline (mostly Anglos) in membership.11 Nationally, 80% of the membership also did not speak English and 60% of its members continued to be Finnish.12 Much like in other regions with high proportions of non-Anglo members, throughout this period tensions began to mount at the Lakehead due to the growing disconnect between the policies of the leadership and the concerns of socialists in the region. The most significant consequence of Moscow’s insistence upon Bolshevization by 1930 was the rising influence of the IWW at the Lakehead — despite the Wobblies’ very minor significance elsewhere in interwar Canada.

11 Library and Archives of Canada (hereafter LAC), Communist Party of Canada fonds (hereafter CPC), MG28-IV4, Reel M-7370, 1A0066, no title and 1A0088, no title, signed A. Skarra. For example, of the 13 members of the District Trade Union Department, only three were not Finnish or Ukrainian. The District 6 Trade Union Department included in 1929 the following: A. McLeod (Port Arthur), A. Skarra (Port Arthur), J. Carey (Port Arthur), A. Hautamäki (Port Arthur), J. Chepseaik (Fort William), Steve Manaryk (Fort William), W. Perunuk (Fort William), A. Gibson (Fort William), M. Benouski (Fort William), G. Sonquist (Port Arthur), N. Law (Fort William), William Boyce (Fort William), and B. Nicolaichuk (Port Arthur).
When in the summer of 1928 the Sixth Congress of the Communist International declared that national organizations should prepare for the onset of a worldwide revolution, the CPC was too embroiled in its own internal struggles to respond effectively to the call. At the Profintern’s Fourth Congress in March-April, calls were made for the Trade Union Education League “to become the nucleus of a new organization for the workers in organized industries, while at the same time remaining the focal point for the left-wing members of the ‘reformist unions.’” By the time of the Comintern’s Sixth Congress in July and August, a policy of dual unionism and a shift to “a class against class policy” had been adopted.¹³

The Anglo-American Secretariat appears to also have become increasingly concerned over the CPC’s progress in popularizing the decisions reached at the Ninth Plenum. As one of the last parties in the world to be fully “Stalinized” and given the continued leadership role of pro-Trotsky Maurice Spector and equivocal Jack MacDonald until 1928 and 1929 respectively, the CPC was rebuked for lagging behind the world communist movement. It was argued that the CPC needed to “bring out in a more clear and sharp form the identity of the Party as the revolutionary party of the Canadian working class.”¹⁴ Addressing this issue was of utmost importance, the Anglo-American Secretariat contended, as the economic and political situation in Canada placed the country “definitely in the midst of the ‘third period’ outlined in the thesis of the VI Congress of the Communist International. The stabilization, rationalization and increased development of Canadian capitalism is fraught with contradictions that will embroil the

country in the coming imperialist war.”

Central to tackling the problem were the trade unions. The CPC leadership believed that only by “winning the masses of workers” in the All-Canadian Congress of Labour and Trades and Labour Congress of Canada (the two national trade union organizations) could the Party be in a position to take advantage of the turmoil that would inevitably grip the country. However, the Anglo-American Secretariat criticized the CPC for its past efforts and rebuked the CPC’s Central Executive Committee (CEC) for its past work. The Canadian party had “too often been directed from the ‘top’ instead of from the rank-and-file, as is evidenced by the slogan ‘Amalgamation of the two Congresses.’” Similarly, in attempting to organize the unorganized, the CPC was cautioned not to

over-estimate the possibilities or desirability of the All-Canadian Congress of Labour, or the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress doing this work. The numerous strikes amongst the unorganized workers during this past year show a growing militancy on the part of workers and opens [sic] up possibilities for the advancement of the revolutionary trade movement. The Party must therefore clarify its present unclear industrial policy, educate activise [sic] its members, and take the initiative in building new revolutionary unions and creating a broad Left Wing opposition movement.

Perhaps the largest obstacle in implementing a successful recruiting campaign was the lack of a significant number of Anglo-Saxon organizers. There was also the issue of the continued conflict between the CEC and non-English speaking members. “The membership of the Party still remains,” the Comintern remarked, “of an unsatisfactory

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15 LAC, CI, Reel 1, [K-269], 495, 72, 34, p. 86, “Draft Letter to the Communist Party of Canada,” nd. circa 23 April 1928, p. 2. This letter went through several drafts until it was eventually sent. I have used the material from the initial draft, unless otherwise indicated, that did not alter from the final copy. The reason is pragmatic, it was clearer than some of the others.
16 LAC, CI, Reel 1, [K-269], 495, 72, 34, p. 88, “Draft Letter to the Communist Party of Canada,” circa 23 April 1928, p. 4.
quality. Greater efforts must be made by the Party to recruit Anglo-Saxon workers from the best elements of the progressives in the trade unions.”

For example, the recent split within the CPC over the question of the Ukrainian language organizations was viewed as “an example of the unhealthy state of the Party apparatus.” The “liquidary tendencies,” underestimations of Party work, failure to extend propaganda, and so on “must be overcome by centrally directed agit-prop work that will organize and control fractional activity within the language organizations. In no sense must the language agit-props supplant Party fractions as tends to be the case now.”

Finally, the Anglo-American Secretariat attempted to defuse internal wrangling within the Canadian Party by ensconcing the political line of Tim Buck as the one the CPC should follow.

Many of these same issues and concerns were echoed regionally. Efforts to organize workers at the Lakehead continued to lag behind those in other regions of the country. For example, calls in May 1928 for a meeting of the unemployed were largely ignored in the Lakehead (whereas thousands had attended a recent similar meeting in Winnipeg.) John Carey, the CPC’s Fort William organizer, accurately observed that the same issues facing workers in Winnipeg faced their comrades at the Lakehead. However, unlike the Winnipeggers, “They had not even learned that which is known even to wolves that hunt in packs, that many can do what one cannot, that in union lies strength.” Carey blamed the inability to unite on the ethnic prejudice rampant in the region. One segment,

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17 LAC, CI, Reel 1, [K-269], 495, 72, 34, p. 91, “Draft Letter to the Communist Party of Canada,” circa 23 April 1928, p. 7.
19 LAC, CI, Reel 1, [K-269], 495, 72, 34, p. 107, “Draft Resolution of Decision of the Canadian Question,” circa 23 April 1928, p. 3.
he contended, viewed any form of organization doomed to failure because it allowed “the foreigners into it.” Others argued the opposite – that an organization without foreigners would be useless. Both, Carey points out, seem to have not been issues in Winnipeg even with its similar ethnic composition. “In short,” he said in summing up the situation at the head of the lakes, “a combination of ignorance, cowardice and blind prejudice made the workers unwilling to take part in a scheme for their welfare, because forsooth there were among them those who spoke a different language.”

While the general lack of solidarity did not allow Communists, for example, to take advantage of the loss of 350 jobs when the Fort William Paper Company’s mill closed, they still had some success organizing young workers. Building upon the popularity amongst both Wobblies and Communists of “socialist summer camps” and educational classes geared towards children, a branch of the Young Communist League (YCL) had been organized in Port Arthur. Twice-weekly meetings of the Young Pioneers in Fort William soon joined those in Port Arthur.

The activities of the YCL grabbed the attention of government officials. As always, Finns bore the brunt of the increased scrutiny. Port Arthur educational authorities, for instance, reported to their Toronto superiors that “red” ideology was being taught in many Finnish schools and in the camps. According to one official: “Red literature runs in this vein. Don’t listen to your teacher, he’s only a tool working for the bosses. All honour to our brave comrades who would not salut [sic] the Union Jack.”

20 The Worker, 26 May 1928.
21 The Worker, 30 June and 14 July 1928.
22 For an overview of the Young Pioneers and radical summer camps, see Paul C. Mishler, Raising Reds: The Young Pioneers, Radical Summer Camps, and Communist Political Culture in the United States (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
23 See, for instance, The Young Worker (March 1928); April 1928; and May 1929.
official was further concerned about Party meetings, which he thought closed with “the Red Flag and a pledge of readiness for world revolution…” The teacher alone could overcome home influence, he warned. “The Red has been drilled in before he gets a chance. This is evident among the Finns more than any other class. If the government continues to dump them into the North it should see that they obey our laws.” The focus on the Finns was not without basis. By 1928, they constituted approximately 60 percent (2,640) of the CPC’s total 4,400 members. In fact, the Finnish Organization of Canada (FOC), coupled with the Ukrainian Labour-Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA) had become the largest ethnically-distinct demographic force within both revolutionary left-wing politics in Canada and the CPC.

The IWW-affiliated Lumber Workers Industrial Union (LWIU) was, on the face of it, in a good position to capitalize on the CPC’s problems. Yet, its situation was actually a difficult one. Many of its members earnestly desired a merger with the Communist-affiliated Lumber Workers Industrial Union of Canada (LWIUC). Some thought that this merged union could simply follow the platform of the IWW. Such a scenario flew in the face of the strategies of the CPC, all the more so as the party increasingly became subject to the Stalinist rigours of the Third Period. In this context,

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however logical and even obvious in theory, the merger of the two radical unions was at best a fantasy in practice.

Union with the OBU was not a new issue. Previous splits within the lumber unions had not been as clear-cut as the CPC and IWW wanted to believe. In the intervening years, many workers had become disillusioned with the Communists or had become nostalgic for those days when lumber workers spoke with a much more united voice. Some hoped that a new union would eventually form a Canadian Administration of the IWW, with an official publication in Winnipeg. As early as 1925, J.D. Golden of the LWIU in Port Arthur and Sudbury had taken up the cause and could be found disseminating material in favour of the creation of a separate Canadian Administration. Vancouver members, perhaps sensing the General Executive Board’s (GEB) shift in attention from the West Coast to Central Canada, took issue with Golden's suggestions. At a mass meeting in December 1925, they even called for all Canadian branches to go on record as to whether they supported Golden and the creation of a Canadian Administration. However, it appears that Wobblies in Canada felt that they were still not strong enough to go out on their own, despite growing concerns over a distant and seemingly aloof Chicago-based leadership.

The organizational problems facing Wobblies at the Lakehead during this period

appear to have been similar to those of their Communist brethren. As was the case with the CPC and the LWIUC, the organization of French workers in Eastern Canada had become a priority of the IWW’s own LWIU. For example, the financially troubled Sudbury branch had been instructed at the Ninth Ontario District Conference in June to undertake to arrange for a French-speaking traveling delegate. Problems arose, however, when the largely Finnish and solvent Port Arthur branch was required to pay part of the expenses. Not surprisingly, Wobblies at the Lakehead were not happy with the decision to go ahead, as they had not been consulted.32

The Port Arthur branch also butted heads with the Ontario District and General Executive Board (GEB) over its rule that workers who left the lumber industry for employment as harvesters had to transfer to the Agricultural Industrial Unit (AIU). The secretary of the Port Arthur Branch argued that this left the LWIU according to its bylaws in bad standing and ineligible to put forward nominations for any positions. In the past, this rule had prevented many of the most active LWIU members from either taking harvesting work or organizing on behalf of the union year-round. Golden brought forth a resolution at the 1928 LWIU conference in Port Arthur that members of the LWIU, AIU and the General Recruiting Union in Canada enter the harvest drive together without its members being subject to transfer fees or loss of delegate status. The resolution passed without opposition.33

33 LUA, CTKL, F, 14, 30, J.D. Golden, Resolution No. 2 to LWIU Conference, 1 April 1928 and “Minutes of Eight Semi-Annual Ontario District Conference of the Lumber Workers I.U. of the I.W.W.,” 1 April 1928.
The GEB in Chicago made no comment on the unilateral decision taken by Canadian Wobblies. In reality, it had little understanding of, and perhaps little interest in, the specific issues of Wobblies outside the United States. When asked in 1929 for a speaker to bolster recent gains in membership and to stave off Communist attempts to draw members away, the GEB declined “on account of [there] not being very many English speaking workers” at the Lakehead. “In this district at present,” it argued, “we do not see any benefit for the organization.” The GEB also pushed Canadian Wobblies to establish an English-language publication. Such was the tone taken by the Chicago leadership throughout much of the late 1920s. Like the CPC, it saw its future success dependent upon establishing, in contrast to its earlier emphasis, a “non-foreign” membership base rather than supporting the initiatives of Finnish members.34

Ironically, both Lakehead Wobblies and Communists faced many of the same dilemmas. In both cases, distant leaderships could only partially grasp the on-the-ground challenges of the local radicals. In the case of the CPC, it was – true to the spirit of the ‘Third Period’ – intent on exposing and denouncing social democrats. Yet in the Lakehead context, the Party’s limited but real electoral successes in the 1920s had rested precisely upon making appeals, through the Canadian Labour Party, to the very “soft leftists” it now denounced as so many “social fascists.”35

The Ukrainian members of the party also posed another growing issue facing the CPC. Unknown to the Central Executive Committee, the National Ukrainian Agit-Prop had submitted a twenty-page document to the Anglo-American Secretariat criticizing the

Party’s recent decisions and, in particular, the leaders’ failure to consider the needs or heed the requests of its Ukrainian membership (the second largest group within the party). The Anglo-American Secretariat agreed and responded that the relationship between the Ukrainian membership and the rest of the CPC’s units, especially the CEC and the YCL, was “far from healthy.” The Ukrainians and Finns were recognized as playing an important role in industry. Yet they were also held to be problematic: “they hold onto their own previous modes of life” and tend to “lead their own social life. Do not speak English and in general, many of them submit only very slowly to assimilation [sic].”

The National Executive Committee of the YCL echoed the position of the party’s leadership and placed sole blame on the Ukrainian leadership: “the accumulating pile of evidence strengthens our conviction that no attempt has been made by the Ukrainian leadership of our Party to put into evidence the conditions of the Fifth Convention of our Party.” Recognizing the majority of the Communist Party of Canada’s members were Finnish and Ukrainian, the CPC declared that the party must first embrace and then integrate them into the party. The CPC claimed that the language organizations were under Communist leadership, and had “considerable influence among the miners of Alberta, most of whom are Ukrainian, and the Lumber workers, most of whom are Finn.” As such, it argued that “favourable conditions for drawing the broad masses of

immigrants into the class struggle” existed.\textsuperscript{39}

The CPC’s conception of its ‘great task’ of revolution, one strongly influenced by the Comintern and by graduates of the Lenin School in Moscow, entailed the Party’s more thorough Canadianization. It was directed by Moscow to draw more English-speaking “British and American immigrants,” and more English- and French-speaking “native-born Canadians,” into its ranks. How could this be balanced with the Party’s continuing reliance upon the Finns and Ukrainians? It was caught in a dilemma. Bolshevization and, later, Stalinization meant relegating the foreign-language groups to the periphery. Retaining the “red bases” it had so painstakingly built in northwestern Ontario meant paying close attention to precisely these groups. The “new line” meant focusing intently on factories. However, the “old realities” of the Party stubbornly drew its attention back to its traditional bases in mining, forestry and other resource industries. The Party was being pulled in at least two directions.\textsuperscript{40}

In response to Ukrainian concerns over the leadership of the CPC’s desire to liquidate the ULFTA, the party “categorically repudiated the accusation.” It determined in its resolution that “greater clarity” was necessary to defuse the increasing conflict between leading Ukrainians and the CPC leadership. The ULFTA was chastised for what the Executive Committee saw as a blurring of the line between the Ukrainian Communists’ “participation in the class struggle together with the Canadian proletariat” and a focus on the “socio-political struggles among the Ukrainians alone.” Ukrainian

\textsuperscript{39} LAC, CPC, Reel M-7380, 8C 0158, “Resolution of Communist International One the Question of Communist Workers in the Ukrainian Workers’ Organizations in Canada,” circa. October 1928, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{40} LAC, CPC, Reel M-7380, 8C 0158, “Resolution of Communist International One the Question of Communist Workers in the Ukrainian Workers’ Organizations in Canada,” circa. October 1928, p. 1.
Communists were urged to learn English “as a means of taking part in the general life of the party.” It further urged “non-Party Ukrainian workers should be trained in the spirit of class solidarity with all other Canadian workers.” Although the CPC declared that it recognized the impossibility of doing away with the “exclusiveness of immigrant groups in one sweep,” it reaffirmed its dedication for the formation of a monolithic party organized along factory lines and from within trade unions.\footnote{LAC, CPC, Reel M-7380, 8C 0159, “Resolution of Communist International on the Question of Communist Workers in the Ukrainian Workers’ Organizations in Canada,” circa. October 1928, p. 2.}

Following upon such declarations, the March District 6 (Port Arthur) conference agenda dealt with the anti-war position of the CPC, the condemnation by the national executive of Trotskyism and “its Canadian offspring (Spectorism),” and how to combat these tendencies within both the Party and the District. The item that received the most focus was trade unionism and the CPC’s relationship to it. The debate at the convention, one delegate reported to *The Worker*, clearly showed “the inability of a number of Party members to grasp the real issues of the Trade Union movement.” In response, delegates passed a resolution supporting “strict disciplinary action against Party members who oppose or neglect to join in the Trade Union which exists in his or her trade.” It appears that the cause of disagreement was “the slackness in our fractional work.” Within the District, party members in what were described as “extra-Party organizations” – referring, in essence, to the continuing presence of the language federations – continued openly to oppose one another and what the District executive perceived as its central authority. While agreeing that the cooperative movement “is one of the most important weapons in the class struggle,” delegates approved a resolution informing the CPC
executive that it was composed of “various elements,” not all of which were dedicated to furthering “proletarian interests in the class struggle.”

By the time of the Fifth National Convention of the LWIUC in April, the CPC’s tactics in the region and continual conflict with the IWW had worn down workers. For example, while the LWIUC had financially supported strikers in the Shabaqua strike, the strike committee consisting of both Wobblies and Communists forced the union to sign an agreement that no attempt would be made by them to organize any workers in the region during the conflict. In fact, all agreed that the strike was “under the leadership of rank and file strike committee which was paralyzed with fear of internecine war between the L.W.I.U. and the I.W.W. disrupting the strikers, and anamoured [sic] with the idea (very popular among the lumber workers of Ontario) of exploiting all groups in the interest of their own particular struggle.” This situation, coupled with a similar arrangement in a recent strike in Kapuskasing and a defeat in a South Porcupine strike, had left the union drained of financial resources and with no real gain in membership or influence. It was believed that the union’s predominantly Finnish membership also limited its potential and success.

A call was made for the centralization of strike leadership with the LWIUC executive, rather than allowing “any local to pull a job strike.” This position appears to have highlighted the growing belief by party leaders that the problems facing the union rested with its leader Alf Hautamäki. Delegates argued that his presence had hindered the union’s activities as many workers tended “to avoid anything for the union undoubtly

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42 The Worker, 23 March 1929.
44 The Worker, 27 April 1929.
[sic] because it would have helped Hautamäki.” The majority of delegates present were in favour of removing him whether or not a suitable replacement was available. Although the delegates agreed that the past two years had seen unprecedented losses, they also argued that the LWIUC had become the “real organizational expression of the main body of workers exploited in the logging camps of Ontario.” The union had lost approximately 30% of its members due, according to the highly self-critical assessments of its organizers, to the tendency of the union towards “slackness in organizational matters, loss of interest by members, internal conflict, and general neglect of the essential work of maintaining and building up the union.” Delegates were warned that “[t]oday the existence of the union is actually endangered.”

And although delegates credited Hautamäki with building up the union, his recent alleged personal conduct also came under fire. As the convention’s report indicates, Hautamäki recognized “the opposition to his occupancy of the position, acknowledges that his personal conduct [particularly in the meeting in Timmins where he appeared on the platform drunk] has at times been reprehensible, and has volunteered to decline nomination and support the candidatures of a comrade” who would be more successful. Given that no one suitable came forward who met the requirements laid out by the convention, it was decided to have him continue as General Secretary even though he “does not fully meet all of the requirements.” This was a slight exaggeration.

46 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0112, “Report of Fifth Convention of the Lumber Workers Industrial Union of Canada,” 6-8 April 1929, p. 3. These requirements included: “has all the details of the organization and its problems at his finger tips, has a complete command of all necessary propaganda materials and channels, has the widest possible contact with the General Labor Movement, command of the English language – and most important of all, experience and
Hautamäki did possess most of the requirements, although not in exactly the way most would have hoped. Having been the cause of some of the current problems facing the LWIUC and the CPC in general, he definitely had “all the details of the organization and its problems at his finger tips.” Having led a series of unsuccessful and financially draining initiatives since 1928, Hautamäki certainly had “a complete command of all necessary propaganda materials and channels.” His long-standing involvement within the labour movement and the sheer fact that most lumber workers knew his name (even if they occasionally spat it out) clearly indicated that he had “the widest possible contact with the General Labor Movement.” While many had issues with him, Hautamäki was re-elected after making a full declaration that, “as a Communist,” he acknowledged his errors.47

The convention also established new district LWIUC offices with full-time secretaries for the district of Northern Ontario (Porcupine District) and Sudbury. The general office in Port Arthur was instructed to function as the district office for the District of Thunder Bay. In the grand design, the new Lakehead office would generate new revenues and help the union regain its financial position. Montreal and Winnipeg were seen as the most problematic centres and the convention decided that efforts needed to be redoubled in those two regions. Montreal (and Quebec more generally) was seen as an area wherein the union might recruit many new French-Canadian lumber workers. Winnipeg was identified as a region notorious for generating the strikebreakers who so

menaced the health of the union in Northwestern Ontario.  

Not all within the LWIUIC were happy with the results of the convention. Many workers were appalled by the re-election of Hautamäki and the general disregard of the wishes of the rank-and-file by the leaders of the CPC. So disgusted was one member from Port Arthur that he wrote to Tim Buck and declared that it seemed to him that “there is a stronger machine in the [LWIUC] than there was in any of the A.F.L. Unions.” The delegates from Port Arthur, along with those from other regions, had gone to the convention determined to elect a new General Secretary. Considering this situation, George Sundqvist questioned how and why the Convention could have re-elected Hautamäki. In addition, he also questioned Buck about why the executive committee remained an unelected body. In his view, this left Hautamäki with even more control and power than before the convention.  

Where could discontented radical workers go? Many in the Lakehead found an alternative in the IWW, which began to make substantial inroads in the region. In particular, the IWW appealed to the growing ranks of disgruntled Finnish Communists. As one Finnish member in Alberta wrote to A.T. Hill: “everything is very bad,” and the IWW “provides a place for all anti-Party Finns.” Although many did leave the union, under the guidance of Hautamäki it continued to be active. No fool, Hautamäki was well aware of what was occurring within the ranks of the Finnish socialists in the region, even

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49 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0120, George Sundqvist to Tim Buck, 21 April 1929. In addition to questions regarding Hautamäki’s leadership of the LWIU, he also faced personal criticism. For example, a motion was put forward that he be disciplined “on the matter of drink, and censured.” See Ibid., Reel M-7380, 8C 0170, “Minutes of Joint Meeting of the Trade Union Department of the C.E.C. – C.P. of Canada, with Party Fraction of the L.W.I.U. of Canada,” 3 April 1929.  
50 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0144, H. M. to Tom [Hill], 15 January 1929.  

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if the CPC leadership was not. Writing to Tim Buck, he requested that the enlarged CEC and many of the CEC committees deal with the penchant of Finnish members in Port Arthur and other areas of District 6 for “fraternizing with the IWW group and its sustaining ring.” Such a relationship with “the most rightist elements of Social Democracy,” he contended, “are a danger to our Party life and to the life of the Finnish Organ.”

With the return of the region’s delegates and as the news of Hautamäki’s re-election spread, workers began to leave the union believing that its end was only a matter of time and vowing to return only if radical changes were made.

Thus, as Sundqvist had so astutely predicted, Hautamäki’s re-election breathed new life into both the IWW and the social democratic tendencies of many socialists in the region. Many in the region began corresponding with the Finnish Social Democratic Party, culminating in one of its leading members, Arthur Aalto, speaking to a large gathering of Finns in the Finnish Labour Temple on 1 July. The IWW, seeking to capitalize on the internal rift, also began an active campaign to organize support rings among small farmers throughout the District. Many leading party members in the region began to declare that the IWW was “as a brother organization” and should be treated as such. Although Hautamäki dismissed these efforts as moneymaking schemes and declared that the IWW only had 65 members, he wrote to Buck in July as a man deeply concerned about its renewed activity.

Perhaps the most disconcerting developments in the eyes of Hautamäki and other Communists were the inroads being made by the Wobblies into previous strongholds of

51 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0121, A. Hautamäki to Tim Buck, 9 July 1929.
52 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0120, G. Sundqvist to Tim Buck, 21 April 1929.
53 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0121, Alf Hautamäki to Tim Buck, 9 July 1929.
the Finnish Organization of Canada “without the least opposition on the part of the leaders of the latter.” As a result, Hautamäki and other Communists had been increasingly “the subject of some hostilities on the part of some Finnish comrades because we have denounced the anti-revolutionary policies of the IWW as seen at present.” He requested that the CEC take up the issue and draft a resolution demanding that party members must immediately sever all connection with the IWW or face expulsion. Ultimately, increasing unemployment and not the efforts of the CPC stemmed the expansion of the IWW in the region.54

However, things were no better for the CPC. The same worsening economic conditions in the resource sector dramatically influenced its ability to operate at the Lakehead. In April, Hautamäki informed the CEC that membership within the LWIUC had decreased by approximately 20% since the previous year. The most disconcerting losses were in the urban sub-districts within Port Arthur and Fort William. As a result, the union was now almost entirely composed of Finnish workers as the bulk of the losses had come from “Slavic” and English members. By the time of the 1929 National Convention, while Hautamäki was describing recent strikes as some of the best organized, he also was quite candid about the organizational problems facing the CPC at the Lakehead.55

Many of Hautamäki’s criticisms pertained to not only the recent strike, but also

54 LUA, CTKL, F, 14, 44, Ed. Peterson, Secretary-Treasurer LWIU 120 to J.D. Golden, 26 March 1929.
55 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7380, 8C 0170, “Minutes of Joint Meeting of the Trade Union Department of the C.E.C. – C.P. of Canada, with Party Fraction of the L.W.I.U. of Canada,” 3 April 1929. Reflecting the ethnic composition of the District membership, Harry Bryan, Michael Biniowsky, and Alf Hautamäki represented District 6 at the convention. Unfortunately, no reports or additional information dealing with either Bryan of Biniowsky has been located.
the situation at the Lakehead in general. He contended that the attention given to fighting the reformists in the party had been misguided, as it was easier fighting them than the IWW. It was syndicalism, he contended, that remained the Party’s primary roadblock in trying to organize the region’s working class. Further, the CPC representative who came to advise the strikers had, like all “help” sent to the region in recent years, been ill prepared and knew nothing of the local situation. It is clear from Hautamäki’s comments that he believed that the majority of the party’s executive did not realize that “to fight in the wilderness is different than in the streets.” For example, one telling mistake, according to Hautamäki was a recent decision to bring the entire strike committee to the picket line. This had left the rest of the Port Arthur District “unprotected” as the district leadership became unavailable and other concerns were neglected.

The lumber workers were not the only segment of the CPC in dire need of help at the Lakehead. By the time of the convention, the YCL had made little recent progress due to the growing hesitancy of many, particularly within the lumber industry, to lend their support. It also did not help that organizers openly criticized the children of lumber workers for being “too feeble to do any real work.” One organizer even suggested that they did not know the problems of the lumber workers and the goal of the YCL should be to educate its members on the conditions and prepare them for life in camps.56

The convention also spent much of its time discussing the Ukrainian situation. Although Mathew Popovich’s review of the Ukrainian Labor Temple argued that the reorganization followed the guidelines laid down in 1928 by the Politburo (or Pol Buro in contemporary parlance), this was not the case in Fort William. Nationalist Ukrainian

organizations, deemed Fascist by Popovich, were reported to have become more active and focused on attacking the ULFTA. As a result, work in Fort William had been progressing at an unsatisfactory rate despite what Popovich believed was a favorable situation. The branch was described as “old fashioned.” While meetings were held and decisions made in line with the National Party Bureau, Comintern, and CEC, it was left to the fraction organizer alone to actually implement the Party’s decisions. This had resulted in a number of important initiatives not being instituted.57

The increasing loss of Ukrainian members at the Lakehead to the Provista Society was viewed as resulting from the left turn of the party and the unpopularity of Bolshevization in the region. According to Popovich, while the criticisms held true for the Finnish members of the party, almost no questions were now being raised aside from the best way to actually mobilize “the broadest mass organization for the purpose of building our revolutionary Trade Union Movement, and so on.” Success was evident, for example, in the activities of Ukrainian Party members in the Crows Nest Pass and Montreal. Even in Calgary, Sudbury, and Fort William, where the situation was “far from being satisfactory,” no objections were now being made “about the very new line in the Mass Organizations on general party work.”58

Not all within the Party were as confident. Many remained skeptical about the new strategy’s overall success. Responding to Buck’s report to the Sixth Convention, J. Carey, an organizer from Fort William, argued that a disunited and distracted leadership did “not understand the Party’s tasks.” He also agreed with comments made by

Hautamäki that the language differences made the liquidation of federalism within the CPC impossible. He did not hesitate to suggest that the poor performance of many in the region had as much to do with a poor understanding of theory.\textsuperscript{59}

Hautamäki in particular argued that the Party had lost a number of good chances to increase the strength of the LWIUC. Despite over 15,000 workers employed in the industries, the union only numbered 3,000. It was only through the Finnish organization, he contended, that any success had been achieved during the previous year. How could the party leadership attack the language organizations, when in recent campaigns the mass organizations at the Lakehead had treated the lumber workers as inferiors?\textsuperscript{60} Both Carey and Hautamäki commented on, for example, a newly-formed Unemployed Association of Port Arthur. Its policy and platform had “never [been] submitted to the unemployed but [had been] imposed upon them from above.” In fact, the association was voicing none of the issues immediately facing workers in the region. Instead, it merely was a “mechanical recitation of about twenty-one points not most pressing to the immediate needs of the unemployed.”\textsuperscript{61}

Notwithstanding the election of Alex Gibson, a member of the CPC and the head of the local Pulp and Sulphite Workers Union, as secretary of the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council, little positive news reached the CEC from the Port Arthur District during

\textsuperscript{60} LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 8C 0384, A. Hautamäki, “Discussion on Ewan’s Report,” circa. 31 May to 7 June 1929, p. 13.
the first few months of 1929. For these, and other reasons, Carey declared, “large masses of workers still follow the I.W.W.” As one party member asked Buck: “how can the union progress when Party members refuse to join?” Buck and the CPC leadership were in fact warned that the fight against the IWW, especially amongst the Finnish members, was extremely important. Hautamäki tried to explain to Buck that the IWW’s sustaining rings in the region were, in contrast to the CPC branches, good at raising funds to support their activities. So successful were they in some areas that, he stated, “they are actually winning the ground from the Fin. Org’n [Finnish Organization of Canada] without the least opposition on the part of the leaders of the latter.”

Despite his complaints, Hautamäki believed that not all was lost for the CPC at the Lakehead. He was quick to point out that he was not “saying this attitude of the Finnish population is the main cause of the success of the IWW sustaining rings in this district.” Merely, he contended that he “wish[ed] to show the tendencies prevalent, and the danger to the Party if these tendencies are not checked in some way.” The situation he suggested was not entirely dire: “[T]he IWW has nothing to do with the real proletariat of this district, its membership being, according to the highest estimate, less than 65% [of all workers].” Much of the problem resulted from the CEC’s approach to the region and the lack of attention being given to the lumber and camps workers by the Trades Union

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62 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0121, Alex Gibson to Tim Buck, 4 September 1929 and Ibid., Reel M-7380, 8C 0394, Salo, “Discussion on Ewan’s Report,” circa. 31 May to 7 June 1929, p. 23.
65 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0121, Alf Hautamäki to Tim Buck, 9 July 1929.
As Hautamäki’s correspondence to Buck reveals, by 1929, the attempts by the CPC leaders to centralize their power had been largely ineffectual in the region. In practice, the party was still at the whim of the (theoretically non-existent but actually potent) language federations. The CPC adopted a much harder stance towards them following harsh criticism by the Comintern in late 1929. The CPC was strongly reminded “the chief objectives of the language organizations must be to become real mass organizations which are to draw the foreign born workers into the general stream of the Canadian Labour Movement.”

The leaders of the FOC, however, viewed their organization as much more than merely an auxiliary of the CPC. It provided a cultural, social, and often economic centre for Finnish-Canadians. Its concerns, while often the same as those of the CPC, went beyond the single-minded goal of the CPC to first dominate Canadian unions and socialists and, second, lead workers into a social, political, and economic revolution. Owing in part to the historic tensions between Finland and Russia, Finns cherished their independence. Growing Soviet control of the CPC leadership had made them uneasy. The FOC’s executive, consisting of original party members John Wirta and Ahlqvist, refused to comply with the Politburo because they argued it did not and should not dictate the decisions of the organization. On 7 November 1929, the executive of FOC local #80 (Sudbury) passed a motion protesting against the leadership of the CPC. In response, the

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66 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0121, Alf Hautamäki to Tim Buck, 9 July 1929.
CPC sent Popovich to the region to placate the moderate element.\(^{68}\) Shortly after things came to a head as the CPC attempted to censure *Vapaus*, the Finnish-language organ of the CPC.\(^{69}\)

*Vapaus* had supported the CPC’s decision in 1928 to expel members, Maurice Spector most famously, on the grounds of Trotskyism. It had also supported MacDonald in continuing in the leadership of the Party. Now the Finns found themselves at the centre of charges of “right-wing opportunism.”\(^{70}\) The conflict centered on *Vapaus*’s editor Arno Vaara, only recently released from prison following publication of an article deemed by government officials to be treasonable.\(^{71}\) Vaara’s sedition trial had garnered national attention, served as a focal point for the grievances of Finnish socialists, and provided fuel for renewed attacks against them at the Lakehead.\(^{72}\) The Fort William *Daily Times Journal*, no doubt reflecting the views of many British-born and English speaking residents, saw the trial as evidence that “Canada is piling up trouble by bringing in

\(^{68}\) Sudbury *Star* 30 November 1929.  
\(^{72}\) For the Port Arthur and Fort William reaction, see *The Worker*, 23 March 1929.
people who read foreign newspapers, defy her institutions and create a revolutionary hotbed. It is time to call a halt to bringing in more of them, and it is time to step heavily on those now here.”

Vaara’s release had touched off a period of division within the Finnish membership of the CPC. It began when the Central Executive Committee of the CPC attempted to capitalize on the groundswell of rank-and-file support for him during his trial. For purely propaganda reasons, it appointed him as a Party official. The problem, though, was that the party leadership had failed to consult with either Vaara or the FOC’s executive committee. Responding to what its executive felt was a clear overstepping of the CPC’s power, the FOC reappointed Vaara and declared that it and no one else had final control over Vapaus.

The CEC of the CPC, already cognizant that the overwhelming majority of its membership was Finnish and paranoid over losing control, viewed the FOC’s stand as a direct challenge not only to its own authority but also to that of the Comintern. Completely misunderstanding the nature of the FOC’s argument, the leadership of the CPC linked their actions to remaining right-wing elements in the party and those opposed to Stalin’s Bolshevization plan. Following the Sudbury local’s decision to side with the

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73 FWDTJ, 22 and 29 December 1928, 29 January and 7 March 1929 and Rasporich, “Ethnicity in Lakehead Politics, 1900-30,” 65.
74 Vapaus, 8 November 1929; Avery, ‘Dangerous Foreigners’, 129-130; and Pilli, The Finnish-Language Press in Canada, 164-165.
75 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7380, 8C 0209, “Minutes of Political Committee,” 16 November 1929, p. 2. The ethnic tension in the Sudbury local is apparent in an early meeting discussing the CPC’s actions. One speaker at the meeting, for example, objected to the presence of the CPC CEC’s attempts to have “Englishmen from other localities” attending this meeting. She did not want “impotent speakers.” For more in this issue, see LAC, CI, Reel 10 [K-278], 495, 98, 81, p. 27, “Minutes of General Membership Meeting of Sudbury Organization, CP of C,” 8 November 1929 and 495, 98, 81, p. 34, “Notice to All District Executive Committees, Communist Party of
FOC executive, the CEC instructed Hill to tour Northwestern Ontario where he spoke to enthusiastic and well-attended mass organization meetings in Port Arthur and Fort William.76

The paranoia towards the “right-wing element” had been developing in the CPC for sometime. Even Hill had come under attack in early autumn for being part of an alleged plot by MacDonald, Popovich, and the language organizations to undermine the activities of the CPC.77 These claims touched off a series of meetings where the loyalty of Hill and the ongoing difficulties with the Finns and Ukrainians were discussed. It should come as no surprise that Hill took exception to the accusation. In a lengthy letter, he outlined his position and declared, “My fight would be to see that the Comintern letter be carried out by collective work and stamp out factionalism.” “Those opposing the CPC’s position,” he writes, “were doing so from a position that was largely a holdover from Social Democratic ideology and were foreign to communist principles and tactics, which naturally could not accept the principles of democratic centralism.” He had recently supported Popovich not because he believed in factionalism, but because the Ukrainian members needed representation on the Political Committee. “I protest the damnable way of discrediting by comrades, and finally I protest against the way that my article of pre-convention discussion was kept out so that no English comrade is able to know my stand.” He finished by demanding a public correction be made and the larger issue of

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77 LAC, CI, Reel 10 [K-278], 495, 98, 81, p. 47, A.T. Hill to Political Committee, CPC, 25 August 1929 and John Williamson, International Press Correspondence 38 (9 August 1929) quoted in Ibid.
growing factionalism be discussed.  

No one in the CPC’s leadership appears to have been listening. The decision by the leadership of the CPC to expel and suspend a number of Finnish members (including stalwarts Vaara, J.W. Ahlqvist, and John Wirta) without input from the Party’s leading Finnish members, resulted in increased factionalism rather than the intended lessening of it. A debate amongst the FOC locals immediately began over who should decide the position and actions of the FOC, its elected executive or the CPC leadership. For the CPC, the issue became a matter of the relationship between ethnic organizations and the party centre. Many formerly ardent supporters of the CPC within the FOC began questioning the objectives and policies of the party. Locals in support of the autonomy of the FOC executive rallied behind their comrades in Sudbury and soon began to attack the new Buck leadership of the CPC for a “false and dangerous attitude towards mass organizations.”

The Port Arthur local remained loyal to the party and actually led the attack against Ahlqvist and Wirta. Along with the Fort William and Intola locals, a unanimous resolution was passed condemning the anti-party actions of the FOC’s executive and “demanding the calling of a special convention… to oust the right wing executive Committee.” Such a position reveals the dedication of the local leadership to the party.

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78 LAC, CI, Reel 10 [K-278], 495, 98, 81, p. 50, A.T. Hill to Political Committee, CPC, 25 August 1929, p. 4.
80 Vapaus, 8 and 9 November 1929 and Pilli, The Finnish-Language Press in Canada, 166.
81 LAC, CI, Reel 10 [K-278], 495, 98, 84, p. 43, S.C. Neil to Secretariat of CPC, 3 December 1929.
centre. While the local leadership of Michael Biniowsky, Harry Bryan, and Alf Hautamäki had opposed Buck during the 1929 election of the CEC, they, along with the rest of the District Executive Committee, put aside their differences and joined with the local Finnish section and supported the party’s decision.82

However, the local leadership was also concerned about the local repercussions of supporting the CPC leadership’s decision. It informed them that it feared that by agreeing, it would ultimately lead to a split in the region similar to that which irrevocably damaged the OBU in 1920.83 To prevent any such occurrence, party stalwart and Finn S.G. Neil was sent to the region to shore up support as Vaara, Alhqvist, and Wirta had been relatively popular among the Finnish members of the party in the region. As Neil reported, not all Finns were entirely convinced and believed the CEC was merely using the issue for its own gains.84

Most telling is that criticisms in the region were directed entirely towards the Anglo-dominated CPC leadership and not the Comintern. For example, one Finn questioned “whether the present leadership of the C.P. of C. has the confidence of the Comintern.”85 If not for the efforts of the FOC and the work of Hill, who came to the Lakehead following Neil’s failure, the situation in Port Arthur would have resulted in a

83 Vapaus, 21 November 1929; The Worker, 30 November 1929; and Pilli, The Finnish-Language Press in Canada, 166-168. The CPC also received support from the Finnish bureau of the Communist Party of the Untied States as it broke off contact with the opposing locals, essentially leaving them isolated.
84 LAC, CI, Reel 10 [K-278], 495, 98, 84, p. 43, S.C. Neil to Secretariat of CPC, 3 December 1929.
85 LAC, CI, Reel 10 [K-278], 495, 98, 84, p. 43, S.C. Neil to Secretariat of CPC, 3 December 1929.
permanent schism within the Party in the region. Hill, along with John Carey and Annie Galt of the YCL, Mike Cosmishin, local organizer for the ULFTA, and George Sundqvist had undertaken to organize in October a series of demonstrations both intended to promote the party line and protest the recent harassment of local workers by the police. Following a number of demonstrations attended by hundreds of workers, all five were subsequently arrested, but not before the groundwork had been laid for a mass lumber workers’ convention. Held at the Workers’ Hall located at 316 Bay Street in Port Arthur in early October, the convention focused on two main issues. One was the decision by the LWIUC executive to enter the prairies. Such a move was seen by many to mean “a heavy drain on the resources of the union.” The second issue, and the most pertinent to the membership at the Lakehead, was the prospect of a region-wide strike.

On 22 October, workers at the Pigeon River Lumber Company’s camps near the Shabaqua rail depot went on strike over better wages and improved conditions. As in 1926, both the LWIUC and the LWIU participated in the strike, forming a joint-strike committee with representatives from both unions on the executive and representing just fewer than 1,000 workers. Immediately, from many other parts of the country, arose calls for the “working class of Canada to rally to the assistance of the striking lumber

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86 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7377, 2A 1323, A.T. Hill to The Full Secretariat, 17 February 1931. Unlike Neil’s short visit, Hill spent much of December touring in the rural parts of the region and speaking to even the smallest of gatherings.
87 *The Worker*, 19 and 26 October 1929.
88 *The Worker*, 26 October 1929.
89 *Labour Gazette*, XXX (1930), 14-15. Peter Campbell has argued that the IWW took no official role during the strike. However, this appears to not be accurate. While the CPC did little to promote their involvement, local press reports and IWW records clearly show their involvement. For Campbell’s interpretation, see his “The Cult of Spontaneity: Finnish-Canadian Bushworkers and the Industrial Workers of the World in Northern Ontario, 1919-1934,” *Labour/Le Travail* 41 (1998): 139. For coverage of the strike, see *The Worker*, 2, 9, and 16 November 1929.
workers." As in the past, the Pigeon River Company’s initial response was to flood the region with strikebreakers and call upon the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) to ensure the safety of workers.

OPP reports from the period indicate that the provincial police were used to harass the strike committee in Shabaqua, arrest picketers, and search them for weapons. As tensions began to mount, the situation became explosive as police, strikers and strikebreakers all began carrying weapons. In addition, as Satu Repo states, the “trainloads of foreign-born workers coming from other parts of the country on false pretenses had little idea of the situation they were facing.” The strike was further complicated by the existence of some camps under the control of recently immigrated nationalist (or White Finns) whose ideological position put them at the extreme other end of the political spectrum. The LWIUC adamantly insisted that it was responsible for directing the strike, notwithstanding the belief held by many strikers that the Wobblies were the real leaders.

While the strike represented an opportunity for the CPC to make inroads, it appears to have been more interested in emasculating the IWW than in building upon any

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90 Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO), Attorney General of Ontario Files (hereafter AGO), RG4-32, 1929/3738, “Resolution on the Disappearance of Voutilainen and Rosval Two Organizers of the Lumber Workers Industrial Union, Winnipeg, Manitoba,” 30 December 1929. The resolution of Vancouver district of the LWIUC added to this and appealed to workers to begin a national general strike. See 1929/3738, “Resolution on the Disappearance of Voutilainen and Rosval Two Organizers of the Lumber Workers Industrial Union, Vancouver, British Columbia,” 31 December 1929. Additional resolutions came from the ULFTA in East Kildaman, Manitoba, A mass meeting of workers from Brandon, YCL, Winnipeg, the Left Poale Zion, Winnipeg, Polish Workers Association, Winnipeg, Toronto Women’s Labour League.


92 LAC, Department of Labour fonds (hereafter DL), RG27, vol. 344, Strike 98, Thomas Falls to Deputy Minister of Labour, 29 October 1929. For more on the “White Finns” see Chapter 3.
success. As Anthony Rasporich has contended, the CPC leadership’s ideologically-pure determination to wipe out the IWW clashed with the strategy and tactics of Hautamäki, who as Secretary of the LWIUC fully understood the Wobblies’ deep roots in the Finnish community and the imperative for the CPC to form a united front with them.  

Many different conclusions have been reached about the strike. The most common one promoted by the Communists was that the IWW pulled their support because they determined, following a supposed fact-finding mission on 20 November, that “the 15 camps, with an estimated worker capacity of 459, had 297 men working in them” and was not worth the time. They blamed the IWW for rumours that the strike “had not started right and that it was only the scheming of the Communists by which they hoped to collect money for their own purposes.” “They went so far,” one correspondent to *The Worker* argued, “to state that there was no strike in existence while groundless slander was spread concerning the leaders.” “This ‘once upon a time’ revolutionary organization which contained the flower of the American working class,” the Communist newspaper argued, “is reduced to a small coterie of syndicalist malcontents which, in order to get a foothold among the lumber workers of Ontario, will stop at nothing to gain their end.”

In contrast, J.D. Golden, a leading Wobbly organizer at the Lakehead, contended that the CPC had merely prolonged the strike to use appeals for financial contributions to deal with the LWIUC’s financial crisis. As he reported in the *Industrial Worker*, “the

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94 Repo, “Rosvall and Voutilainen,” 84.  
95 *The Worker*, 11 January 1930.  
96 *The Worker*, 28 December 1929.
Communist politicians have broken the strike in Ontario, but are still collecting funds although the strike is closed.” The IWW viewed the strike as a “flop.” None of the demands had been met and damage had been done to the organizing spirit of the workers by the CPC. Chiefly responsible, according to Golden, was Hautamäki, whom he described as a “supreme wizard of this [the CPC] labor splitting and semi-bourgeois group.” He argued that the CPC had alienated workers and decidedly repelled them from organized labour by not allowing them to “express their opinions” and through declarations that all those who did not join the strike were scabs (including those in the eight camps not involved). Golden also supported the rumour then circulating that Hautamäki had been seen carousing with the lumber bosses and even drinking privately with them while workers were picketing. Further, sworn testimonies from workers at a number of camps claimed that Hautamäki had arranged separate agreements.

As for the IWW’s official position on the strike, Golden stated in the Industrial Worker that the Wobblies in Port Arthur had refused to take action. “Past experience,” he contended, “has taught their members that nothing can be obtained by cooperating with the officialdom of this group, who will only stab them in the back at their first opportunity, and betray the workers.” As evidence, Golden referred to the incidents surrounding the 1926 pulp workers strike. “‘Corral the Dollars’ seems to be the slogan of the L.W.I.U. of Canada. It reminds us of the old saying that ‘Talk is cheap, but it takes money to buy booze’. And booze is necessary to the officials of the L.W.I.U. of Canada as gasoline is to a Ford; for, without it, they would not have the nerve to face the workers

97 Industrial Worker, 9 November 1930.
98 Industrial Worker, 23 November 1930.
whom they are deceiving.”

The CPC maintained that at both the 20 November meeting of the IWW executive in Port Arthur and in the 27 November issue of the *Industrial Worker*, Golden and other prominent Wobblies had recognized the “good possibilities for winning the strike” and reported that picketers had been sent to the strike area. They also urged workers to provide funds so that the strikers could receive proper financial support. The CPC further claimed that the IWW’s picketers were in fact mostly recent strikebreakers who threatened the LWIUC leaders of the strike that, if they continued to lead it, the IWW “would declare it closed within a week and for this reason a new strikers Committee must be formed under the control of the I.W.W.” The real reason the IWW wished to lead the strike was so that “they could more easily break it and betray the strikers.” The CPC also alluded to possible collusion between the IWW, lumber barons, and the police to break the strike.

The remnants of the One Big Union (which had decided to not join the IWW) provide a third narrative of the events surrounding the strike. It contended that the men who initially went on strike decided to affiliate with neither the LWIUC nor the LWIU. Hautamäki had become a member of the strike committee through manipulation and, contrary to the desire of the workers, had printed strike notices claiming the strike to be a Communist-led one. In response, the strikers held another meeting at which they not only reaffirmed their position and “unanimously agreed to call their strike an unorganized

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99 *Industrial Worker*, 23 November 1930.
100 *Industrial Worker*, 27 November 1930; *The Worker*, 11 January 1930; and also LAC, CPC, Reel M-7382, 10C 1989, “Is the IWW to blame for the breaking up of the strike in the Port Arthur district?” n.d.
101 *The Worker*, 11 January 1930.
102 See, for example, *The Worker*, 28 December 1929, 11 and 18 January 1930.
strike,” but also resolved that only those involved in the strike could sit on the strike committee. This resulted in the expulsion from the committee of Hautamäki who, incidentally, had also acted as its treasurer.103

Hautamäki, according to the Bulletin, next organized another “gang” of workers unconnected in any way to the strike. They attended a mass meeting of the strikers and outvoted the actual participants, placing Hautamäki back on the committee as its treasurer. The OBU claimed that he “cleaned up about $2,000 very quickly as a result of this move on the part of the gang.” This maneuver changed an optimistic atmosphere to one of defeat. Workers went back to work, the Bulletin suggested, because they firmly believed that “when a grafter like Hautamäki has got charge of things there is no chance for us to win our fight.” Workers were aware of both his and the CPC’s past record within the camps of Northwestern Ontario. Specifically cited was his and the CPC’s involvement in the 1928 Kapuskasing strike. In this incident, the strike committee headed by Hautamäki had collected over $3,000, but (allegedly) the workers had seen none of it and the funds remained missing.104

The OBU also supported claims that Hautamäki and other Communists were misrepresenting the role of the IWW. In fact, even some within the LWIUC itself began to doubt Hautamäki’s credibility. A joint committee comprised of two members each of the IWW and LWIUC investigated his claims that the Port Arthur Branch of the IWW had been “acting as scab shippers.” They reported that no evidence at all supported Hautamäki’s claims and that workers had reported to them that they had, as the IWW

103 OBU Bulletin, 26 December 1929.
104 OBU Bulletin, 26 December 1929.
argued, gone back to work because of his involvement.\textsuperscript{105}

As the Western nations descended into what following generations would call the Great Depression, the Political Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the Communist International observed that the Communist Party of Canada continued to operate “mainly [as] a propagandist organization with small membership with weak connections with the broad masses of the Canadian workers.”\textsuperscript{106} As this chapter has suggested, despite attempts to diversify, approximately 90\% of the CPC’s membership was still comprised of Finnish and Ukrainian immigrants.\textsuperscript{107} Over half of its members were drawn from the FOC.\textsuperscript{108} Even more disconcertingly, from a CPC perspective, was the actual decline in overall membership from 2,876 to 1,385 in 1930.\textsuperscript{109} Hill, echoing the party’s leadership at the time, recalled that both the CPC’s recent traumatic reorganization and the economic crisis necessitated a change in leadership and industrial strategy. As a result, when Tim Buck visited Russia again in December 1929, he did so as the newly anointed head of the CPC. However, he was also the leader of a party in the midst of internal factionalism and facing increasing external criticism from the Communist International.

Between 1921 and 1928, the CPC, John Manley states, “channeled its meager resources into a losing struggle to pull Canadian labour away from ‘reactionary labour bureaucrats’ and place it ‘on the side of the proletarian revolution.’”\textsuperscript{110} As the next

\textsuperscript{105} \textit{OBU Bulletin}, 26 December 1929.
\textsuperscript{106} LAC, CPC, Reel M-7382, Political Secretariat ECCI, to Central Committee, CPC, 3 October 1930.
\textsuperscript{108} Avery, ‘Dangerous Foreigners’, 120.
\textsuperscript{110} Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class During the Great Depression,” 46.
section of this study will explore, with the introduction of the Workers’ Unity League the Communist Party of Canada adopted the “Third Period” policies of the Communist International and began preparing for “imminent revolution” despite few tangible successes during the 1920s. The previous penchant for boring from within and for the United Front, successfully used in strikes at the Lakehead but also the cause of much conflict, was replaced, ultimately to the detriment of local efforts, by an emphasis on the creation of separate “revolutionary industrial unions.”

Radforth, *Bushworkers and Bosses*, 126.
PART 3

The Great Depression and the Third Period
Chapter 9
“Class against Class”
Communist Activities, 1930-1932

With the onset of the Depression, many socialists increasingly believed that the time for radical social change in the Western world had finally come.¹ “The Depression,” writes historian Michiel Horn, “was the most disruptive in a series of economic slumps that for more than a century had periodically tested the pocket books and spirits of farmers, industrial workers, businessmen, and others.”² Socialists saw the Depression, early signs of which could be seen at the Lakehead in 1928, as an indication that the third period, as the Communists called it, had begun and capitalism had finally run its course.

The failure “to sell the [Canadian] West’s huge wheat crop of 1928” marked the beginning of a period of massive unemployment.³ Much of the Lakehead economy depended on moving the wheat crop. Wheat’s collapse consequently made for the region’s crisis. As total production fell from 566 million bushels in 1928 to 293 million in 1929, the grain elevators on the waterfront of both Port Arthur and Fort William increasingly became still and hundreds lost their jobs.⁴ The declining price of pulpwood, the region’s other major industry, led to initial wage-cuts and later unemployment for

¹ Ian McKay, “For a New Kind of History: A Reconnaissance of 100 Years of Canadian Socialism,” Labour/Le Travail 46 (Fall 2000): 95. For a brief overview of the Great Depression, see Michael Horn, The Great Depression of the 1930s in Canada (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1984).
lumber workers as timber operators attempted to lower production costs.\(^5\) Those workers who still had jobs faced increasingly poor working and living conditions on top of significant wage losses.\(^6\)

On the surface, the situation at the Lakehead combined with the growing popularity of socialist organizations would seem to have been ideal for the expansion of organizations throughout Northwestern Ontario. Accompanying the changing economic conditions was the further reorganizing of the region’s dominant socialist organization, the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). The year 1930 began with some significant changes within the structure of the CPC. Keeping in line with decisions reached at the previous Comintern Plenum, in January, the Party disbanded the Trades Union Education League to become directly involved in the organization of industrial unions in every sector of the economy. No longer was the focus of the CPC to be “boring from within;” rather, it pushed for the creation of separate Communist unions under the guidance of a central organization known as the Workers’ Unity League (WUL).\(^7\)

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5 See, for example, A.E. Safarian, *The Canadian Economy in the Great Depression* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1970), 44.
7 Although established on Christmas Day, 1929, the Workers’ Unity League was only made public in March 1930. According to John Manley, the CPC only created the Workers’ Unity League upon Moscow’s intervention. See Library and Archives of Canada (hereafter LAC), Communist Party of Canada fonds (hereafter CPC), MG28-IV4, Reel M-7382, 10C 1813–1814, “CPC, National Trade Union Department, Minutes,” 25 December 1929 and John Manley, “Moscow Rules? ’Red’ Unionism and ’Class Against Class’ in Britain, Canada, and the United
Led by the enigmatic Tom McEwen, a blacksmith originally from Scotland, “the WUL sought to organize the unorganized into powerful industrial unions under rank and file control, unions which could mobilize workers for the defense and improvement of their living and working conditions and ultimately for the overthrow of the capitalist system.”

The motivation for establishing the WUL came not from the changing conditions in Canada, as the party would later claim, but rather from directives from the Communist International. It was also not, John Manley contends, a decision reached through a dialogue with the rank-and-file membership. “In fact,” he suggests, “it knew that the new line was opposed by large sections of the membership, particularly Finnish and Ukrainian comrades.”

However, while the WUL would eventually claim to have organized 40,000 workers by 1933, at the Lakehead tensions emerged between its leadership and the lumber workers’ union. One major reason could be traced back to the fact that, at the Lakehead, the vast majority of the CPC’s membership continued to be Finnish and Ukrainian despite an intensive focus on diversification during the previous
five years.\textsuperscript{11} The establishment of the WUL occurred during a period “traditionalist” historians have regard as “the Comintern’s darkest hour, the moment when Stalinism triumphed in the International and Moscow’s instructions politically disabled the working-class movement.”\textsuperscript{12} It was during this phase that “the slogan ‘class against class’ now fully characterized the struggle throughout the world.”\textsuperscript{13} As the work of John Manley demonstrates, the CPC’s adoption of the tactics of the “Third Period,” while successful in achieving limited political success, overall had negative consequences for the CPC, as was particularly apparent in the CPC’s Finnish-dominated Lumber Workers’ Industrial Union of Canada (LWIUC) at the Lakehead.

As this chapter demonstrates, during this period, the CPC found itself immersed in a very ambiguous crisis. One the one hand it had enormous potential. However, it also was characterized by equally formidable internal contradictions. It was being asked to fulfill a seemingly impossible mandate to be, simultaneously, an ethnically-focused party sensitive to the needs of a multiplicity of national groups. It was also being asked to be a homogeneous and monolithic battalion in the army of the world revolution. The situation at the Lakehead between 1930 and 1932 reveals a plurality of interests operating within

\textsuperscript{11} This assessment does not only apply to Canada. See, for example, Matthew Worley, \textit{Class Against Class: The Communist Party in Britain between the Wars} (London: I B Tauris, 2002). The membership in the party during the first years of the Depression dropped from a reported 2,900 paid members in 1929 to only 1,400 in 1931. Total membership (both paying and non-paying socialists who claimed party affiliation) has been estimated to be between 4,000 and 5,000. See Avakumovic, \textit{The Communist Party in Canada}, 66; Melvin Leonard Pelt, “The Communist Party of Canada, 1929-1942” (MA thesis, University of Toronto, 1964), 85; and Arja Pilli, \textit{The Finnish-Language Press in Canada, 1901-1939: A Study in Ethnic Journalism} (Turku: Institute of Migration, 1982), 179-180.

\textsuperscript{12} Manley, “Moscow Rules? 'Red' Unionism and 'Class Against Class' in Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1928–1935,” 9

\textsuperscript{13} Avakumovic, \textit{The Communist Party in Canada}, 54.
Port Arthur, Fort William, and the surrounding region. Increasing competition by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) augmented existing tensions between the Finnish-dominated LWIUC and the Anglo-led unemployment associations and the leadership of the WUL. While inter-organizational and extra-organizational conflict dominated the activities of socialist organizations in the region, all workers at the Lakehead shared a common plight. The situation would lead to moments of solidarity and demonstrated that, when united, socialists in the region could speak with a powerful voice. However, such moments were all too fleeting.

By 1931, hundreds from all ethnic backgrounds were on municipal relief rolls. In April 1931 alone, 200 families in Fort William representing 1,000 people were receiving goods in kind. Over 90% of these people were non-Anglo Saxon and 80% had been in Canada for less than five years. Such members of linguistic and cultural minorities confronted the local authorities’ discriminatory practices. As a Fort William relief officer informed one of the many unemployment organizations in the twin cities, preference was to be given first to Fort William-born applicants. Afterwards, the requests of Canadian-born and then British-born workers would be attended to. Only then, if there were still some goods or money left, would the non-British born applicants be looked after.

14 Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society (hereafter TBHMS), City of Fort William fonds (hereafter CFW) G3, 3/4/18, Mayor, Fort William to Ralph H. Webb, Mayor of Winnipeg, 1 April 1931. While no statistics on Port Arthur have been located, it is safe to assume that a similar situation existed when one considers the higher number of Finnish bushworkers in that city. For more information on Canada’s response to immigrants during the Great Depression, see Donald Avery, “Dangerous Foreigners”, 116-141 and Reluctant Host: Canada’s Response to Immigrant Workers, 1896-1994 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995), 108-125. For a general discussion of immigration policy during this period, see Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 216-249.

15 TBHMS, CFW, 3/6/6, Fort William Relief Officer [names unclear] to Citizens and Ratepayers
Such discrimination understandably led to significant unrest. Finnish workers, in particular, played an important role as they had during the 1920s in both the cities of Fort William and Port Arthur and in the many lumber camps throughout the region. Those camps and organizations with Finns also tended to be more apt to dispute government initiatives and transform the threat of strikes into action.\(^{16}\) However, the same Finnish workers who formed the bulk of the CPC and IWW membership were found more often in the lines of the local soup kitchens than in the woods during this period. Not surprisingly, the focus of the WUL’s early efforts in the region was in organizing the unemployed.\(^{17}\)

As John Manley writes, “few working class activists from the depression years would have denied that the CPC played an unequalled part in the unemployment movement.”\(^{18}\) Lakehead depression era organizer Michael Fenwick claims that Communists were “the only ones who fought in the unemployed ranks.”\(^{19}\) The onset of the depression had provided the CPC with an opportunity to assume a greater leadership role within the Canadian left. In part, this resulted from the inability of the trades and

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Unemployed Organization of Fort William, 11 December 1931. Copies of the letter were sent to the Northern Development Branch, Mr. Powers, Employment Service, and Mr. McNaughton, Fort William City Clerk.


17 A number of scholars have explored the unemployed organizations during this period. For example, see Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class in the Great Depression: The Worker’s Unity League, 1930-1936” and Gordon Hak, “The Communists and the Unemployed in the Prince George District, 1930-1935,” BC Studies 68 (Winter 1985-86): 45-61.

18 Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class in the Great Depression,” 535. For an overview of the CPC’s attempts to organize the unemployed, see 535-606.

labour organizations affiliated with the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada and the American Federation of Labor to deal with the growing unemployment throughout the country.\textsuperscript{20} This generalization does not mean the Communists stood alone nor conversely that its activities were unanimously supported, either within or outside the Party.

Unemployed associations, next to the Lumber Workers’ Industrial Union of Canada, appear to have been the most active at the Lakehead. They were also increasingly the focus of tension. The unemployed were often less concerned with the “politics of unemployment than with having something done about an exceedingly grim existence.”\textsuperscript{21} They also did not blindly defer to those with labour movement backgrounds; leadership became a major point of disagreement internally in the CPC and between competing interests. Alf Hautamäki’s presentation (speaking as a Finn and head of the LWIUC) to the CPC leadership at the 1930 Plenum encapsulates the issues that dogged socialist organizations, in particular the CPC, at the Lakehead during this period.

Using the Port Arthur District as an example, Hautamäki argued that despite the rhetoric of the party, in terms of organizing the unemployed, the IWW was in fact ahead of the CPC in the region. “The District Buro, myself included,” he stated, “possibly had no time, possibly not even horse sense to prepare for this.” In part, this was a result of the centre being “unable to look after its own home.”\textsuperscript{22} He contended that too many members

\textsuperscript{21} Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class During the Great Depression,” 538-539.
\textsuperscript{22} LAC, CPC, Reel M-7381, 8C 0566, “Response of Com. Hautamäki,” circa February 1930, p.1. The IWW claimed to have organized the unemployed through its Finnish support circle members in Port Arthur, Nipigon, Sioux Lookout, Sault Ste. Marie, Hearst, and Cochrane. In addition, a General Recruiting Union #310 was operating in Port Arthur. See Ibid and LUA, Canadian Teollisuusunionistinen Kannatus Liito fonds (hereafter CTKL), MG10, F, 14, 46, “Minutes of
of the CPC were “trying to be leaders” and organizational efforts were being hampered by the party not letting the “the rank and fileers to go among the unemployed and do the work.” The party’s failure to do so had led to a “great error” being made in the Port Arthur District.23

Hautamäki’s critique of his comrades extended to the Party’s handling of the murder of Communist organizers Viljo Rosvall and Janne Voutilainen near Onion Lake in the Winter of 1929. While visiting lumber camps in the region to persuade other workers to join the LWIUC, the two organizers disappeared.24 In an increasingly rare show of solidarity, Communists, Wobblies, and unorganized workers combed the woods together looking for the bodies and, when that failed, watched the forests to ensure that the killer(s) did not spirit them away. When their bodies were found in early April 1930, socialists of all stripes stood shoulder-to-shoulder condemning the actions of the lumber boss blamed for their deaths.25 “As a visible sign of God’s outrage at their comrades’

Regular I.U. 120 Business Meeting,” 6 January 1930.

23 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7381, 8C 0566, “Response of Com. Hautamäki,” circa. February 1930, p. 2. Despite the standard wage only being 40 cents an hour, the district committee had come out with the “demands of’25.00 a week for unemployed; 7 hours a day; 5 days a week; Abolishment of Child Labour; Support the Chinese Revolution; Build up a Left Wing Union.’ I think this is a laughable joke, and something out leaders did not understand. This is not the fault of the leaders of the districts, but of the whole tailism [sic] of the party.”


25 AO, AGO, 1929/3738, Constable James Higgins to Ontario Provincial Police District 9
dreadful fate,” Alf Hautamäki pointed out, was a three-quarter eclipse of the sun that coincided with their funeral.26

However unifying the tragedy had initially been, by 1932 it had been transformed, under Third Period conditions, into a source of rancorous division. By December 1932, Communists regularly claimed that the Wobblies had participated in a campaign to stop workers from searching for Rosval and Voutilainen. For its part, the IWW falsely argued that Hautamäki had “sent them [Rosval and Voutilainen] to Russia and framed up their disappearance as a means of getting money and sympathy for the LWIU[C].”27 A kernel of truth existed within the hyperbole. Citing their prior experiences with Hautamäki, the IWW initially did question, as the LWIUC claimed, the disappearance of the two men. However, considering their much longer fight against both regional lumber bosses and White Finns (who were initially blamed), it is both laughable and inconceivable that they would have participated with them in the murder and cover up of two workers. However, the IWW was little better than their Communist brothers and sisters. It countered CPC accusations by arguing that the two workers had been tools of certain Communist leaders

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who, in sending them to the camps, had acted as “dangerous irresponsible creatures.”

Such an unedifying CPC/IWW dispute testified to underlying political and structural problems confronting Lakehead leftists. The CPC in particular was initially unable to establish a normally-functioning District Council or a branch of the WUL in either of the twin cities. Finnish and Ukrainian members instead undertook such activities. As a result, non-party members stigmatized the CPC and its activities as “foreign initiatives.” Such a belief hampered attempts to recruit new members. The very Anglo-Saxon workers the party so desired viewed the continued dominance of the Finns as an indication of the party’s lack of commitment to the region. For the leadership of the CPC such comments only served to reinforce their view that the continued existence of the language federations posed a problem for a revolutionary party that prided itself on science, discipline, and speed. Ethnic tensions ran high in the region. They influenced not only relations between Finns and Anglo-Canadians, but also those between Finns and Ukrainians. Even the dispatch of veteran organizer Harvey Murphy to the Lakehead failed to re-energize a local labour movement seemingly divided in membership and purpose.

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28 *Lumber Worker* (December 1932), 4.
29 For example, although 300 freight-shed workers had organized under the WUL banner shortly after its creation, they quickly disappeared due to inadequate organizational support.
30 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7380, 8C 0385, J. Carey, “Discussion on Ewan’s Report,” circa. 31 May to 7 June 1929, p. 14. One of those involved in the attempts to organize the Longshoremen and Shed Workers into the WUL was Mike Cosmishin. See LUA, JMLHC, Tape 6, Interview with Mike Cosmishin, 1972.
31 Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class During the Great Depression,” 175.
32 Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class During the Great Depression,” 167. According to the National Development Bureau’s *The Industrial Survey of Port Arthur, Part One, Survey of General Conditions*, 15 December 1931, Port Arthur and Fort William combined possessed 29 unions. Membership in Port Arthur totaled 2,152 (22 of the 29 unions) and Fort William 1,538 (24 of the 29 unions). This was out of a combined population of approximately
The inability of the CPC to mobilize the working class became evident in the 1930 civic election. In Fort William, Andrew Heikkinen ran as an openly Communist candidate in the worker-dominated Ward 1. Many workers in the ward, such as Ukrainian leader Mike Cosmishin, had been “baptized” into the CPC during the Shabaqua strike and many felt the time had arrived for significant electoral gains. Heikkinen’s subsequent loss was attributed to his election manifesto. It called for the election to be used “as a preparation for future and sharper class struggles” and denounced Canada’s involvement in Russia during 1919. Neither of these themes endeared him to voters, who re-elected the more moderate labor candidate Fred Moore once again to city council.

While not too much should be read into the election of Moore – he was after all the incumbent, popular amongst the unions and workers in the ward, and secretary of the Fort William Trades and Labor Council – the Communist response to Heikkinen’s defeat reveals the deep divisions in the Lakehead left. The Worker drew upon Third Period rhetoric to depict Moore as a “Labor-Faker,” one of those who had “betrayed the workers.” The Communists took particular aim at Moore’s role in Fort William’s Citizens’ and Ratepayers’ Unemployed Association (CRUA), a body that competed

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33 LUA, JMLHC, Tape 6, Interview with Mike Cosmishin, 1972. Mike Cosmishin’s belief in the CPC lasted until his death in the 1980s and rested on the idea that the Party stood for “a world where people [were] guaranteed a livelihood and where people would not live in fear.” He also viewed Karl Marx as the “greatest scientist that the world has produced” and the man who had “showed the working class how to become free.”
34 City of Thunder Bay Archives (hereafter TBA), Fort William fonds (hereafter FWF), Series 4: City Clerks Files (hereafter FWCC), 124, File 209, “Communist Party Election Manifesto,” circa. 1930. The program also contained goals from the school board that included the state subsidy of school for all until 16, free technical schools, the secularization of schools, abolition of corporal punishment, limitation of class sizes to 25 students, free text books, free health care for all pupils, and free meals for worker’s children attending school. For a breakdown of the results in Port Arthur, see Port Arthur *News-Chronicle* (hereafter PANC), 7 January 1930.
directly with them for influence among the unemployed. CRUA aimed to provide relief for unemployed workers in all industries. It enjoyed some success. By early February 1930, it had established a variety of branches and even sponsored a sister organization in Port Arthur. It had targeted long hours, the lack of workforce planning, and the particular problems of unemployed women. It had won the respect of local councils and mayors and enjoyed the support of mainstream unions. For its supporters, it provided a tangible and direct response to the crisis.

From the Communist perspective, CRUA was a dangerous adversary. Communists mobilized to re-start their unemployed association and, under the prestigious leadership of A.T. Hill, sought to link the struggle of the unemployed with the replacement of the existing economic system. Their Unemployed Association of the Twin Cities (UATC) attained impressive dimensions, winning considerable support from a diversity of organizations, including labour organizations claiming 3,000 members in Fort William alone. The UATC and CRUA jockeyed for influence in presentations to

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35 The Worker, 26 April 1930.
36 See, for example, TBA, FWF, FWCC, 124, File 209, Leslie Howard, Secretary, Citizens and Ratepayers Unemployed Organization of Fort William to Fort William Relief Committee, 24 February 1930; Leslie Howard, Secretary, Citizens and Ratepayers Unemployed Organization of Fort William to Fort William Mayor and Council, 20 February 1930; 24 February 1930. The organization by 1932 was known as the Citizens’ and Ratepayers Association of Fort William. Miscellaneous material can also be found in TBHMS, CFW, 3/6/5 and G 3/6/6.
37 TBA, FWF, FWCC, 124, File 209, Unemployed Association of the Twin Cities to The Mayor and Council of the City of Fort William, 25 January 1930. The Port Arthur office of the Unemployed Association of the Twin Cities was located at 316 Bay Street and the Fort William office in the Ukrainian Labour Temple on Ogden Street.
city councils. Mayor Darrell of Port Arthur denounced the Communist Association and declared that his Council “did not intend to be dictated to” by men activated by “red propaganda.” Representative from the Independent Labour Party and trades and labour councils of both cities shared his anti-Communist position. Yet, the Communists could more plainly articulate the outrage and anger of the unemployed. In March, 1930, a large crowd of between 5,000 and 6,000 workers “paralyzed” Fort William and Port Arthur in a large demonstration denouncing not only the plight of the jobless but also the “imperialist war.”

The UATC’s troubles with the municipal councils of Port Arthur and Fort William were only one of a host facing Communist organizers in the district. Finnish and Ukrainian members of the CPC had increasingly been under attack for being “leftists.” Many Anglo members of the party were fond of criticizing them and their organizations for being “federalistic” and the root of the party’s problems. Many, most often led by Hautamäki, countered by arguing that they were better geared towards organizing the unemployed and that the “Bolshevization” of the party could not, and should not, be carried out overnight. As Hautamäki stated to the CPC leadership: “Federalism cannot be done away with by resolutions alone, but by getting workers to work side by side of

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40 Speeches were delivered by Hill (acting now as the District Organizer), Frank Bruce (identified as the YCL’s District Organizer), Mike Cosmishin (ULTFA organizer), and Elsie Donald, an increasingly prominent activist. In Port Arthur, Hautamäki and Carey were joined by YCL organizers D. and W. Parnega at a meeting of hundreds directly in front of the Port Arthur City Hall. See The Worker, 15 March 1930. Following the parade, a meeting was held in the Ukrainian Labour Temple where other prominent local Communists such as Biniowsky and Semenoff gave speeches as well. This demonstration was preceded by a smaller in both cities on 6 March in support of recent rioting in London. See PANs, 6 March 1930.
different nationalities, not as nationalities, but as members.”

It appears that he was not alone in his criticisms. The Political Secretary of the Comintern in Moscow harshly criticized the CPC’s executive for its recent expulsion of prominent Finns. Ostensibly for the sake of party unity, it had directed the leadership to reinstate all those Finnish members expelled during the Vaara incident in 1929. The CPC, characteristically, meekly accepted Moscow’s critique. To be fair, the leadership of the CPC was caught between the Comintern’s desire for larger numbers of English and French members and the reality that the vast majority continued to be neither. They were also well aware that, as Tim Buck remarked, the language organizations in Canada (particularly the Finnish and Ukrainian) were “not mere radical working class organizations… they are centres for all kinds of political assistance. Political, and also economic assistance. They are real centres to which they draw the workers on the basis of language needs.” However, the Comintern had concluded, and the Canadian leadership accepted, that the continued lack of compliance by the language organizations was a “very strong basis for Right danger in Canada, and a very strong basis for Right tendencies.”

Finnish and Ukrainian organizations, being the largest and most prominent, came under the most scrutiny. Somewhat ironically, CPC leader Tim Buck argued they had developed “a superiority complex… in relation to other immigrant workers.” This, he suggested, was a result of their inherent “petty bourgeoise [sic] attitude of superiority to

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those members who are not members of the revolutionary organizations, and partly a
certain cultural superiority.” The attitude, he suggested, had little to do with the
“Canadian” experience; rather, “foreign born workers in Canada” were “still to a great
extent (mentally) living in their home countries. They still want to speak their own
language, they cannot effectively participate in trade union meetings or Party meetings on
the basis of their language, but in contradistinction to this, they are a decisive element in
Canadian industry.”

As Buck’s analysis suggests, it was difficult for the CPC to change its underlying
demographic base. The International strongly urged the Party to develop its “growing
mass influence,” and to go beyond the ethnic communities historically identified with the
Party. The Comintern was especially critical of the CPC for failing to translate large
demonstrations into impressive membership increases. In April 1930, the CPC launched
an ambitious campaign to increase the total membership in the party by 3,000 and double
the subscription list of The Worker from 5,000 to 10,000. Members were informed that

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44 LAC, CI, Reel 11 [K-279], 495, 98, 101, p. 80, “Draft Report by Tim Buck on Canadian
Situation (1930) for CEC of CPC,” circa 1930, p. 4. In the years following, Buck would paint a
picture of unanimous support by all members for party initiatives. See, for example, his Thirty
Years, 1922-1952: The Story of the Communist Movement in Canada (Toronto: Progress Books,
45 LAC, CI, Reel 11 [K-279], 495, 98, 101, p. 80, “Draft Report by Tim Buck on Canadian
Situation (1930) for CEC of CPC,” circa 1930, p. 4. For example, Finns comprised almost all of
the 800 bush workers who participated in the strikes against the Pigeon River Timber Company
during the winter of 1930. See Veltri, “Labour Radicalism Among Finnish Bushworkers at the
46 A most striking instance of this phenomenon could be found in Quebec where recently 20,000
workers had reportedly marched in the streets of Montreal in a Party-organized demonstration.
support of the Party, yet membership in that province remained one of the lowest in the country.
See LAC, CPC, Reel M-7380, 7B 2116 and 7B 2117, Communist Party of Canada, Central
Agitation and Propaganda Department, “Party Recruiting Campaign,” 1 April 1930, p. 2-3.
47 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7380, 7B 2116 and 7B 2117, Communist Party of Canada, Central
Agitation and Propaganda Department, “Party Recruiting Campaign,” 1 April 1930, p. 2-3. The
this focus of the campaign was to be on “Anglo-Saxon” and “Canadian-born” workers. While they were told this should not preclude the recruitment of “as many as possible revolutionary immigrant workers into its ranks, and must in no way be interpreted to mean that,” district organizers knew what was expected of them.\textsuperscript{48} They had also been warned, in vintage Third Period language, that anyone attempting “to destroy the party campaign by characterizing these aims as ‘utopian and unrealizable’ is a sabotageur [sic], who aims at disrupting and hindering the growth of the revolutionary movement.”\textsuperscript{49}

With the Finnish and Ukrainians organizations playing a huge role in the region and the bulk of local organizers having been drawn from their ranks, it cannot be coincidental that Jim Barker, a Tim Buck loyalist, was sent to the Port Arthur District in April to shore up discipline and assist in the recruitment of English-speaking members.\textsuperscript{50} Barker had been sent by the Party to Cape Breton in November 1929 to assist in party organizational efforts and, one can assume, keep an eye on Nova Scotia miner and union leader J.B. McLachlan, who was increasingly suspect for his alleged right-wing


\textsuperscript{48} LAC, CPC, Reel M-7380, 7B 2120, Communist Party of Canada, Central Agitation and Propaganda Department, “Party Recruiting Campaign,” 1 April 1930, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{49} LAC, CPC, Reel M-7380, 7B 2115, Communist Party of Canada, Central Agitation and Propaganda Department, “Party Recruiting Campaign,” 1 April 1930, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{50} LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0449, Jim Barker to Tom Ewen, 3 April 1930. There has been a suggestion that Barker was in fact Sam Langley who, following his arrest during May Day demonstrations in Toronto, was deported sometime in the summer of 1929. The chronology does not make sense though. Langley was arrested in Port Arthur while walking with A.E. Smith, however, the dates do not seem to add up. It is more likely that it was the summer of 1931 as Barker disappears mysteriously from the Lakehead and Communist files around this time. See Lita-Rose Betcherman, \textit{The Little Band: The Clashes between the Communists and the Canadian Establishment 1928-1932} (Ottawa: Deneau Publishers, 1982), 50; \textit{The Worker}, 25 May 1929; PANC, 20 April 1932; and A.E. Smith, \textit{All My Life: An Autobiography} (Toronto: Progress Books, 1977), 109.
sympathies. McLachlan would later recall that Barker’s “one consuming ambition” while in Nova Scotia had been “to get me out of the movement.” While parades continued to draw thousands of workers, few of the 335 new members outside of the lumber industry recruited between July 1929 and July 1930, despite the best efforts of Barker, were English-speaking or trade union members.

Barker could hardly be blamed for the lack of progress. The WUL continued to have no offices in either of the twin cities. Communists in the region also had to deal with the reemergence of the IWW in the lumber camps and its growing prominence in demonstrations in Port Arthur. Unlike the CPC’s organizers, the Wobblies also tended to focus more on regional issues rather than those half a world away. This tactic, Hautamäki reported, resonated better with workers than did the national and international platforms advocated by the CPC’s organizers.

Concerns over the IWW had become so pronounced that by the time of the Seventh Annual Convention of the LWIUC, it was resolved that members should have no

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52 For the CPC’s July 1930 analysis of new party members in District 6, see LAC, CI, Reel 11, [K-279], 495, 98, 101, p. 153. See also CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0454, A.H.S to the Editor of the Worker, August 1930.

connection with the IWW or with its restaurants and auxiliaries. Finns in the region were known to participate in both CPC and the IWW’s cultural, sport, and social activities and the party was concerned that such activities had contributed to membership decreases. The Central Executive Committee was particularly harsh: “all workers shall be thoroughly acquainted with the betrayal that the leadership of the I.W.W. committed in Port Arthur [Shabaqua] strike last fall, in directly acting in the interests of the employers by serving as an agent of lumber jobbers and petty businessmen.”

The IWW attempted to organize the unemployed, the unorganized, and the lumber workers. However, these efforts met with limited success. To deal with the situation, the LWIUC opted to reorganize to allow for the inclusion of unorganized workers at the convention. Such a move was also an attempt to rectify the confusion resulting from the seasonal nature of lumber work and the lumber workers’ need to seek additional employment during the harvest season. To reflect this change, the union changed its name to the Lumber and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union of Canada (LAWIU) shortly after affiliating with the WUL. It also became the sole WUL presence in the region.

The new union also made the situation facing young workers a priority. Building

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56 *The Worker*, 12 April 1930.
on the successful participation of the CPC during the strikes of 1929, the Young
Communist League (YCL) had begun to establish branches throughout Northwestern
Ontario and regularly hold meetings. By 1931, highly active branches could be found in
The LAWIU also established its own youth section as lumber camp bosses were
increasingly using young workers in the Port Arthur District as a form of cheap labour.
This move was seen as a natural outgrowth of the union’s goal of organizing all of the
unorganized in the district.58

The YCL’s and LAWIU’s new prominence was suggested in their leading role in
the 1930 May Day demonstrations, the largest the twin cities had seen in years.
Thousands of residents participated in the parades or came out to support them.59 Various
police inspectors followed the estimated 1,000 marchers from the Ukrainian Labour
Temple. The protestors carried banners with such slogans as “Long Live the Indian
Revolution,” “Heroes in 1914 – Vagrants in 1930,” and “Long Live the Soviet Union.”
Fearing trouble, additional officers, members of the local militia, and North West
Mounted Police officers descended on the crowd. Strengthened by “a battalion” of
Legion members, authorities arrested dozens of those present, including parade leaders

58 Young Worker (May 1930), p. 4. Although they performed the exact same work as adults,
young workers typically received significantly less pay. The LAWIU viewed the employment of
underage workers as an important problem confronting the union and gave itself the task of
organizing the increasing number of unorganized young workers. All young workers recruited
into the youth section would also receive full membership in the union at a special dues rate in
proportion to their wages. The focus of the section was to be on education in militant trade
unionism and the organization of sport and social events as a means to entice others to join.
59 For coverage of the demonstrations, see The Worker, 3 May 1930; FWDTJ and PADNC, 2 and
3 May 1930; and Betcherman, The Little Band, 119-123.
Frank Bruce, Peter Bolotynuk, Waino Hakala, Mike Cosmishin, and Elsie Danalinski.  

Notwithstanding the efforts of the newly-established Finnish branch of the Canadian Labour Defence League and of noted lawyer J.L. Cohen, all the accused were found guilty of unlawful assembly and, with one exception, sent to jail. One defendant, seventeen-year-old Elsie Danalinski, was given the option of paying a $100 fine. Danalinski stalwartly refused to pay the fine, because she wished to stand shoulder to shoulder with her comrades and not receive special treatment as a woman. It proved a fatal choice. She was placed in close contact with a prisoner with tuberculosis, contracted the disease, and died after her release from jail.  

Despite the visible support in the region for the causes promoted by the CPC, the Port Arthur District continued to be racked with turmoil. The growing number of demonstrations in the region had not translated into support for the CPC’s political platform. The provincial election of 1930, for example, saw A.E. Smith once again run. This time, however, he chose the riding of Fort William over Port Arthur. The decision was not an arbitrary one. After consulting with district organizers, the Political

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60 Betcherman, *The Little Band*, 121. See also LAC, J.L. Cohen fonds (hereafter JL), MG30-A94, vol. 1, “Rex vs. Bruce, et. al.,” May to June 1930 and *Canadian Labor Defender* (June 1930), p. 7 and 11. Early in the year, the CLDL had begun to expand its activities and A.E. Smith reported in April that new branches had been formed in Port Arthur (Finnish) and Fort William (Ukrainian). In addition, other new branches within District 6 included Sioux Lookout (Finnish and English), Fort Frances (Ukrainian), and Nakina (Finnish). The growing number of demonstrations and subsequent arrests, “plaguing the Lakehead,” as one police official wrote, had necessitated the establishment of so many branches. See *Canadian Labor Defender* (May 1930), p. 11. For more on the life and work of J.L. Cohen, see Laurel Sefton MacDowell, *Renegade Lawyer: The Life of J.L. Cohen* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).  
Committee had decided that this constituency, in contrast with faction-ridden and Finnish Port Arthur, offered the prospect of building a more stable working-class base.\textsuperscript{63} Nonetheless, on the day of the election Smith received less than half of the votes he had won in his previous run for office.\textsuperscript{64} One reason could have been that Port Arthur, with its higher population of Finns, was more demographically and politically ‘red’ than Fort William.

Mobilizing workers in Fort William had become just as problematic as in Port Arthur. While the strength of the CPC in the latter city remained the Finns, Fort William’s was dependent on the participation of local Ukrainian workers. The souring relationship between the Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple Association (ULFTA) and the CPC resulted in the branches in Port Arthur and Fort William cutting off communication with the district executive. Only a few of the ULFTA’s members had recently attended party functions. As Hautamäki complained to McEwen in the spring of 1930, a recently planned WUL campaign could not be effectively prepared without the ULFTA’s executive’s assistance.\textsuperscript{65}

The CPC attributed Smith’s dismal results to poor campaign financing and to the fact that he was the first Communist candidate to ever run in the constituency.\textsuperscript{66} His lack of success was also a result of the region increasingly acting as “the junction between

\textsuperscript{63} LAC, CI, Reel 11 [K-279], 495, 98, 98, p. 30, “Minutes of the PolCom Meeting,” 22 May 1930.
\textsuperscript{64} Nationally, the CPC’s ten candidates polled about 7,000. The highest being 2,200 and the lowest 95. See LAC, CI, Reel 11 [K-279], 495, 98, 101, p. 124, Report of the Situation of the Work of the CPC During the Years of July 1929-July 1930, 18 August 1930, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{65} LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0451, Alf Hautamäki to Mr. T. Ewen, 25 April 1930.
\textsuperscript{66} The Worker, 9 August 1930. As discussed elsewhere in this study, Communist candidates had a history of contesting civic and provincial elections in the area, even if – technically speaking – the CPC had not previously contested this particular seat.
eastern and western Canada.” As Lita-Rose Betcherman suggests, “the twin towns of Port Arthur and Fort William were the stopping-off place for all of the unemployed single men who rode the rails from one end of the country to the other.” While “this drifting mass of migratory workers was grist for the communist mill,” the population’s transience also contributed to the difficulties of establishing a stable party structure.67 The potential was apparent. As one local Communist organizer suggested, “if we are successful in lining up the harvesters when they are penniless and, in spite of that, in good spirits and in a fighting mood we will be able to get all the westerners interested in this important and great movement.”68

In an attempt to reinvigorate the district, in August the leadership underwent a change. The District Secretary and Agit-Prop Organizer had been forced to leave the region to find work, and new and relatively inexperienced members replaced them. The shuffle resulted in Mary Gilbert, a member of the YCL, becoming much more active in the region.69 Gilbert’s rise within the local CPC ranks was evidently very rapid. When seventeen delegates from all over the Port Arthur District met in September for the first youth section of the LAWIU conference, she opened the proceedings. Frank Bruce represented the WUL (nationally), Hautamäki greeted the conference on behalf of the General Executive Board of the LAWIU, and Dan Parnega represented the Young Communist League.70

68 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0496, Unknown LAWIU to J.E. Moe, 3 June 1930.
69 LAC, CI, Reel 11 [K-279], 495, 98, 98, p. 71, “Minutes of the PolCom Meeting,” 2 and 9 August 1930 and The Worker, 2 August 1930.
70 Young Worker (15 September 1930), p. 1. Delegates to the conference included: Aleks Rintala (lumber worker) and Frank Huhtala (lumber worker); from Kaministiqua, Walter Hendricson (lumber and farm worker), Elmer Heikkila (lumber worker), and Armand Erickson (farm worker).
More demonstrations meant more police surveillance. Tensions climaxed on 28 October 1930 when local police, the RCMP, and members of the Canadian Legion raided the Port Arthur headquarters of the LAWIU and the offices of the CLDL. Everything was seized and those who protested were arrested.\textsuperscript{71} Officials at all levels also increasingly let it be known that any infractions by the “foreign-born” would lead to deportations.\textsuperscript{72} As the work of Barbara Roberts has demonstrated, the threat of deportation during the Depression years was hardly a phenomenon unique to the Lakehead.\textsuperscript{73} “The techniques used for the political deportations of the 1930s were similar to those developed during the period of the First World War,” Roberts argues. “In both instances, political deportation was made easier by special legal powers to deport radicals overtly for political ‘crimes’ as enemies of the state.” Those arrested at the Lakehead were frequently brought up for such lesser crimes as vagrancy.\textsuperscript{74} Two very notable deportation cases involved Akselt Panttaja and Eric Holm. Panttaja, a Finnish labourer, was arrested on a charge of

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worker); from Kivikoski, Ansu Hoxel (lumber and farm worker), Aate Pitkanen (farm worker), Mauri Hoxel (farmer worker), Tauno Peterson (lumber worker), and Peterson Pekka (farm worker); from Intola, E. Korhonen (farm worker) and Eino Hostikka (lumber worker).See also Young Worker (6 October 1930), p. 1. For young lumber workers it was demanded that piece work be abolished, a 7 hour, 5 day week be instituted, a rate of $80 a month without board or $50 a month with board be set, two 15 minute rest periods be introduced, and all discrimination against young workers be halted. For agricultural workers, delegates demanded that an 8 hour, 6 day week be introduced, a rate of $50 a month with board be set, agricultural technical training with pay be offered, the abolition of parental enforced child labour on the farms occur, and that all slave contracts for immigrant youth be banned.

\textsuperscript{71} Canadian Labor Defender (October-November 1930), np. This seizure explains the lack of material from the District offices found locally or in the LAC.

\textsuperscript{72} The CLDL commented that a “savage attack now being made upon the worker is shown to be a cunning, deliberate, far-reaching, vicious policy that must be stoutly withstood by organized and determined effort on the part of the working class of Canada.” See LAC, CPC, Reel M-7383, 11C 2871, Resolution on the Defense of Foreign Born Workers, circa. 11-12 July 1930, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{73} See Barbara Roberts, Whence they Came: Deportation from Canada, 1900-1935 (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988), 125-158.

\textsuperscript{74} Roberts, Whence they Came, 125.
vagrancy. On the advice of his lawyer, he pleaded “not guilty” to the charge, but the court translator put his plea down as “guilty.” Despite the best efforts of his lawyer, and a signed affidavit from himself, he was deported to Finland on 23 March 1931, to certain imprisonment. Holm’s offence was to have demanded “work or bread” from city officials. In both cases, the Canadian Labour Defence League argued that the system was discriminating against workers on political grounds.75

Changes in leadership and the migratory patterns of many workers meant institutional chaos. Each unit operated autonomously and in isolation without a centralizing authority providing either guidance or information. As one local member advised Buck, even though a “fairly strong section of the unemployed workers” had been established in Port Arthur, it was “merely an accident and not through any fault of the party.”76 “The partial failure of these plans,” one member of the National Committee of the LAWIU wrote, “is not because the workers are not responding but that the comrades in the mass organizations and the left wingers do not realise the importance of our union. They do not understand the special role that our union plays in the revolutionary trade union movement.”77 Hautamäki argued that many locals had also been getting the wrong impression of the party as, without any form of explanation, money sent for meeting the cost of speakers in the region was not being used for that purpose.78

75 Canadian Labor Defender (May 1931), 8; LAC, CPC, Reel M-7377, 3A 1579, Tom Ewen to Alf Hautamäki, 20 March 1931; and Betcherman, The Little Band, 127 and 146.
76 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0462, Unknown to Tim Buck, 20 November 1930. While membership in the region fluctuated between 700 and 800, much of it came from the LAWIU and remained ethnically Finnish.
77 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0459, National Executive Committee, LAWIUof C to G. Lamont, 6 September 1930.
78 LAC, Canadian Security Intelligence Service fonds (hereafter CSIS), RG146, 1025-9-9019, vol. 2, pp. 30-33, Alf Hautamäki to Tim Buck, 31 December 1930.
For its own part, the Committee argued, “our union is an economic organization of great importance as it includes the most exploited sections of the working class. Because of the unstable economic conditions, an intensive fight must be carried on in the streets as well as in the camps. For this reason, our union is much nearer to the revolutionary political activities than many of the other unions.”

Disappointed with the efforts of Gilbert and the WUL and fearing what further absorption would mean locally, the LAWIU actively sought to become the “decisive factor” in the region. It argued that “those who are traveling in the freight trains” must become the “rallying centre of the jungle gangs, and the talk of those who are filling the skid roads and the flop houses.” “It must also be guiding spirit among the loggers and the camp workers,” Hautamäki wrote to a colleague in British Columbia. “We have a strong enough union to create our own ideas, psychology of fight and revolt based on communist principles.”

However, the LAWIU’s financial problems continued to prevent it from orchestrating successful organizing and educational campaigns. The National Executive Committee estimated in 1930 that at least 5,000 dues paying members would be required to ensure stable activities.

At the same time that Communists were grappling with internal issues, external ones also threatened to destabilize the party. Local authorities had not been blind to the growing militancy within the area and to the attempts by Communists to mobilize workers for demonstrations. In response, they beefed up the local police force, asked that...
the militia be on standby, and requested an enlarged detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in the area. The Port Arthur police board, in order to “curb mob scenes,” also organized a permanent auxiliary force comprised largely of officers from the Canadian Legion.82

The auxiliary force was used indiscriminately to quash demonstrations through the rest of the 1930s. For example, when at the end of October 1930, a group of peaceful marchers led by Frank Bruce and Mary Gilbert neared the Port Arthur city hall to present a petition to the council, policemen began to harass and physically abuse them. As was often the case at the Lakehead, things turned violent. Gilbert, after being assaulted, called for assistance and a brawl broke out. Police attacked the marchers and a number of onlookers, in response, attacked the police, knocking Chief George Taylor to the ground and injuring him.83 In retaliation, the police raided the Communist and Wobbly halls on Bay Street. Specifically targeted were Gilbert, the Unemployed Association of Port Arthur and the offices of the local branch of the CLDL.84 The situation had become so tense that Hautamäki believed the police would arrest him at any moment.85

Despite the growing militancy in the region and the successful establishment of an unemployed association affiliated to the WUL, when the November 1930 District 6 Conference took place, the situation did not look good. Recent recruitment efforts had resulted in only minor gains in membership (although the LAWIU reported five new locals in the region). A. Skarra, chair of the Organization Department, attributed this to

82 PANC, 22 and 24 October 1930.
83 Betcherman, The Little Band, 126 and The Worker, 25 October 1930. For local coverage of the demonstration, see PANC, 21 October 1930.
84 PANC, 27, 29, and 30 October 1930; The Worker, 1 November 1930; and Betcherman, The Little Band, 126.
85 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0471, Alf Hautamäki [?] to G. Lamont, 27 November 1930.
the “lack of the party machinery in groups carrying out the party work.” Those groups and units that had submitted some form of report indicated that a culture of indifference had taken hold. There was much misunderstanding among the units. The District Executive Committee suspected, in classic Third Period style, that some of the party’s numerous groups had succumbed to “pacifist ideas and manners,” and feared that many members were indifferent to the Party.

While membership numbers in unions may have been down, the UATC had begun to see considerable progress. By December, it had become so large that it was divided into two separate organizations, one operating in each city. The Port Arthur Unemployment Association (PAUA) appears to have been the more active. For example, the soup kitchens it ran provided between 350 to 400 single men in Port Arthur with coffee and food daily. So successful were such initiatives by Gilbert that McEwen suggested that she take advantage of the situation and those who had received some form of relief be “hunted out by committee and brought back into the fight.”

86 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, Reel M-7380, 8C 0093 and reverse of 8C 0093, “Minutes of District 6 Conference,” 23 November 1930, p. 2 and The Worker, 11 October 1930.
87 In 1930, the District consisted of 17 groups within Port Arthur and Fort William. With the exception of Group 1 each had one representative. Additional rural units with a representative were located in the communities of Lappi, Tarmola, Comnee, Finland, Nipigon, Kaministiqua, Alppila, Intola, Kivikoski, Murillo, and Finmark. Department representatives included those from the Organization Department, Co-op. Agit Prop, Trade Union, Women’s Department, and Canadian Labor Defence League Buro. LAC, CPC, Reel M-7380, 8C 0093 and reverse of 8C 0093, Minutes of District 6 Conference, 23 November 1930, p. 2.
88 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7380, 8C 0093 and reverse of 8C 0093, Minutes of District 6 Conference, 23 November 1930, p. 2.
89 Although this organization is referred to as the Port Arthur Unemployed Association, Port Arthur Unemployed Council of Port Arthur, and Unemployed Organization of Port Arthur, I have gone with the name that appears on the masthead of its “bulletin.”
90 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0474, Unemployed Bulletin 4 (nd., 1930).
91 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0465, National Secretary, WUL to Mary Gilbert, Secretary, Port Arthur Unemployed Association, 25 November 1930 and 1A 0472, Tom Ewen to Mary Gilbert, 4
Tensions between Gilbert and Hautamäki split the local Communists. Gilbert thought Hautamäki and his lumber workers were overstepping their authority by recruiting unemployed workers. Hautamäki pragmatically considered that organizing the unemployed was more important than the particular organization or organizer claiming credit for it. It was, he told Gilbert, “Quite unnecessary to get warmed up as to who did the work.” Hautamäki, in some WUL interpretations, was confusing revolutionary trade unionism with organizing the unemployed. Gilbert, in the eyes of her critics, was dabbling with concepts of monetary reform in the PAUA newspaper The Bulletin, and even Tom McEwen, who was generally supportive of her, thought she was in danger of sinking into a “swamp of false ideology.” Many of these conflicts seemingly stemmed from a CPC caught in a contradictory position, that of suddenly being required to undertake the complicated tasks of constructing a comprehensive unemployment organizing program, in a region that did not conform to its underlying conception of how a revolutionary movement should be built. In this setting, Hautamäki could draw upon longstanding Finnish bonds of unity and the organizational history of his union to do something with the unemployed, but in doing so, he ran up against the ostensibly more inclusive alternative strategy of the WUL, which, organizers and members of the LAWIU were told by the National Secretary, was to be placed at “the forefront of every question.”

December 1930.
92 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0465, National Secretary, WUL to Mary Gilbert, Secretary, Port Arthur Unemployed Association, 25 November 1930.
93 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0465, National Secretary, WUL to Mary Gilbert, Secretary, Port Arthur Unemployed Association, 25 November 1930.
94 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0476, Tom Ewan to Mary Gilbert, 5 December 1930.
95 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0469, National Secretary, WUL to Alf Hautamäki, 3 December
Hautamäki, for his part, made the situation worse by attacking and condemning the tactics of the WUL in the region. Spurred by the inability of the PAUA to protect “foreign” workers, he blamed the regional failures of the association and WUL on the “two Anglo-Canadian organizers with the WUL [Barker and Gilbert] for their destruction of the ethnic mass protest” cultivated since the death of Rosvall and Voutilainen. Workers in the region knew that it was through the mostly Finnish membership of the LAWIU that Port Arthur, or more specifically, 316 Bay Street, had become “the talk in every freight and in all the hang outs” throughout the country.

To change the situation, the WUL actively began to pursue a plan to move the LAWIU’s headquarters to Montreal. As McEwen suggested, “a greater concentration could be carried on in the Maratime [sic] Provinces, which in connection with Ontario, would direct its energies towards the organization of the entire pulp cutting industry.” For historians such as Anthony Rasporich, this summed “up two decades of intra-party factionalism between Finns and Anglo-Saxons in the Left.” Such mishandling of lumber workers in the region contributed, Hautamäki argued, to the continued presence of the IWW. Although the WUL did support the maintaining of a district office to keep up organizing efforts in the region, it favoured Winnipeg over Port Arthur as the location because of the potential to recruit agricultural workers in Manitoba and, no doubt, to decrease the power of the members from Northwestern Ontario.

1930.
97 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0470, Alf Hautamäki [?] to G. Lamont, 27 November 1930.
98 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0470, Alf Hautamäki [?] to G. Lamont, 27 November 1930.
99 Rasporich, “Ethnicity in Lakehead Politics, 1900-30,” 63
100 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0470, Alf Hautamäki [?] to G. Lamont, 27 November 1930
The CPC also continued to attribute the growing unrest within its ranks to the “problem of ironing out one of the most important questions facing our Party – that of determining the role of the proletarian revolution in Canada – and the question of Canadian imperialism, the status of Canada itself.” According to Ian Radforth, the “hands-off approach” to both the LAWIU and Port Arthur District, the adoption of the policy of Bolshevization, the rise of Tim Buck, and the subsequent aggressive attack against the autonomy of the language federations led the party to take a much more direct role in Northwestern Ontario during 1931. Alex Gibson joined Mary Gilbert as the WUL’s leading figure in the region.

Of the five “labour” candidates endorsed by the local Trades and Labour Council in Port Arthur during the 1930 civic election, the Communists had backed only Gibson and only he had been elected. President of the Pulp and Sulphite Workers local and a well-known member of the local branch of the Communist Party, his nomination was a coup for the CPC as his endorsement by the Trades and Labour Council indicated a certain amount of success in appealing to the trade unionists in the region. Unlike in Fort William, where labour candidates (in the vein of the Lib-Labs a decade before) were elected based on centre-left campaigns, Gibson capitalized on “his Marxist sympathies and support for radical unions among the bushworkers made him a fairly popular

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102 Radforth, Bushworkers and Bosses, 126 and The Worker 21 February 1931.
103 Rasporich, “Faction and Class in Modern Lakehead Politics,” 41. For local coverage, consult PANC, 12, 13, 16, and 29 December 1930.
104 Gibson was also a worker-poet, writing two known books during his lifetime. These works focused on the plight of the working class at the Lakehead and his experiences. See Songs of the road, and other poems (Port Arthur: np., 1933) and Grist for the mill, and other poems (S.l.: s.n., 1959).
candidate while other more moderate trade unionists were unable to make an impact.  

No doubt, though, Gibson’s position as president of the Port Arthur League for Municipal Progress and Fred Moore’s open support during the campaign did not hurt.  

The CPC publicly remained quiet about Gibson’s connection to Moore and other centre-left politicians. As Tom McEwen told Gilbert, Gibson was “not worth a damn” and only useful for his position in the Pulp and Sulphite Workers Union. His early success in recruiting new members for the WUL had not subsequently borne fruit in later recruitments. Although only recently part of the CPC team in the region, Gilbert was personally blamed for the district’s woes.

With Gibson’s abilities in question, it was decided that Barker should be the District 6 Organizer. However, he and the Organizing Secretary of the CPC realized that to have any chance at success, the support of Finnish members was essential. The party instructed the Finnish National Party Fraction Bureau in Toronto to assist in the mobilization of the Finnish members in the region and their mass organizations, as they were essential in the fight for the unemployed. The Central Executive Committee also stuck to the Comintern’s directive. As the Organizing Secretary of the Party stated, “a step in the direction of carrying out the decisions of the recent Enlarged Plenum on the

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105 “Faction and Class in Modern Lakehead Politics,” For the results in Port Arthur, see PANC, 6 and 7 January 1931.  
106 PANC, 9 January 1931. It remains unclear whether Fred Moore was in fact ever a member of the Communist Party of Canada. It appears, though, that in 1929 his wife belonged to the Women’s Labour League. See The Port Arthur Henderson’s Directory 1929.  
107 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7377, 3 A 1541, National Executive Secretary WUL to Mary Gilbert, 21 January 1931.  
tasks of the language mass organizations” had to be carried out.109

Barker had “concrete tasks” to carry out under the direction of the district and local WUL councils. Central was the participation of Finnish Organization of Canada (FOC) locals and the need for them to concentrate on workers other than those from their communities.110 “This campaign,” the FOC was instructed, “must result in thousands of contacts for our Party especially among the Anglo-Saxon and French Canadian workers in the factories. Every Finnish Party member must concentrate on the establishment of these contacts in his or her own place of work.”111

These initiatives posed a number of problems. First, as discussed previously, the WUL did not operate a local council and the PAUA and LAWIU continued to perform its duties. In fact, the WUL had little direct influence even amongst the lumber workers in the district. Further, the WUL leadership became concerned by the election of someone (possibly Gibson or Gilbert) it described as “a representative of ‘The Reformist Unions, NOT A PARTY MEMBER” becoming the new Secretary of the “District Committee.”112 Finally, much to the chagrin of McEwen and Gilbert, Hautamäki continued to be the most visible leader in the region, organizing unemployment demonstrations and, frequently, being arrested and fined for his role.113 In terms of leadership, the WUL continued take a

109 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 2A 1103, Organizing Secretary of the CPC to Finnish National Fraction Buro, 20 February 1931.
110 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 2A 1103, Organizing Secretary of the CPC to Finnish National Fraction Buro, 20 February 1931.
111 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 2A 1103, Organizing Secretary of the CPC to Finnish National Fraction Buro, 20 February 1931 and 2A 1104, Organizing Secretary of the CPC to Finnish National Fraction Buro, 20 February 1931.
113 See, for example, PANC, 25 to 17 February and 10 March 1931.
decidedly subservient role to the LAWIU.114

By the end of 1930, another factor began to influence the CPC’s activities in the region. The formation of the Karelia Autonomous Soviet Republic, a socialist utopia in the historic Finnish homeland of Karelia, led to what historians have called “Karelia fever.”115 Thousands of Finnish workers were driven, perhaps in equal parts by cultural nostalgia, a utopian impulse to finally live in a socialist society, and a sharp sense of alienation from a rejecting and unemployment-ridden Canadian society, to explore this distant, alluring option. Unemployment was undoubtedly a driving force for many. In 1931, approximately 10,000 of Canada’s estimated 70,000 Finns were unemployed.116 This migration worried the CPC and Comintern leadership as it stood to deprive them of the bulk of its most ardent organizers and much of its rank-and-file.

It should come as no surprise that the unemployment situation combined with the increased persecution, arrests, and the constant threat of deportation meant that the CPC executive was literally receiving thousands of applications from Finnish members for

114 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7377, 3A 1536, Alf Hautamäki to Tom Ewen, 14 January 1931.
transfers to the USSR. At the Lakehead, hundreds of Finnish Communists, such as prominent YCL member Aate Pitkanen, told their District Executive Committees that they intended to go to Karelia. Many of them were among the CPC’s and the LAWIU’s most valuable workers. Between 2,000 and 3,000 Finnish socialists opted to leave Canada. Many CPC locals ceased to exist. In the summer of 1931, no fewer than 200 workers left the Lakehead for Karelia; by 1932, much of the regional leadership of the LAWIU had emigrated.

Karelia only served to reinforce the CPC’s concern about its dependence on non-Anglo-Saxon workers. The problem was that it also realized that they were necessary for the financial and political success of the Party. Over 12 mass Ukrainian and Finnish organizations were operating in the district, providing the bulk of the operating funds


119 Radforth, *Bushworkers and Bosses*, 125. Alf Hautamäki and other Finnish communists at the Lakehead had in fact played a large role in establishing the Karjalan työkuunta (Karelian Work Unit) in 1930. In the list supplied to the Department of Immigration and Colonization in June 1931, 55 Port Arthur residents and two Fort William residents are reported to have gone to Karelia. The originals are from the Library and Archives of Canada. One of the most notable people to leave was one-time Port Arthur District CPC organizer Ivar Seppala. J. Wright, the Port Arthur inspector, reported that the purpose was to observe the methods in Russia and learn how to implement them when they return to Canada. See “Division Commissioner, Department of Immigration and Colonization to Department of Immigration and Colonization,” 25 June 1931. The document can be found in the research files for the film *Letters from Karelia* (NFB, 2005) in the possession of the author.

120 See, for example, Tim Buck’s correspondence with Niilo Virtanen, a well-known party member in the Sudbury region who had written on the situation. LAC, CPC, Reel M-7377, 2A 1484 and 2A 1485, Buck to Newman, 10 April 1931.
even if they did not send reports to the national headquarters.\textsuperscript{121} The Finnish Organization of Canada remained the most active, financially supporting and providing the largest number of participants for demonstrations, rallies, and presentations by touring and local speakers. In short, the Finns remained the glue that held the CPC together in the region during a time when the district was in shambles.\textsuperscript{122}

Despite their relatively small numbers, the Finns’ often-critiqued “federalistic tendencies” had reportedly begun to reassert themselves in the region and to dominate CPC activities. Some Finnish party members in Fort William, for example, crippled efforts to hold demonstrations by refusing to work with their Ukrainian comrades.\textsuperscript{123} The reason for this position remains unknown; however, the ULFTA’s three branches had recently become more active under the guidance of Michael Biniowsky and had been showing a greater interest in developing the platform of the WUL over its own cultural initiatives. It even appears that they were beginning to fall more in line with the Party’s directives than the associations in Winnipeg. However, under Biniowsky’s leadership it remained firm in its desire to operate autonomously.

Such factional disputes between the Ukrainian and Finnish communists appear to have been rare. For example, Hautamäki and Biniowsky worried that the WUL was unsuited, and perhaps unable, to organize farm labourers and harvesters in the region. The two men cautioned Tom McEwen that the local branch of the ULFTA had “been quite passive,” opposing, for instance, the creation of committees for fear that the WUL

\textsuperscript{121} LAC, CPC, Reel M-7378, 4A 2613, “Resolution on the Party Plenum, and the Tasks of the Party in District #6,” circa. 1931, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{122} LAC, CPC, Reel M-7377, 3A 1601, Jim Barker to the Workers Unity League, 31 March 1931.

\textsuperscript{123} LAC, CPC, Reel M-7378, 4A 2613, “Resolution on the Party Plenum, and the Tasks of the Party in District #6,” circa.1931, p. 1.
and LWIUC would become a competitive organization. Demonstrations held in Port Arthur and Fort William in February featured both Finnish and Ukrainian mass organizations with Hautamäki and Biniowsky playing prominent roles along with Gilbert. For their roles, Hautamäki and another Finnish agitator Emil Wilen were arrested and served brief jail sentences.

By April, the Political Bureau of the CPC and District 6 organizer Jim Barker wanted to have Alf Hautamäki and his wife Ailane (head of the Finnish Women’s Labour League branch in Port Arthur) thrown out of the party for their stubborn refusal to comply with the party’s directives. Barker viewed Alf Hautamäki, much as he had McLachlan in Nova Scotia, as the impediment to success in the region. Barker was not alone in his opinion. Many party loyalists both nationally and in the region had become dissatisfied with Hautamäki’s performance as leader of the LAWIU. His lack of enthusiasm for CPC policies and the recent inactivity in the bush camps was blamed on his growing lack of personal popularity. The Kivikoski and Tarmola locals, for example, wrote to Tim Buck that he had even been seen drinking with opponents of the Party and that this, and other indiscretions, had lost him the confidence of workers in the

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124 The letter sent to Gilbert from Biniowsky appears to have been lost. In her letter to McEwen, Gilbert comments that the only copies are being sent with her letter and asks them to be returned. It appears that this never happened. See LAC, CPC, Reel M-7377, 3A 1545, Alf Hautamäki to T.A. Ewan, 29 January 1931.

125 Barker also attributed the mobilization of the Women’s Labour League branches, the Unemployed Council, the YCL, and LAWIU to the two men. Significantly, in all of these organizations the majority of members were Finnish and Ukrainian. However, while the Port Arthur gathering was attended by over 2,000, the Fort William one, led by Barker and Biniowsky, was much smaller. See LAC, CPC, 3A 1565, Jim Barker, District Organizer, to Tom Ewen, Industrial Department, CPC, 27 February 1931, p. 1 and The Worker, 28 February 1931. For local coverage, see PANC, 25 to 17 February and 10 March 1931.

126 Radforth, Bushworkers and Bosses, 126.
region.\textsuperscript{127}

Officially, Hautamäki was also blamed for the failure of Bolshevization to take hold within the Finnish membership of the LAWIU. McEwen and the WUL, in particular, lashed out at him for his “pessimism and defeatism” and for “his policy of concentrating on educational work among the unemployed bushworkers,” to cite the words of Ian Radforth. In contrast, McEwen argued that the LAWIU should focus on “the camps, at the work place, organizing them for strikes, rather than serving as a propaganda organization.”\textsuperscript{128} Yet, Hautamäki’s position as National Secretary of the LAWIU complicated matters. Conscious of the Communist International’s reaction to such decisions in the Vaara scandal of 1929, the party executive suspended Hautamäki for three months on the pretense of his having missed a district convention of the LAWIU.\textsuperscript{129}

During the period of his suspension, a LAWIU convention was held in May. The membership in March had suggested that Emil Wilen, despite being a poor English speaker, should become secretary of the union. Although not well-known nationally, he was well-regarded locally as an active and responsible organizer among the lumber workers. While agreeing that an alternate plan would be prudent, McEwen disagreed with District organizer Jim Barker and advised him not to use the convention to support a candidate other than the WUL’s, a Finn named Sillanpaa. The membership’s choice

\textsuperscript{127} LAC, CPC, Reel M-7377, 3A 1571, P. Saari, E. Smolander, E. Haara (for the local union fraction), Antti Pitkänen and Adolf Savolainen (members of the NEC, L&AWIU of Canada to Tim Buck, 16 March 1931.
\textsuperscript{129} LAC, CI, Reel 13 [K-281], 495, 98, 117, p. 59, “Minutes of the Pol Bureau CPC,” 17 April 1931 and LAC, CPC, Reel M-7377, 3A 1617, Org. Sect’y, Political Buro to Jim Barker, 18 April 1931.
carried the day (even getting Hautamäki’s support). The long desired replacement of Hautamäki occurred as Wilen took over as National Secretary of the union. Clearly, the WUL was attempting to manipulate the district into supporting its selections despite the growing support in the district for another candidate.

McEwen’s direct intervention was accompanied in March by his declaration at the Port Arthur District Conference of the LAWIU that the WUL “must assume equal responsibility with the leadership” of the union. This assumption of power was supposed to accompany a transformation of the union into a mass organization and mark a material change of the union’s organization. The WUL argued that rather than operating at the point of production (i.e. the lumber camps), it operated instead in those areas where workers were unemployed. The present form of organization “renders the ideological development of the membership of the [LAWIU] for the economic struggles on the job extremely difficult, and reduces their contact with the poor farmers throughout the district to nil during the course of these preparations.” The CPC had also become concerned that the LAWIU was “sinking its identity in the Unemployed Organization, where its membership have become unemployed.” As a result, many LAWIU locals had become defunct and ceased to exist. An attempt to rectify this situation occurred in March when a mass conference was held ostensibly to establish amongst all party units and

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131 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7377, 3A 1572, Jim Barker to Organization Committee, 17 March 1931 and 3A 1571, Alf Hautamäki to Tom Ewen, 17 March 1931 and 3A 1581, Tom Ewan to Jim Barker, 23 March 1931.
members a basis for the WUL.¹³⁴

The decision to have the WUL play a more direct role in the organizing efforts of the LAWIU was made at the centre without any consultation with or consideration of the district. As no Industrial Department or WUL branch existed and all agitation was being carried out by Ukrainian and Finnish members (aside from Barker, Gilbert, and occasionally Bryan) the CPC continued to appeal to few beyond the Finnish community. By taking a greater role in the LAWIU the WUL hoped to increase its presence using its infrastructure while not having to provide for a separate organizer.¹³⁵

Even the LAWIU was increasingly experiencing problems. Hautamäki had reported in March that only about 100 of the 1,000 members were paying dues, as many were unemployed or had become increasingly involved with the IWW. The YCL branches at the Lakehead similarly reported that no activity had occurred due to increasing competition from both within and without the party. The Ukrainians in the district were described as being “tied down with work in the mass organization” and, outside of Kivikoski and Murillo, many Finns were opting to send their children to Junior Wobbly meetings instead. The problem, from the perspective of the Finns and Ukrainians, had to do with the CPC’s leadership in the region.

Local members of the Ukrainian fraction, for example, described the head of the district’s Women’s Branch as anti-ULFTA and dictatorial. Mary Gilbert was also now being described as someone who had “antagonized all members” in the district.¹³⁶ The

¹³⁴ LAC, CPC, Reel M-7377, 3A 1569, Jim Barker to Central Organization Department, 14 March 1931.
¹³⁵ LAC, CPC, Reel M-7377, 3A 1588 and 1588a, Jim Barker to Central Org Dept., 20 March 1931.
grounds for this negative perception of Gilbert were that, as one of the few Communist leaders not imprisoned in the February disturbances, she had failed to maintain accustomed levels of activity among the Finns. In Gibert’s defence, the WUL appears to have spread her too thin. As Barker wrote to McEwen, she was frequently called away on party business and in her absence the non-Finnish and Ukrainian activities in Port Arthur and surrounding region would cease.\textsuperscript{137}

Emil Wilen’s attempts to strengthen the Finnish base of support in the LAWIU also continued to be hampered by the Central Organization Department’s (COD) emphasis on Anglo-Saxon and French-Canadian workers. In the May recruiting drive, for example, the COD informed all organizers that the main task of the drive was to ensure that 60% of new recruits came from these two ethnic groups. Further, the COD informed district organizers that while the “foreign-born” membership “to a certain degree retards mass recruiting among Anglo-Saxon workers, we must decisively reject now the claim that foreign-born comrades cannot recruit from among the basic sections of the working class.”\textsuperscript{138} As Stewart Smith remarked, “the general impression here [in Moscow] is that there is not sufficient blending between the new comrades in the leadership… and the older and more experienced comrades…” This had resulted in “un-thought-out statements” and a “weakening of [the] Party line.”\textsuperscript{139}

Even Hill, a party member seemingly above reproach, felt the brunt of the new

\textsuperscript{137} LAC, CPC, Reel M-7377, 3 A 1563, Telegram, J. Barker to The Worker, 25 February 1931; 3 A 1566, Jim Barker to Tom Ewen, 27 February 1931, p. 2.; and Reel M-7378, 4A 2614, “Resolution on the Party Plenum, and the Tasks of the Party in District #6,” circa. 1931, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{138} LAC, CI, Reel 14 [K-282], 495, 98, 122, p. 25, Central Organizing Department to All District Organizers, RE: The May Recruiting Drive, 8 April 1931, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{139} LAC, CI, Reel 13 [K-281], 495, 98, 116, p. 16, Stewart Smith (Anglo-American Secretariat) to Tim Buck, 23 April 1931, p. 2
turn of the Party when Smith, the young rising star, criticized him for comments made about the party’s purpose and program. At issue, however, was not the eventual organization of the party. Both Hill and Smith agreed on the fundamental principles. Yet, Smith was out of touch with Lakehead realities. Operating from his Lenin School perspective, he attributed divisions within the Lakehead left to ideological battles between left and right, or to errors in carrying out the “tactical line” of the Party, and seemed oblivious to the underlying ethnic or organizational realities that had intensified the left’s personal and political differences.  

By 1931, the leadership of the WUL still failed to understand the local situation. With Hautamäki gone, Barker was chastised for the “bloody crime” of obtaining only 500 signatures for the recent unemployment insurance campaign. As McEwen remarked, “that amount could be got by a mere visit to a few factories alone.” Further, Barker was warned to be leery of those who dismissed claims that non-English workers could not organize Anglo-Saxons. “[We] will have to fight continually against this ‘not speaking English’ crap,” he argued. “We have a Finnish girl here who hardly speaks a damn word of it, and who had collected more English signatures than any other single member in Toronto. The reason is that she is determined to collect rather than to speak.”

Comparing Toronto to the situation at the Lakehead speaks to his inability to grasp the local situation and the general failure of the WUL and CPC to come to grips with the growing unrest in the region.

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140 LAC, CI, Reel 13 [K-281], 495, 98, 116, p. 16, Stewart Smith (Anglo-American Secretariat) to Tim Buck, 23 April 1931, p. 6.
141 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7377, 3A 1602, National Secretary, Workers’ Unity League to Jim Barker, 3 April 1931.
142 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7377, 3A 1602, National Secretary, Workers’ Unity League to Jim
Was the LAWIU in danger of losing its identity when it came to the Finnish issues articulated by the FOC? Yes, some Communists worried. In response, they acted to make the LAWIU less Lakehead-centred. They established new districts from Montreal to Vancouver. They even diminished Port Arthur as the union’s headquarters, by establishing a joint headquarters in Sudbury, apparently with the hope of appealing to French-Canadian workers. All such measures seemed to be aimed at making the Finnish Canadians less central to the LAWIU.

Certainly, the vast majority of the local CPC members belonged to the union, but other departments continued to be active even if in only a limited fashion. For example, the 25 February demonstrations resulted in 2,000 demonstrators participating in Port Arthur and another 3,000 in Fort William. Over 1,400 had turned out in March for the International Women’s Day demonstrations in Fort William, West Fort William, Intola, Tarmola, and Port Arthur organized by the District 6 organizer, Jim Barker. However, these demonstrations also served to underscore the issues facing the region. The Political Bureau of the CPC admitted it had little direction of the events and the lack of party organization resulted in little, if any, recruitment.

Working under the aegis of the PAUA, during the spring of 1931 the WUL did have success organizing a series of demonstrations. In April, mass rallies in both Port

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Barker, 3 April 1931.

\[143\] LAC, Cl, Reel 13 [K-281], 495, 98, 117, p. 41, Minutes of Pol Bureau CPC, 13 February 1931.


Arthur and Fort William featured over 4,000 and 1,000 workers respectively. The May Day celebrations of 1931 featured some of the largest crowds in years. Local Finnish and Ukrainian Communists came out thousands strong to listen to speeches by leading members of their communities. Local food workers also rallied to the cause, as twenty-nine working in the Finnish restaurants and co-operatives joined the WUL and created the Food Workers’ Union of Canada’s first local.

That same month the Workers’ Unity League federated the increasingly unwieldy Unemployed Associations into the National Unemployed Workers Association (NUWA). Shortly after, NUWA councils were running in Port Arthur, Fort William, West Fort William, Kenora, Fort Francis, and Sioux Lookout with approximately 1,000 total members. In reality, it was national in name only. With McEwen and the WUL’s attention focused on the creation of “red” unions, little attention was given to providing national leadership. This left local associations largely without guidance from the party centre.

And such guidance and support was badly needed at the Lakehead. Independent

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146 The Worker, 25 April 1931.
147 Like many such gatherings, local police and the RCMP interrupted the speeches, wading into the crowd and attacking those present with batons and arrested the leaders. Demonstrators, while temporarily disbanding, met later that night at the Finnish Labour Temple in Port Arthur. The 400 in attendance passed resolutions condemning local police and the RCMP for brutality and for the arrest of many who took part. See, The Worker, 6 and 16 May 1931; FWDTJ, 1, 2, 6, 9, and 11 May 1931; PANC, 1, 2, and 9 1931.
148 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7377, 3A 1638, Unknown to Ailene Hautamäki, 8 June 1931; 3A 1650, H. Myntti, Secretary Treasurer, Food Workers’ Union of Canada to National Executive Secretary, WUL, 19 June 1931; and 3A 1651, National Executive Secretary, WUL to H. Myntti, Secretary Treasurer, Food Workers’ Union of Canada local #1, 22 June 1931.
149 Avakumovic, The Communist Party in Canada, 75
151 Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class During the Depression,” 541-54
Labour supporters on both city councils continued to block the attempts by the Communists to bring forth their issues to each of the city councils. Fred Moore, in particular, as secretary of the Citizens’ Unemployed Association (CUA) and secretary of the Fort William Trades and Labour Council, began a campaign to convince workers to not take part in the NUWA.¹⁵² Only the LAWIU, thanks to its largely Finnish membership, had remained active. The number of union locals had increased since the last Plenum from 5 to 17. Its continued activity and success was believed to have been more the result of the lessons learned following the deaths of Rosval and Voutalinen than the WUL leadership.¹⁵³

To be fair, the organizing ability of the LAWIU had been complicated by the presence of farmers in the union. As farmers were non-migratory, their inclusion had created a problem. The LAWIU leadership was unsure how they could be best mobilized as the union’s previous strategies were geared toward the seasonal nature of the lumber camps. Even McEwen questioned what connection the farmers had to the lumber industry? “At what point,” he argued, “do these dairy and stump farmers meet the system of capitalism, certainly not in the lumber camp but as farmers, their problems are mortgages, taxes (school, road, post, etc).” However, blame was laid at the feet of Hautamäki, who, while no longer head of the LAWIU, remained an active organizer for the union of the FOC branch in Port Arthur. Despite following party desires, he was

¹⁵² *The Worker*, 25 July 1931 and *FWDTJ*, 27 June and 2 July 1931. Over the course of the next few months, local Communists would take aim at Moore, Alex Cruikshanks, secretary of the local AFL, and ILPer Jack MacDonald. See, for example, *The Worker*, 25 July and 3 October 1931. He would also later be blamed as the ILPer responsible for the lack of Communist success in the 1932 civic elections in Fort William. See *The Worker*, 30 January 1932.

criticized for “organizing anyone but lumber jacks.”

McEwen proposed that a Farmers’ Unity League be formed whose foundation could be the farmers currently in the LAWIU in the Thunder Bay District. McEwen’s argument did make some sense. Although many farmers in the region, especially those within communities dominated by Finnish and Ukrainian immigrants, were sympathetic to the CPC and had a long history of providing both moral support and food to striking lumber workers, they had fought numerous attempts by the local organizers to have them join the LAWIU. Would it not make more sense to fully organize the Long Lac workers, McEwen wondered, than to persist in attempts to squeeze money from the farmers? Here was a pattern that would be paralleled elsewhere in Northwestern Ontario.

The CPC’s influence among youth workers, women, and agricultural workers was waning. No functioning Women’s Department or shop presence could be found in District 6. Despite the large number of small farmers in the district, the Farmers’ Unity League (FUL) remained virtually unknown in the region. All of this, the 1931 Plenum concluded, resulted from “the state of affairs in the party itself.”

To solve the organizational problems and, specifically, to recruit Anglo-Saxon farmers, the WUL convinced Harry Bryan to work as an unpaid organizer. He used his contacts amongst the English unionists and the Finns to recruit workers in both the

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156 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7380, 8C0096, Tom Ewen, “Report on District 6,” 7 July 1931, pp. 2.
158 LAC, CPC, Reel M-7378, 4A 2615, “Resolution on the Party Plenum, and the Tasks of the Party in District #6,” circa 1931, p. 3.
lumber and agricultural industries.\textsuperscript{159} Despite Bryan’s efforts, organizing workers in other fields still fell to the LAWIU due to the lack of WUL leadership. For example, the LAWIU had successfully organized a section of transport workers when 200 and 300 dockworkers in the both Port Arthur and Fort William joined. A short-lived publication entitled \textit{The Great Lakes Transport Worker} was even established.

The inability of the CPC to attract members from industries outside of the lumber camps continued through the summer and fall. For example, at the June District convention Barker reported that 32 units were operating in the region with only 239 members in twenty-seven of the units, fifty-four of whom were women.\textsuperscript{160} It was only because of the personalities of Gibson and Gilbert that the numbers had not decreased further. Gibson managed in late 1931 to organize a small number of food workers in Port Arthur. Working with Harry Bryan, Gilbert likewise had reorganized over 30 workers and YCL members at the Thunder Bay Dairy into the newly established Food Workers Union (the first dairy in Canada to do so).\textsuperscript{161} The arrest in August of nine of the CPC’s leaders on charges of sedition and belonging to an illegal organization had also led to a renewal of activity. Like their comrades throughout the country, Communists immediately reacted when news reached them. The participation of 4,000 workers in

\textsuperscript{159} LUA, JMLHC, Tape 5, Harry Bryan Reminiscences, 1972.
\textsuperscript{160} \textit{PANC}, 20 April 1932. This included in West Fort William sixty-five members of the YCL. The source of this information was reputedly to be located in records obtained by the Port Arthur chief of police during a raid on 30 September 1930.
\textsuperscript{161} See LAC, CPC, Reel M-7377, 3A 1548, Tom Ewen to Mary Gilbert, 4 February 1931 and Reel M-7380, 8C 0096 to 8C0097, Tom Ewen, “Report on District 6,” 7 July 1931, pp. 2-3. Harry Bryan had originally organized the dairy workers along with various dairy farmers in the District of Thunder Bay in 1929. See LUA, Thunder Bay Finnish-Canadian Historical Society fonds (hereafter TBFCHS), MG8, B, 7, 30, Item 2, Interview with Einar Nordstrom, 15 and 19 March, 2 May, and 7 May 1979. According to Nordstrom, the dairy outperformed its commercial counterparts during the Depression. Some mistakes and the eventual lack of need for it led to it going out of business.
demonstrations led Attorney General William Price of Ontario to describe it as “an uprising.”

Although total party membership (in all WUL-affiliated unions) in the district had fallen to only 700 members, of whom less than 50 were actually working, clearly the Communist labour movement still could respond strongly to a challenge.

By the beginning of 1932, while the WUL had assisted in the organizational restructuring of the party, it had also exacerbated many of its internal problems. The much more established, and largely non-English sections, such as those in Fort William, West Fort, and Port Arthur, continued to “have great remnants of the past passivity, resistance to the turn on the part of the leading circles, inability to break with old forms of activity, hiding behind excuse of persecution and victimization.” Reports of secret meetings and demonstrations of those opposing the WUL were reportedly occurring across the region in what was seen as a degeneration of the CPC in the area. As one official commented, while the differences in the party had apparently been “partially

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162 Betcherman, 175. Protests in November once again featured thousands of workers, dozens of police, and numerous arrests. It certainly must have irked party leaders that Finns in the region, responding to Vapaus’s position that the arrests were part of national attempts to suppress the revolutionary movement, were by far the most visible. See The Worker, 7 November 1931; and Pilli, The Finnish-Language Press in Canada, 186-187. For more on the arrests and subsequent trials, see Betcherman, 171-211. For general overviews on the arrests of the CPC leaders, see Avakumovic, The Communist Party in Canada, 87; Pilli, The Finnish-Language Press in Canada, 182; Ben Swankey and John Evans Shiels, Work and Wages: A Documentary Account of the Life and Times of Arthur H. (Slim) Evans, 1890-1944 (Vancouver: Trade Union Research Bureau, 1977), 33; F.R. Scott, “The Trial of the Toronto Communists,” Queen’s Quarterly 39 (August 1932): 512-527; and Ahti Tolvanen, “Finntown” A Perspective on Urban Integration: Port Arthur Finns in the Interwar Period 1918-1939 (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1985), 101.


164 LAC, CI, Reel 14 [K-282], 495, 98, 128, p. 32, John Wein [?] Secretary National Partifraction Burom UMO [?], 24 October 1931, p. 2. For Jim Barker’s report on the general difficulties in trade union work related to District 6, see The Worker, 17 October 1931.

165 LAC, CI, Reel 14 [K-282], 495, 98, 128, p. 32, John Wein [?] Secretary National Partifraction Burom UMO [?], 24 October 1931, p. 2.
overcome… we still have plenty of carry over of Federalism from the past.”

It is significant that, at the CPC’s February 1932 party plenum, some delegates admitted to being involved in “splitting tactics,” which had led the Party into “mistakes” in its struggle against the supposed right danger. The typically self-flagellating Third Period jargon captured some grains of truth: District 6, although plainly the CPC’s heartland, was not flourishing. The CPC had made some gains in visibility and organizational presence, but in Port Arthur and Fort William, no shop or factory group could be found, and the WUL existed in name only. Hautamäki had been marginalized, Gilbert was thought by some to be ideologically unsound and only intermittently effective, and the controversial Jim Barker had been deported. There was a palpable sense within the Party as a whole that the pattern of “obligatory membership” in the Communist Party for those who joined the Finnish Society for cultural or personal reasons was diluting the party.

While admitting that the district reflected many of the problems facing the party nationally, the local leadership was blamed for utterly failing to capitalize on a local situation pregnant with the possibilities of growth. As demonstrated, the WUL and its activities in the first few years of the 1930s alienated many workers at the Lakehead. Alf Hautamäki for one remained adamant that the destruction of the ethnic solidarity, which

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166 LAC, CI, Reel 14 [K-282], 495, 98, 128, p. 33, John Wein [?] Secretary National Partifraction Burom UMO [?], 24 October 1931, p. 3.

167 While groups of the WUL were reputedly active amongst the Freight Handlers and the Pulp and Paper Industry, this amounted to nine individuals who operated in isolation. See LAC, CPC, Reel M-7378, 4A 2616, “Resolution on the Party Plenum and the Tasks of the Party in District #6,” circa 1931, p. 4.

168 PANC, 20 April 1932.

had resulted from the murder of Rosval and Voutilainen, owed more to the work of Anglo-Canadian organizers than to the trade unionists or the IWW, as the CPC executive suggested.\(^{170}\)

By 1932, the CPC firmly believed that “the present system of obligatory membership of the CP [Communist Party] for those workers who join the Finnish Society for social reasons must be abandoned.” The leadership believed, considering the ongoing issues, that “only those who are convinced Communists can be recruited into the Party. The Finnish Society must become a mass organization and be utilized by the Party fraction as a recruiting ground for the Party.”\(^{171}\) The LAWIU had become more widespread and the number of locals at the Lakehead increased from 11 to 34; however, total national membership in the union fell 30% during this period in part due to growing unemployment.\(^{172}\) While the LAWIUC, the largest Communist union at the Lakehead, would affiliate with the WUL in 1930, its initiatives and large Finnish membership would put it and its leadership increasingly at odds with the goals of the national leadership. By 1932, the ongoing tensions, rooted in many cases in ethnic differences, once again fuelled the desire for many to find alternatives.\(^{173}\)

As the next chapter will discuss, to achieve this goal they realized that key to such


\(^{173}\) In his autobiography, Tom McEwen insisted that the resolution for the 1929 Lumber Workers Industrial Union of Canada strike in the Port Arthur area resulted from the WUL’s first experience with mediation. However, this is unlikely, as the WUL was not formed until after the strike had ended. See McEwen, *The Forge Glows Red*, 158.
success at the Lakehead lay in undermining the activities of the IWW and, in essence, stripping 314 Bay Street of its allure. Despite recent successes with recruiting new members (especially amongst the unemployed), LAWIU leaders remained concerned about the activities of the IWW – even though they dismissed their rivals as “quite like a bunch of rabbits under the leadership of the well-known pie artist – [J.D.] Golden [the new head of the IWW in Canada].”\(^{174}\) Underneath the words, one senses a worried acknowledgement that the Lakehead Left was far from a homogeneous CPC stronghold.

\(^{174}\) LAC, CPC, Reel M-7376, 1A 0470, Alf Hautamäki to G. Lamont, 27 November 1930. Golden had been active in the region, according to Hautamäki, for 3 weeks.
Chapter 10
Wobbly Relations:
The Communist Party of Canada, the Industrial Workers of the World, and the
Lakehead, 1932-1935

Between 1932 and 1935, the Lakehead was gripped by a series of strikes that not only nearly crippled the already-weakened economy of the region but also gravely affected the workers’ organizations still existing in Port Arthur and Fort William. The year 1933 alone featured ten strikes in Northwestern Ontario logging camps involving over 3,000 workers. According to the Department of Labour, such disputes accounted for one-third of the total time lost in Canada, including two of the ten largest non-coal mining strikes in the entire country.\(^1\) This number increased in 1934 to sixteen strikes involving over 6,107 workers.\(^2\) The Workers’ Unity League (WUL), through the Lumber and Agricultural Workers’ Industrial Union of Canada (LAWIU) played a prominent role in the unrest. Yet, it was a movement that extended far beyond the Communists. By 1933, only 500 of an estimated 3,500 workers in the heavily Finnish-dominated lumber industry in the Thunder Bay District actually belonged to the LWIUC.\(^3\) It is even more startling that despite the role played by the CPC in this period’s momentous wave of unrest, by July 1935 only about 400 members could be found in District 6, despite total party membership climbing to 7,390.\(^4\)

As this chapter demonstrates, in the Lakehead the CPC in 1932 faced many of the

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1. John Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class During the Great Depression” (Phd diss., Dalhouise University, 1984), 251.
same challenges it had faced in 1926. Notwithstanding the efforts of the WUL, and the vigorous attempts by the Party’s leaders to implement the Comintern’s directives, not much had actually changed. The language groups and lumber workers’ unions remained vital. As one party official told the Comintern’s Anglo-American Secretariat: “our sectarian approach to the masses,” combined with glaring weaknesses in trade-union work, had confined the Party to its traditional bases of support. At the same time, the CPC faced a new element in a revived and combative IWW. Although sworn enemies of each other, the CPC and the IWW evolved a curiously symbiotic relationship on the ground that was very different from the somewhat abstract revolutionary doctrines enunciated in Moscow or Chicago. And both revolutionary socialist organizations were unable to expand much beyond their Finnish-Canadian base, and in the end, their inability to do so meant they did not survive, as powerful shapers of the Lakehead left, the vast sea-change that came over the Canadian and international socialist movement in 1935.

The first few months of 1932 did not bode well for the aspirations of Communists at the Lakehead. The year began with the deportation of District Organizer Jim Barker (alias Sam Langley). According to the Canadian Labor Defender, he “was picked up on the street in Port Arthur, thrown around by two detectives, handcuffed and placed in the cells.” By 10 p.m. that same night he was on an eastbound train and, at the time of the

5 LAC, Communist International fonds (hereafter CI), MG10-K3, Reel 2 [K-270], 495, 72, 206, p. 3, Meeting Bureau, Anglo American Secretariat, Report on Canada, 4 May 1932, 3.
6 Lakehead University Archives (hereafter LUA), Canadian Teollisuusunionistinen Kannatus Liito fonds (hereafter CTKL), MG10, E, 10, 12, Herbert Mahler to Eino Markkanen, 10 August 1931.
article, on the ship Ascania heading for Europe. While deportations had become a common occurrence for immigrant workers in the immigrant heavy timber industry, the sudden deportation of the British-born Barker no doubt was an attempt to deprive the already-weakened District Bureau of its most active member. The national leadership of the CPC had thereby lost its most faithful local servant.

Barker’s arrest and deportation was just one of many instances of a dramatic campaign of official repression. Provincial and city police frequently searched the residences of known and suspected Communists in both Fort William and Port Arthur. Specifically targeted were the Ukrainian Labour Temple in Fort William and both the Communist and IWW Finnish Labour Temples in Port Arthur. Also singled out were the local offices of the Canadian Labour Defense League (CLDL) and the WUL. The police often seized “suspicious” literature and threatened those in the workers’ and Finnish halls with arrest and deportation. In a few instances, they even apprehended those they found present at the time of the search in an attempt to force the CPC to spend its time and resources in litigation rather than rallying workers to their cause out in the camps or on the streets.

Under these conditions, left-wing activism was fraught with danger and difficulty. Yet Lakehead leftists kept working. The Young Communists, for example, organized

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7 Canadian Labor Defender (January 1932), p. 3.
10 The Worker, 19 March 1932. According to lists published in The Worker on its tenth anniversary, the FOC, International Cooperative, ULFTA, Women’s Section of the ULFTA,
strike support in Nipigon and initiated a Thunder Bay membership drive.¹¹ Youthful members of the WUL organized a Finnish Workers’ Sports Club and those in the Ukrainian Labor-Farmer Temple Association in Fort William and Intola maintained a vibrant presence.¹² All the while, such young leftists were intensively surveilled by the RCMP. In such an environment, many Finnish Communists realized ever more sharply how important it was to combine with Ukrainian and other “ethnic” socialists, as evidenced in a joint slate of candidates in the 1932 Port Arthur civic elections.¹³ As the Canada-wide pattern of anti-Communist repression took hold, CPC insiders thought that many in the Lakehead had succumbed to a “great terror.” In May 1932, the Anglo-American Secretariat was told that the membership had become “panic-stricken and somewhat passive,” and even the region’s many left demonstrations were not generating solid growth for the Party.¹⁴ State repression and Bolshevization together, it seemed, had worked to demoralize the Lakehead left.

¹¹ Young Worker, 29 January, p. 5 and 17 February 1932, p. 5.
¹² See Young Worker, 17 February 1932, p. 8 and 30 September 1932, p. 1.
¹³ Ahti Tolvanen, Finntown: A Perspective on Urban Integration: Port Arthur Finns in the Interwar Period 1918-1939 (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1985), 102. In total, 48 candidates were nominated in Port Arthur. For local coverage of the elections, see Port Arthur News-Chronicle (hereafter PANC), 28 December 1931. For “ethnic” solidarity, see LAC, Cl, Reel 2 [K-270], 495, 72, 206, p. 7-8, Meeting Bureau, Anglo American Secretariat, Report on Canada, 4 May 1932, 7-8. In the case of May Day demonstrations in 1932, they occurred and were well attended despite the “May day united front committees” application to hold a parade being refused by the city councils in both cities at the bequest of George Taylor, the Port Arthur chief of police, and C.E. Watkins, Fort William chief of police. See Fort William Daily Times-Journal (hereafter FWDTJ), 29 April 1932. For a report of the “peaceful” gatherings, see FWDTJ, 2 May 1932.
¹⁴ LAC, Cl, Reel 2 [K-270], 495, 72, 206, p. 7-8, Anglo-American Secretariat, Report on Canada, 4 May 1932, 7-8. In April, C.E. Watkins, Chief of Police in Fort William, attacked Communism before the Missionary Society of St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church. He outlined the recent activities and promised that firm action would be taken in the future. See, PANC, 20 April 1932.
Added to these CPC woes was another: the re-emergence of a much more active and enthusiastic IWW. Finns disquieted by Bolshevization, and some of them perhaps already inclined to syndicalism, began to abandon the LAWIU for the IWW’s Lumber Workers’ Industrial Union (LWIU) and the IWW-affiliated Finnish support circle Canadian Teollisuusunionistinen Kannatus Liitto (CTKL), which functioned under a newly-created Canadian Administration (CA) of the IWW. Doubtless to the chagrin of some Communists, the Wobblies, not the Communists, held centre stage in the struggle against the Pigeon River Company in 1932.15 Yet, the Communists, through the WUL, lent their support to the strikers, in the form of cash contributions and food, and when the strikers were beaten, they placed the blame not on the IWW, but on the repressive tactics of the RCMP.16

It would be hard to exaggerate the traumatic results of the RCMP crackdown. According to the CLDL, in 1930 200 members of the CPC were arrested on minor charges. By 1931, this number had increased to 720, ranging from charges under Section 98, sedition, unlawful assembly, and inciting to riot. In the first six months of 1932 alone, the CLDL reported 456 arrests.17 The issues facing the district did receive a significant amount of attention at the August Plenum of the CLDL.18 Primarily, delegates expressed optimism about gains in the district’s Anglo-Saxon membership. According to the Plenum’s report, the arrest and trial of the eight leaders of the CPC had resulted in

15 Worker, 2 July 1932.
16 Worker, 30 July 1932.
18 LAC, CSIS, vol. 6, file 1025-9-9103, part 1, p. 0502, RCMP Western Ontario District Report, 10 August 1932.
unprecedented support from across the country. “In Toronto, Vancouver, and Port Arthur districts,” it was suggested, “there is already a decided turn towards the Anglo-Saxon masses.” In Port Arthur, this included the participation of many leading trade unionists. The Lakehead’s members constituted 1,000 of the CLDL’s 13,042 members. They came from local workers’ organizations that included the Lumber Workers Industrial Union locals, Pulp and Paper Workers locals, Building Union Trade locals, Trade and Labour Council (Port Arthur), ULFTA, Unemployed Councils, and the Workers’ Benevolent Association.

The Plenum also resolved that the Port Arthur District should establish a Finnish Patronati. The Patronati was a structure first used as a committee among Italian emigrants in France in 1927. They used the committee to raise money for victims in Italy. “The Patronati,” the CLDL informed districts, “constitute a wide mass movement with a very loose organizational form.” The purpose of the CLDL establishing them in certain districts was to tap into the ranks of various emigrant groups for the purpose of raising funds in support of political prisoners in specific jails or in their country of origin. The CLDL’s enthusiasm for the Patronati suggested a creative new flexibility in the face of the repression, and prefigured in some respects the Popular Front tactics that were to become popular after 1935.

Many of the same issues dealt with at the CLDL Plenum also appeared at the LAWIUU convention held the same month in Sudbury. Delegates from the Lakehead were

21 LAC, CSIS, vol. 6, file 1025-9-9103, part 1, p. 0459-458, “What are the Patronati?”
amongst those who discussed the “heroic support given to the unemployed workers during the strike struggles.” They learned how various Communist organizations “had supported the lumber and sawmill workers in their fight against the common enemy.”

At the conference, the Port Arthur District was instructed to focus its attention and resources on four key tasks. First, the district leadership was instructed to further organize the unemployed lumber workers into the union. Second, it was decided that the district’s executive needed to be strengthened by including more Swedish, Ukrainian, and Slovakian workers. Third, the district needed to keep in close contact with organized workers to ensure they remain. Finally, the district needed to remain vigilant in carrying on an ideological campaign and in “skillfully handling” the White Finn question.

The schism that had occurred within the party following the expulsion of Spector and MacDonald in the late 1920s, also entered into the discussion about both the LAWIU and the CPC’s general stagnation in the region. The failure of the strike at Onion Lake in 1929 became viewed as an example “of the leftist tendency” within the party. The new guard believed that this tendency had found expression in the strikes and it, rather than any of the strategies and tactics involved in the disputes, was responsible for the failure of workers to adopt the program and policy of the LAWIU. To combat these supposedly “left” tendencies, the CPC urged the members to reflect on the centrality of “united front forms of struggle.” Yet, the CPC’s Lakehead policy was inherently contradictory. It was seeking a base within a working class historically inclined to support the IWW, the One Big Union, and the Independent Labour Party, among other non-Communist organizations. Yet rather than articulating a program that might address such other forms

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22 Lumber Worker (September 1932), p. 1.
23 Lumber Worker (September 1932), p. 12.
of leftism, it focused upon perfecting its own internal ideological development. It also remained preoccupied with the predominance of the “foreign born” and the relative absence of “Anglo-Saxon” and “French-Canadian” workers, without really suggesting how, without abandoning its long-time stalwarts, the CPC could effectively reach out to these other Canadians.24

Just as the CPC was undergoing internal changes, so was the structure of the IWW. Sometime between July and August 1932, members in Canada had chosen Port Arthur as the home for the newly formed CA. A pro tem Canadian Executive Branch (CEB) was established under the leadership of Finnish Wobbly H.J. Lindholm. The pro tem CEB quickly launched a Canadian IWW publication The Organizer, and began a series of attacks on capitalism in general and on trade unions and Communists in particular:

The trade unions foster a state of affairs, which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping to defeat one another in wage war. Moreover the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.25

The pro tem CEB also blamed the inability of the unemployed to receive relief on Canadian Communists, “Labour Parties, Unions, Liberals, Conservatives, Churches, and many other organizations.”26 It claimed that the only way the situation could be changed was if one industrial union was formed in such a way that “all its members in any one industry, or in all industries, if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on

24 LAC, CI, Reel 1, [K-269], 495, 72, 176, p. 47, “Anglo-American Secretariat Meeting; Report on Canadian Question,” 2 July 1932.
26 The Organizer 1:2 (September 1932), p. 1.
in any department.”

As The Organizer proclaimed in its inaugural issue, “we of the I.W.W., who have tasted of both victory and defeat, know of old that our tactics and our principles are sooner or later to be recognized by the great mass of workers, both employed and unemployed.”

While the IWW undertook its own organizing activities, it also began to lend moral support to all activities of other organizations attempting to undermine conventional trade unionism. An example of this emphasis was the formation of the Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia (AMW of NS) under the leadership of Michael McNeil in 1932. The pro tem CEB viewed the AMW of NS campaign as inspirational: it had “all the ear marks of the kind of tactics used by the I.W.W.” Such support for the formation of the AMW of NS gave some indication of the IWW’s plan for Canada. The pro tem CEB was quick to assert that the formation of the AMW of NS demonstrated that “the day is not far distant when the coal miners of Nova Scotia and all Canada are organized into the same Union with our brother miners in the United States, who are fast signifying their choice of organization by joining the I.W.W.” The Organizer called upon Nova Scotia miners “to study the structure of the I.W.W. and how it is so built that out of its industrial units is built the model ONE BIG UNION.”

On 12 September 1932, members of the IWW met in the Finnish Labour Temple in Port Arthur to officially establish the Canadian Administration. Well-known Port Arthur Finn H.J. Lindholm presided over the meeting of 17 delegates representing branches and industrial unions from across Canada. In addition to delegates from the Port

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29 The Organizer 1:1 (August 1932), p. 2.
Arthur Branch and General Recruiting Union (GRU), the conference was attended by representatives from Kingston, Ontario and the Vancouver and Merritt branches of British Columbia. Several other localities also sent resolutions, minutes, and correspondence even though their delegates could not attend. The goal of the meeting, according to The Organizer, was to “put the Industrial Workers of the World on the map in Canada,” and to lay the foundation for the First Annual Convention of the Canadian Administration of the IWW to be held in June 1933.30

Although the minutes of the September 1932 Convention fail to mention any reference to the Canadian IWW’s struggle against Communists, the pages of its official organ reveal a deep mistrust of CPC activities in Northwestern Ontario and their “dirty lies.” The CEB contended, for instance, that “the Definition of a Bigot… [was] the Canadian Communist.”31 Often going beyond the Canadian experience for fodder, it attempted to create a rift between the Finnish members and the leaders of the CPC. It sought to draw in some of those lumber workers who had elected to join the recently-renamed Communist Lumber Workers’ Industrial Union of Canada (LWIUC).32 Frequently, contemporary and historic events in Europe were invoked to suggest that Communists in Canada were now colluding in the camps with the hated nationalist “White Finns” who had killed thousands of Finnish socialists during the Finnish Civil

30 The Organizer 1:3 (October 1932), p. 2. See also LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 6, “Minutes of the First Conference of Canadian I.W.W. Held in Port Arthur, Ontario,” 12 September 1932.
31 The Organizer 1:1 (August 1932), p. 4.
32 The decision to change the name of the union back from the Lumber and Agricultural Workers of Canada to the Lumber Workers Industrial Union of Canada (LWIUC) was made so the union could grow on that basis and to reflect the reality that no agricultural branches currently existed. See Lumber Worker (September 1932), 5-6.
The perceived failure of the American Communist party in Michigan was also used as an example of the growing lack of revolutionary policies and tactics within the North American Communist movement. How, the CEB wondered, could Communists consider themselves revolutionary, when it was in fact the Wobblies, not the Communists, who were demanding that workers possess the complete value of their labour, whereas the Communists were content to fiddle with such reforms as unemployment insurance?\(^{34}\)

Despite attempts to portray itself as moderate, principled, and revolutionary, the CEB still advocated, like its pre-war manifestation, the general strike. “Nothing less than the thunder-bolt of the General Strike,” argued the CEB, “can uproot the profit system and destroy it, branch and limb.” Using the short-lived socialist republic in Chile during the summer of 1932 as inspiration, in October 1932 the CEB renewed calls for a general strike and industrial unionism. It argued that the events in Chile were just another example that “the dream of a Socialist Commonwealth is – but a dream, without the strength of Industrial organization.” Moreover, the CEB argued, “No armed insurrection or revolution has yet changed the social system.”\(^{35}\)

While the CEB acknowledged that both the Paris Commune and Russian Revolution had changed material conditions, “both of them were failures insofar as freedom from slavery was the objective.” The French, the article continues, were “still slaves of capitalism” and the Russians were “slaves of State Capitalism.” Only Revolutionary Industrialism, “with its well developed plan for control of the state through

\(^{33}\) The Organizer 1:3 (October 1932), p. 1
\(^{34}\) The Organizer 1:2 (September 1932), p. 2.
\(^{35}\) The Organizer 1:3 (October 1932), p. 1.
control of industries, is the only logical answer to our prayers or salvation. Make your laws in the Union Hall.”

The CEB also took issue with what it perceived to be the CPC’s manipulation of the plight of the unemployed, especially recent immigrants. When, facing starvation, the unemployed in Hearst, Ontario, took action into their own hands and “served several ultimatums” to local authorities, the CPC took credit despite their lack of involvement. Outraged, Wobblies claimed that this was merely another example of Communists throughout Northern Ontario taking credit for the successes of others. The CEB also attacked the Communists for their lack of internationalism. “Real revolutionary labor movements,” The Organizer wrote, “are international, but really Communism is falling in line with the R.B. Bennett regime in Canada: ‘Run those dam [sic] foreign agitators out of the country.’”

It was a sharp critique, yet in many respects, the IWW was in reality little better than its Communist adversary. Between 1924 and 1935, only a handful of General Conventions had occurred, and many of those with little or no Canadian or other non-American representation. In addition, the conventions held in the 1930s tended to focus more on the General Executive Board’s (GEB) survival than any new initiatives to organize workers.

These ideological battles took place against a backdrop of ever-intensifying state repression. In October, unemployed workers in Port Arthur began week-long rotating demonstrations throughout the city to protest the actions of local officials. Einar Nordstrom, a well-known Communist who participated in the demonstrations, recalled that things became violent when fifty protestors gathered peacefully outside the residence

36 The Organizer 1:3 (October 1932), p. 1.
37 The Organizer 1:3 (October 1932), p. 3.
of Port Arthur Mayor John Percy Ibbetson. Informed by an insider of the protestors’ plans, the police, according to Nordstrom, were waiting in nearby bushes and trees.

When the protestors arrived, the police surprised them and proceeded to attack them with clubs and fists. At a prearranged signal, the local RCMP detachment joined in and the protestors were beaten until overpowered and arrested. Many demonstrators received such severe beatings that they became unconscious and later woke up in the local jail having received no medical attention.

In one such incident, a rally of approximately 1,000 unemployed workers in October turned ugly when a dozen mounted officers swinging batons rode into the ranks of demonstrators. A number were injured and knocked unconscious, the most serious case being that of a Finnish worker named K. Jaaska (also spelled Jaaski) who eventually died. Those demonstrators who escaped the initial charge by the mounted police and fled to Bay Street, were run down by police who also used the opportunity to force their way into the Communist hall and arrest all present. Police also raided the Scandinavian Workers’ Society Hall and arrested and ordered deported its chairman, Emil Sandberg,

38 LUA, Jean Morrison Labour History Collection (hereafter JMLHC), General Series 186 A, Tape 25, Interview with Einar Nordstrom, 1972. This event occurred after Communists attempted to hold demonstrations in early September only to be blocked by police each time. See, for example, FWDTJ, 6 September 1932.

39 FWDTJ, 31 October and 1 November 1932; PANC, 28 October 1932; Young Worker, 11 November 1932, p. 1; The Worker, 5 November 1932; LUA, JMLHC, Tape 25, Interview with Einar Nordstrom, 1972; Canadian Labor Defence League Labor Defender (December 1932): 7; Oscar Ryan, The Sedition of A.E. Smith (Toronto: Canadian Labour Defense League, 1934), 7; and Mary Veltri, “Labour Radicalism Among Finnish Bushworkers at the Lakehead, 1916-1936” (HBA thesis, Lakehead University, 1981), 93-94. This was not the only violence to permeate demonstrations in Northwestern Ontario. One event in Sioux Lookout in particular received attention in the local press. An unemployment demonstration on 10 December turned ugly when protestors rioted and one of those present attacked police with an axe. Three provincial policemen were reported injured and 14 demonstrators were eventually jailed. See FWDTJ, 10, 12, and 13 December 1932.
for his alleged role in masterminding the march.40

While the death of Jaaska did result in an inquest, local officials trivialized the sworn testimony of workers and accepted the statements of police without question. The final verdict determined that Jaaska had died of lockjaw resulting from a cut on his nose and as his body “showed no evidence of blows or other violence” when examined, claims of police brutality were unfounded. While the hundreds of socialists who had showed up for the verdict were visibly angered, their “branding [of] the Port Arthur cossacks as murderers” appears to have had little bite.41 Jaaska’s death resulted in a massive funeral reminiscent of the one held for Rosval and Voutalinen in April 1930. Over 1,000 workers took part in his funeral, marching behind his red flag-draped coffin and a banner that read: “The future belongs to toilers. Comrade Jaaska died demanding bread.”42

Jaaska’s death created a sense of solidarity amongst workers in the twin cities and caused civic officials concern. Employment agencies in both Port Arthur and Fort William began to refuse work to Finnish and Ukrainian workers in an attempt to stem the growth of both the CPC and IWW. In no other industry was this more apparent than in the lumber industry. Companies hired men to watch workers and liaised closely with the employment agencies to ensure that known Communists or Wobblies did not receive work.43 Anti-Communist “White Finns,” such as Kosti Koivukoski, president of the Loyal Sons of Canada and an official with the dreaded Pigeon River Timber Company,
were placed in positions of authority within both the employment agencies and the
camps. Their goal of “preserving the good name of the Finns, fighting the Reds by all
means and helping the authorities in whatever way they can,” presented them “with an
ideal opportunity to exploit the antagonisms within the Finnish community and the
divisions within the working class as a whole to their own advantage.”44

The November 1932 District Organization Conference of the YCL in District 6,
however, reveals that little information about the activities of the National Executive
Committee or about what had been occurring in the region had been reported to
members.45 Although an effort was made to rectify the situation, this was cut short by
police raids and the arrest and conviction of Walter Waywood, Secretary of the Fort
William Unemployed Council and a member of the District 6 YCL. Waywood was at
first arrested for allegedly holding up a local gasoline station and, when the local
magistrate dismissed these charges, for being a counterfeiter.46 The real purpose of these
arrests appears to have been for the local police to gather information on “the Young
Communist League, its activities, and many other such questions.” Although the Young
Worker assured its readers that the Secretary “was too loyal to tell them more,” shortly
after Waywood’s arrest the District Organizer of the YCL was incarcerated along with a
host of other non-Anglo members in the region.47

In an attempt to win over current and former Wobblies, the CPC began to take a

44 The Worker, 26 November 1932; Tolvanen, Finntown, 68; Nils Inkilä, “Finnish National
Radicalism Among Finnish Bushworkers at the Lakehead,” 97-98.
45 Young Worker, 11 November 1932, p. 3.
46 The charges were thrown out even though Waywood admitted to making fake coins for
“experimental purposes.”
47 Young Worker, 23 December 1932, p. 3. For more on the raids, see FWDTJ, 9, 21, and 29
November 1932.
more conciliatory tone, even admitting that in the past the IWW had “combined the best elements of the fighting trade unionists, and much of the theoretical knowledge of the Social-Democrats. They helped to radicalize sections of workers.” Yet, “the fatal weakness that makes the I.W.W. anti-working class was their ignorance of the political nature of the class struggle… Industrial organization with the general strike as the weapon to emancipate the workers was the beginning and the end of their theory and practice.” Finally, “the magnificent struggles put up by the I.W.W. in the past taught them no lessons.” 48

They might have added that the Wobblies were equally struggling to balance centralism with grassroots power. Communists at the Lakehead were by no means the only socialists having trouble with their central authorities. The CA’s submission to the 1932 General Convention of the IWW reveals a growing distance between the two Administrative branches. According to the report, between 1931 and 1932, only one IWW-supported speaker had visited Canada, and he had only stopped in Vancouver. In fact, except for the CA’s Secretary-Treasurer, no IWW speaker (English or Finnish) had visited many regions such as Northern Ontario for nearly eight years. Since the September conference in Port Arthur, the Canadian Administration had taken it upon themselves to give two traveling delegates the task of “invading” Eastern and Northern Ontario. The CA claimed that, through the efforts of Fred Anderson and George MacAdam, Sault St. Marie had been brought back into the fold and over 40 new members enrolled in the final weeks of October alone. 49

48 Lumber Worker (December 1932), 13.
49 LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 14, Canadian Administration Secretary-Treasurer and C.E.B to the Delegates of Annual Convention assembled, 1 November 1932, p 1.
According to the CA, total IWW membership in Canada had increased by almost fifty percent since its establishment in July 1932. This was in direct contrast to the GEB’s report of decreasing membership during that same period. The Vancouver, Port Arthur, Sault St. Marie, and Timmins LWIU branches, and the Port Arthur GRU, were all reported to be holding regular meetings and exchanging minutes. Membership meetings were also being held in Kingston and Nipigon. The CTKL also continued to be active.\(^{50}\) In November alone, the Port Arthur branch signed up 30 new dues-paying members. Besides Sault Ste. Marie, other regions expressed a growing need for members in order to stay active.\(^{51}\)

By November, the CA also reported on two initiatives being undertaken solely at its own discretion. Delegates at the General Convention were informed that Anderson, MacAdam, and all Canadian Wobblies had begun a campaign to organize the unemployed into industrial unions throughout Canada. While the Canadian Administration acknowledged that organizing the unemployed was “a seemingly unsound financial step… [it] will turn into a sound step with the acquiring of a larger membership.”\(^{52}\) The General Convention was also informed that the Canadian

\(^{50}\) LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 14, Canadian Administration Secretary-Treasurer and C.E.B to the Delegates of Annual Convention assembled, 1 November 1932, p 2.

\(^{51}\) The Organizer 1:4 (November 1932), p. 3. The activities of both the IWW and CPC did not go unnoticed. The Toronto Labour Leader, for example, viewed the Workers’ Unity League and the IWW in particular as intolerable. It alleged that attacks were being made by the two organizations on workers unwilling to side with them in labour disputes. As increasingly became the case, it described both the WUL and IWW as “Communistic organizations” which thrived on strikes and violence. It further believed that these two organizations represented the biggest threat to the organized labour movement and asked that both the Province of Ontario and the Dominion of Canada take action. See LAC, Department of Labour fonds (hereafter DL), RG27, volume 365, Strike 228, Toronto Labor Leader, 9 November 1934.

\(^{52}\) LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 14. Canadian Administration Secretary-Treasurer and C.E.B to the Delegates of Annual Convention assembled, 1 November 1932, p 3.
Administration planned to submit resolutions calling for alterations to the Constitution of the IWW to reflect the realities of the current situation in Canada. The two most significant changes intensively debated in Canada and eventually made the foci of a referendum, were the reduction of the size of the Executive Board from seven to five and the lowering of initiation fees for unemployed members.

While the CA reaffirmed its commitment to industrial unionism (“as it was an idea no more… [but] a living factor”), it also made it clear to the delegates at the General Convention that it would be actively attempting to “stay on good terms with such revolutionary Unions as the O.B.U [Canada] and the newly formed Amalgamated Mine Workers of Nova Scotia, that efforts to combine all Canadian revolutionary workers into a real ONE BIG UNION can be consummated without difficulty, or with as little difficulty as possible.”\(^{53}\) However, the CA also reported that the biggest obstacle stopping it from making “immediate big gains” was the “anti-I.W.W. propaganda carried on by Finnish Communists.”\(^{54}\)

While Communists may have been generally unwilling to work with the Wobblies, for the 1933 municipal elections, they did participate with other organizations in a “United Front Election Conference.” The conference had been organized to put forth candidates to fight “not only against the out-and-out capitalist politicians, who are supported by the Chamber of Commerce, but more so the candidates and the program of the League for Municipal Progress.” The league had been established by Fred Moore in the 1920s and was now led by on again-off again Communist Alex Gibson.

\(^{53}\) LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 14. Canadian Administration Secretary-Treasurer and C.E.B to the Delegates of Annual Convention assembled, 1 November 1932, p 3.

\(^{54}\) LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 14. Canadian Administration Secretary-Treasurer and C.E.B to the Delegates of Annual Convention assembled, 1 November 1932, p. 1.
Communists were concerned with this organization as, they contended, it “put up candidates who spout revolutionary phrases about ‘organization,’ ‘Control by the workers,’ etc. etc.” Local Communists argued that such ill-defined “leagues” sought to persuade workers to take the easy path of elections rather than the more difficult but rewarding route of class struggle. And they also critiqued the explicit nativism of the Fort William Ratepayers’ Association, which seemed (in the words of the *Young Worker*) determined to stir up “hatred against the foreign-born workers.”

Although intending to run three candidates in each city on the “United Front ticket,” regulations forced them to run only one man (named Nayda) in Fort William and a labourer named Emil Roukkula in Port Arthur. Nayda polled 306 votes in Ward One and in Fort William Ruokalla garnered 700 votes. The “relatively high vote,” according to *The Worker*, resulted from the increased presence of the CPC in the region, in particular during unemployment demonstrations. The inability to win a seat, though, was attributed to the “poor apparatus” in the region. Three aldermen belonging to the League of Municipal Progress were elected, including Gibson in Port Arthur and Fred Moore in Fort William. Their success in winning the vote of workers was due, quite candidly admitted local organizers, to getting the support of the Trade Unions and forming a united front. However, both did not receive as many votes as in the previous year. The election, for many, highlighted the need for the “full mobilization of ALL MASS ORGANIZATIONS.”

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55 *Young Worker*, 23 December 1932, p. 4; *The Worker*, 3 and 31 December 1932; and *FWDTJ*, 23 December 1932.
56 *The Worker*, 14 January 1933. Complete Port Arthur results can be found in the *PANC*, 3 January 1933.
57 *The Worker*, 14 January 1933. For a complete list of candidates in Port Arthur, see *PANC*, 28
Over the next few months, relief efforts dramatically increased, as did the number of threatened and actual strikes.\textsuperscript{58} Workers building the Northwestern Ontario section of the Trans-Canada Highway walked off the job over wages. Unemployment demonstrations also continued unabated. The Workers’ Unity League claimed to be taking a prominent role in each.\textsuperscript{59} Authorities clearly believed this to be the case as surveillance increased and, as was the case in April, the CLDL offices in Port Arthur and the Ukrainian Labour Temple in Fort William were once again raided and workers arrested.\textsuperscript{60}

The raids may have provided the impetus for the renewed sense of solidarity that began just before May Day in 1933. Wobblies, Communists, and assorted Trade Unionists joined to form a committee to organize demonstrations in both cities. The parade and accompanying outdoor mass meeting was attended by a reported 2,500 workers.\textsuperscript{61} Cooperation was most apparent, however, in June 1933 when over 1,300 workers in the Thunder Bay and Nipigon districts began a strike under the leadership of a committee composed of both Communists and Wobblies.\textsuperscript{62}

The LWIUC would claim it organized the joint strike committee. Yet, many signs, such as the central role of the Wobbly-controlled Labour Temple and the salience of key figures, point to its construction through the united efforts of Wobblies,

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\textsuperscript{58} The Worker, 25 February 1933 and FWDTJ and PADNC, 18 February 1933.
\textsuperscript{59} The Worker, 18 March 1933.
\textsuperscript{60} The Worker, 15 April 1933.
\textsuperscript{61} The Worker, 6 May 1933.
\textsuperscript{62} The Worker, 24 June and 1 July 1933; FWDTJ, 7 to 16 June 1933; PANC, 13, 15, and 21 June 1933; and Ian Radforth, Bushworkers and Bosses: Logging in Northern Ontario, 1900-1980 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 127-128.
Communists and even Finnish nationalists. In this instance as in many others, the IWW and Communists could achieve things together that eluded them separately. Finnish and Ukrainian workers leery of Communists, especially given recent controversies regarding their language federations, could be brought into the struggle through the Wobblies. Thus, seemingly opposed forces—the Port Arthur Trades and Labour Council, the YCL, the FOC, the LWIUC, and the IWW—can all be seen contributing to this epochal strike of the 1930s.

It was a large (1300-strong), dramatic and violent strike. It brought crowds of people into the streets of Port Arthur, and although it resulted in a disappointing wage settlement below that demanded by the workers, such concrete achievements as the recognition of camp committees, no-discrimination agreements, and the reform of the truck system in the camps allowed the LWIUC to claim a moral victory. At the same time, the LWIUC blamed the IWW for the settlement’s limitations, and emerged from the strike as its clear beneficiary—with a growth in its membership from 500 to 1300 over the first six months of 1933. Moreover, because the CPC union, unlike the Wobblies,

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63 *The Worker*, 1 July 1933 and *FWDTJ*, 17 1933.
64 See LAC, Communist Party of Canada fonds (hereafter CPC), MG28-IV4, volume 16, file 33, M. J. Fenwick, Mass Meeting Secretary to National Executive, Finnish Organization, 15 November 1933.
65 For a description of the crowds, see Manley, “Communism and the Canadian Working Class During the Great Depression,” 265-266.
66 *The Worker*, 1 July 1933. This event was not isolated. In the next two months two other similar incidents occurred. When a foreman of the Pigeon River Company fired five members of a camp committee in July, workers responded by electing more members to the committee and threatening to strike if the five were not rehired. While the CPC claimed victory in forcing the company to rehire the men, this only occurred because they claimed the allegations were the fabrication of other workers. When in September 140 men went on strike demanding the completion of the camp’s construction before beginning work, the Pigeon River Company fired all of them and imported replacement workers from outside of the Thunder Bay District. Despite CPC claims otherwise, it appears that the strike was only resolved when the Mayor and other city officials from Port Arthur intervened and brokered a deal with the Company. While the
was willing to take part in government-imposed collective bargaining, it was left in a stronger, more permanent position.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1933, the CPC continued to experience success in the forests of Northwestern Ontario.\textsuperscript{67} “An estimated 25,000 meals,” according to Mary Veltri, “were distributed to the strikers through the seven kitchens which were set up in the Lakehead, Tarmola, Lappi, Nipigon, North Branch, and Long Lac.”\textsuperscript{68} Donations and foodstuffs flowed from both the Communist and Wobbly halls in Port Arthur and Fort William. Much of this cooperation resulted from a mass conference held in August 1933. The LWIUC, IWW, unemployed and unorganized workers, and farmers from the region surrounding the Lakehead all participated and agreed upon a strategy for the upcoming harvest and lumber season. A uniform piece rate of $2.50 per cord, a minimum monthly wage of $40.00, and a 75 cent daily charge for board were established.\textsuperscript{69} This solidarity ensured that when timber operators increased wages from the previous year, the mass committee rejected the offer.

The strike continued to gain strength despite an attempt by the LWIUC representatives to take control of the joint IWW/ CPC strike committee. Mass picketing was used in the strike to block supplies to camps so as to stop the importation of strikebreakers. In the case of the Pigeon River Camps, pickets averaged between 500 and

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\textsuperscript{67} See \textit{The Worker}, 29 July 1933 and \textit{PANC}, 26 September 1933.
\textsuperscript{68} Veltri, “Labour Radicalism Among Finnish Bushworkers at the Lakehead,” 101.
\textsuperscript{69} Veltri, “Labour Radicalism Among Finnish Bushworkers at the Lakehead,” 103.
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1000 workers. By the middle of November, over 4,500 lumber workers were participating in the strike, the majority in the Thunder Bay District. In response, the police in Fort William and Port Arthur began to arrest strike fund-raisers in an attempt to weaken the strike effort. In one incident, 47 picketers were arrested and 33 of them were sent to jail for two months or more.

One result of the outcome of the strikes was a change in tactics by the CA of the IWW. The CEB, now under the leadership of the newly elected George MacAdam, began to vigorously push forward the changes its leader thought necessary for the survival of the IWW in Canada. Financially, MacAdam had inherited an administration no better off than that of the Communists. Writing to the other members of the Executive Board, he outlined the priorities of the board as he saw them. Foremost was a commitment to the establishment of the Canadian Defence Organization (CDO). MacAdam viewed the CDO as an important necessity because, he argued, “If the I.W.W. functions with success in the economic field, it will incur the hostility of the masters and their tools.”

While rational, the desire for the CDO demonstrates that the IWW was not acting as an innovative and forward-thinking organization. Instead, it was trying to compete with the recent activities of the CPC’s Canadian Labour Defence League. MacAdam’s letter to the CEB reveals an unwillingness to defend any one outside the IWW or “be put out of the field thru lack of finances.” For an organization already having financial problems, this was not unreasonable; however, it also revealed MacAdam’s concern that “cases would be thrown upon us by the rival defence organization [the Canadian Labour

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70 Tolvanen, Finntown, 82-83.
71 Tolvanen, Finntown, 83.
72 LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 17, George MacAdam to CEB, 1 July 1933, p. 1.
Defence League] and if we do not have a clear cut policy, we could not turn them down without losing prestige.”

The CDO was ambitious in design and difficult to implement. A chronic lack of money meant that members were limited to the CEB and the CTKL. The CEB and MacAdam also proposed to model the CDO after the General Defence Committee. Funds would be generated through membership cards and stamps patterned after those currently used by the CTKL and Junior Wobblies Union; however, as these were unavailable in 1933 and the cost was prohibitive, it was decided that a 25c stamp be made compulsory to those members one year and over and voluntary to those under one year. “Older members,” MacAdam argued, “thoroly [sic] understand the necessity of raising monies.”

The situation surrounding the inability of the GEB to provide support for the defence of Canadian Wobblies also reveals both a lack of interest and understanding in the plight of workers in Canada by the American administration. In fact, the GEB was surprisingly ignorant of events in Canada. For example, despite the OBU Bulletin being sent to both the GEB and Industrial Worker for members to keep abreast of events in Canada, GEB Secretary-Treasurer Herbert Mahler himself admitted “I seldom see it and none are kept on file, so it has gone the waste basket route.”

Responding in the same

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73 LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 17, George MacAdam to CEB, 1 July 1933, p. 1. MacAdam may have also insisted on the establishment of the CDO for personal reasons. Although voting against its establishment at the First Annual Convention, he and five other prominent Wobblies had since been arrested and imprisoned for an incident in Sioux Lookout, Ontario. The men in question were George MacAdam, H. Snider, B. Taylor, T. Spenuk, and M. Fedrokpow. All five were arrested for their part in the action against the relief camp located in Sioux Lookout. MacAdam and Snider were charged as the ringleaders.

74 LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 17, George MacAdam to CEB, 1 July 1933, p. 1.

75 LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 17, George MacAdam to CEB, 11 September 1933, p. 1.
letter sent to Mahler from H.J. Lindholm in July 1932, he further showed the GEB’s lack of information, by requesting “the clippings, then we can look it over and take a shot at them. Perhaps you could accompany the clippings with an article. That would be better as you know the local situation.”

This lack of commitment also sometimes manifested itself in competition within the IWW for scarce resources such as speakers. In 1932, the GEB expressed concern over the CA’s attempts to get Canadian expatriate Fred Thompson from the United States to go on tour throughout Canada. Wagner refused declaring that they needed him themselves and “will try to keep him here as long as we can, although if he should be deported, we cheerfully turn him over to you.”

The need for an organizer in Northwestern Ontario, however, was paramount, as, according to one relief camp worker recently moved to British Columbia, the Communists had managed to “create enough friction between the anti-communists and pro-communists that it is almost impossible to hold a camp organization together once the word communist is mentioned.”

Although many of MacAdam’s desired reforms would have made the Canadian Administration less dependent on the GEB, the establishment of a Canadian Wobbly Press was not high on his list. Although less than a month earlier the First Annual

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76 LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 12. Herbert Mahler to H.J. Lindholm, 8 July 1932. The lack of information also permeated into the official literature of the IWW during the next two decades. Fred Thompson, a Secretary-Treasurer of the G.E.B. during the late 1930s and, interestingly, a Canadian himself, not only gets the date of the Canadian Administration’s establishment wrong, but ignores the entire 1930s except for George MacAdam’s imprisonment. Clearly, while Canadian IWW members had a long history of being knowledgeable of events in the United States and supporting striking workers in that country, little evidence exists of the GEB’s commitment to the IWW in Canada. See Fred Thompson, The I.W.W. Its First Fifty Years (1905-1955) (Chicago: Industrial Workers of the World, 1955), 177-78.

77 LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 12. Joseph Wagner to H. Lindholm, 18 January 1933.

78 LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 18, Dave Dubé to George MacAdam, 7 July 1933.
Convention had empowered the CEB to establish a Canadian IWW paper, MacAdam voiced his personal dislike for the proposal. In contrast, many (like the Canadian Administration Secretary-Treasurer H.J. Lindholm) strongly urged members to support an IWW paper “chuck full of Canadian and World Wide labor news.” Although the Industrial Worker, Lindholm suggested, “leaves nothing to be desired for our fellow workers across the line,” the success of The Organizer clearly demonstrated a “crying need” for a “nice little paper” printed at the Lakehead. Such a paper, he argued, would appeal to both former and current members of the IWW and provide food for the increasingly radical labour movement.79

The proposed content of the paper provides a window into how Wobbly leaders in both Canada and the United States viewed the world around them.80 Lindholm, for instance, argued that a Canadian-based paper would satisfy the growing appetite for information on Technocracy and Technology. He encouraged Canadian Wobblies “to bring the matter of subscribing for a paper which advocates practical Technocracy to them and see how soon they will buy a subscription.” Even the GEB Secretary-Treasurer Joseph Wagner, who would neither support nor condemn the establishment of a Canadian-based paper, agreed “the I.W.W. should profit as much by the development of the Technocrats’ moves as possible.”81 Lindholm’s and Wagner’s interest in “Technocracy,” an approach to the crisis of the Depression derived from the scientific management writings of Howard Scott, an admirer of Thorstein Veblen, suggested that Canadian Wobblies shared some of the utopian aspirations of their American

79 LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 16. H.J. Lindholm to All Members, 12 January 1933.
80 LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 16. H.J. Lindholm to All Members, 12 January 1933.
81 LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 12, Joseph Wagner to H. Lindholm, 30 January 1933.
counterparts for a post-capitalist, scientifically-managed society informed by the most advanced concepts of expertise and efficiency.\textsuperscript{82}

Despite claims by Lindholm that the Canadian Administration already had 200 subscribers lined up by July, MacAdam, citing once again the financial crisis that faced the CA, argued that a Canadian paper could not succeed when the \textit{Industrial Worker}, despite its large subscription base, was teetering on the brink of financial collapse and dragging the GEB down with it.\textsuperscript{83} Many Wobblies, such as August Tortilla, agreed and instead it was decided to petition the \textit{Industrial Worker} to create a “special space for Canadian news.”\textsuperscript{84}

The situation facing the IWW in Canada only worsened in the coming months as members increasingly began to perceive that the CA had done “little or nothing” during the last few years. Foremost was the issue of language. August Tortilla’s resignation in Sault Ste. Marie on 12 July 1933, for example, demonstrated that the issue was hardly settled. Torttila argued that while wholly committed to the IWW, he wanted someone to take his place on the CEB “as it is a handy cap for me as I cant Read or write English and it is Hard to get a interprtor [sic] all ways that can exsplane [sic] them.”\textsuperscript{85}

Echoing the thoughts of many Wobblies, MacAdam argued that the IWW in general “had been living on our reputation too long now.” He also challenged the CEB

\textsuperscript{82} For more on the Technocratic movement, see William E. Akin, \textit{Technocracy and the American Dream: The Technocratic Movement, 1900-1941} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

\textsuperscript{83} LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 17, George MacAdam to CEB, 1 July 1933, p. 1. At the June Convention, George MacAdam went on record as opposing the establishment of a Canadian Wobblly Press.

\textsuperscript{84} LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 16, August Torttila to George MacAdam, 12 July 1933, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{85} LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 16, August Torttila to George MacAdam, 12 July 1933, p. 1. See also Peter Campbell’s similar arguments in his “Cult of Spontaneity: Finnish-Canadian Bushworkers and the Industrial Workers of the World in Northern Ontario, 1919-1934.”
and membership in general “to get busy and lay the ground work for a drive this winter that will put the I.W.W. on its feet in Canada... Either we change our tactics and get down to the facts that are confronting us or [we] will be relegated to the ranks of ‘spittoon philosophers.’” One of the biggest obstacles to success, however, was the “lack of efficient organizers who have the ability to hold meetings, especially outdoor meetings.” The need for good organizers was paramount in MacAdam’s view as, he aptly observed, the IWW lacked “the pep that the ‘commies’ have. They are always on the go and manage to get a lot of publicity which is essential to a labour union that is just growing.” By stealing the ‘thunder and publicity’ of the CPC, MacAdam reasoned, the IWW could draw away workers disillusioned by the “brass band bally-hoo” of a Party that was still dominated by Moscow.

Hostility to both the CPC and IWW following the 1933 strikes provided many of these disillusioned workers, however, with an alternative. Affiliated to the All Canadian Congress of Labour, the Canadian Bushmen’s Union (CBU) was dominated by anti-Communist and “White,” or non–socialist, Finnish lumber workers. The union and its members acted as informants for the RCMP and OPP on the activities of local Communists. While the union disappeared sometime during 1934, it created difficulties during its brief existence. Formed under the leadership of George Salverson, a Port Arthur Alderman and prominent member of the newly-formed Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, the union’s executive also included a local timber sub-

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86 LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 17, George MacAdam to CEB, 11 September 1933, p. 2.
87 LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 17, George MacAdam to CEB, 1 July 1933, p. 1.
88 For a discussion of the Canadian Bushmen’s Union, see Radforth, Bushworkers and Bosses, 130. For the Communist view of the CBU see, for example, The Worker, 20 January 1934.
contractor, L. Maki, and the local Finnish Consul, a man named Koivukoski.\textsuperscript{89} The executive’s composition, and the role of Salveron in mediating an end to recent strikes, led the CPC and IWW to attack the CBU as a company union.\textsuperscript{90} In response, Salveron, using local newspaper coverage of a spurious plot by the Soviet Union to undermine Canadian timber production, attacked the LWIUC for its use of professional agitators who were more loyal to the CPC and Russia than to the region.\textsuperscript{91} Even though his accompanying claims that little dissatisfaction over working conditions existed were utterly false, his appeal to regional patriotism did strike a chord.

Workers at the Lakehead, especially within the lumber industry, had seen a continuous parade of organizers and agitators from the CPC tour the region for nearly a decade. These individuals would appear, organize, and then move on. During provincial and federal elections, the CPC would use the region – deemed one in which Communist sympathies ran high and success was a real possibility – to supplant the local leadership and parachute in candidates such as A.E. Smith in an attempt to win a seat for one of the Party’s cadre. Once the election had been lost, Smith would leave and not return until the next election. In the meantime, the region would go back to being neglected by the CEC and having to beg for speakers. Although the CBU failed to attract more than a few supporters (aside from the White Finns who did not share the ideological belief of members of either the LWIUC or LWIU), its existence proved to be an irritant for both

\textsuperscript{89} Tolvanen, \textit{Finntown}, 84.
\textsuperscript{90} LUA, CTKL, F, 15, 10, G. Salveron to Strike Committee, United Front, 7 June 1933. See this file and F, 15, 11 for a series of strike bulletins issued by the committee. Established in 1932, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation had little presence at the Lakehead during the strike and did not become a force in the region until late 1934.
\textsuperscript{91} PANC, 7 December 1933.
the CPC and IWW in the region until it disappeared in 1934.\footnote{PANC, 20 November 1933.}

Violence broke out again in early December when, after nearly a month of labour unrest in the bushcamps, police attempted to break the ranks of strikers blocking strikebreakers from getting access to the Pigeon Timber Company’s stables. Over 50 police officers, armed with guns and batons, attacked the unarmed strikers but were successfully repelled. Undaunted, they next fell upon a nearby workers’ hall and, with the assistance of a number of citizens, proceeded to enter and beat the men found asleep inside. Additional men outside ambushed those who managed to escape.\footnote{Tolvanen, \textit{Finntown}, 85. For daily coverage of the strike, including the establishment of a commission to investigate why a settlement had not been reached and the almost daily reports of strikers being arrested, see \textit{PANC}, 2 to 13 December 1933.} So indiscriminate had the police become that, according to one witness, they “did not distinguish strikers from bystanders and several onlookers and passersby in the vicinity received a cudgeling."\footnote{PANC, 11 December 1933; 12 December 1933; and Tolvanen, \textit{Finntown}, 84-86. Tolvanen’s sources for the eyewitness accounts are from interviews with Yrjö Korpi (January 1973) and Mrs. Elvi Beck (August 1978).} The next day even the most ardently anti-Communist unions at the Lakehead added their voices to those protesting the City of Port Arthur’s involvement in the violence and demanded that the strike be resolved. Bowing to pressure, eight days after the police attack, many smaller operations reached a settlement over wages and recognized the unions involved. However, the larger companies, while agreeing to align their wage scale with the other companies, continued to refuse to recognize any unions.\footnote{PANC, 14 to 16 and 18 December 1933 and Tolvanen, \textit{Finntown}, 87-89.}

The CPC had won renown in its struggle against the timber companies, even if in all such struggles it incurred the anti-Communist and anti-foreign wrath of the local media.

Through to the close of 1933, the Party was prominent in the extraordinary struggles
unfolding in Northwestern Ontario.

Certainly many young people were attracted by the Party’s fighting record. In November, Communist youth staged a major youth conference, which drew participants from a host of socialist and non-socialist organizations. Yet, from the standpoint of the Junior Wobblies, even this opening up to non-Communist progressives needed to be pushed further: in a fascinating issue of their paper, The Junior Recruit, they drew upon the example of Marx himself in urging the Communists to reconsider their disparaging attitudes towards students, teachers, and the petty trades. It was a foreshadowing of the new “common sense” on the left that would fully flourish only after 1935.

Predictably, just as the fortunes of the party seemed to be improving at the Lakehead, the nature of the Communist movement underwent another change. The policy of separate unions, which had consolidated with the creation of the WUL, gave way to renewed efforts to create a united front to tackle the growing concerns over fascism. As Leslie Morris indicated to the First Congress of the League Against War and Fascism in October 1934: “In Canada before the fascist avalanche comes down the mountain-side we must forge this united front through which fascism cannot break.” While for many the fight for the legality of the CPC and the release of the leaders arrested in 1931 remained a priority, the weakened position of the party also necessitated a change in tactics. The CPC realized that, aside from the odd strike victory, their efforts to form a mass

96 The Young Worker, 1 November 1933, p. 7.
97 The Junior Recruit (November 1933). Not surprisingly, the YCL disagreed with the Wobbly perspective. See The Young Worker, 15 November 1933, p. 6.
98 The Worker, 17 October 1934; “Speech to First Congress Against Fascism,” in Look on Canada, now, and see history anew: An epoch past and a life fashioning under your hands Communism, to which all roads lead, Selected Writings of Leslie Morris, 1923-1964 (Toronto: Progress Books, 1970), 16.
movement had been a dismal failure. Even party strongholds such as the Finnish lumber workers at the Lakehead had suffered near-crippling losses in membership. By 1934, the attempts by the LWIUC to organize some form of united mass conference had increasingly met with mistrust and scorn. The IWW, still a force the CPC could not dismiss in the region, refused to participate and the remaining workers who attended either belonged to camps too small to have a great influence or merely followed the decisions of the LWIUC representatives.99

The decisions made at the conference were also hollow. Many companies, including the region’s largest, had already signed agreements with the CBU. In effect, it had managed to block both the LWIUC and the LWIU from organizing in the largest camps.100 Members of the Fort William Ukrainian Labor Temple Association – comprising the second largest number of members after the Finns – were also increasingly more concerned with the famine situation in the Soviet Ukraine than domestic issues. This situation, coupled with increasing – although often discredited – reports of “Stalinist terror” in the Ukraine, led many party faithful to openly question the Communist International, the Canadian leadership, and leave both the CPC and ULFTA.101 The Ukrainian community had also split into a number of factions. Many in such “nationalist organizations” as the Provista Society (fd. 1923), ardently opposed the CPC.102

99 The Worker, 19 September 1934.
100 PANC, 10 September 1934.
102 Farmerske Zhyttia, 25 April 1934 in Prophets and Proletarians: Documents on the History of
While the lumber unions and the remnants of the former language organizations were experiencing inner turmoil, Jack Quinn, head of the Single Men’s Section of the Unemployed Worker’s Protective Association (UWPA), reported that the association had been especially active in camps connected to the construction of the Northwestern Ontario section of the Trans-Canada Highway. The UWPA was a YCL-supported organization representing hundreds of single men in Port Arthur alone. It had won relief concessions shortly after being established. The activities of the UWPA were accompanied by the WUL affiliated Relief Camp Workers’ Union (RCWU). With over 7,000 men employed in relief camps located in Northwestern Ontario, the RCWU had been established as a means of mobilizing the workers and providing a unified voice to advocate better conditions and wages in the camps. Interestingly, the YCL continued its attempts to establish its own nucleus in the camps with a certain amount of success as well.

The YCL, RCWU, and UWPA all played major roles in the May Day activities of 1934. An attempt to coordinate workers in the relief camps was made throughout the Thunder Bay District. Linked to these events were anti-war and anti-fascism meetings to
stir up support for a series of mass rallies in the coming months.\textsuperscript{107} The Young Worker reported in mid-May that the Port Arthur YCL had approached the Junior Wobblies and the Youth Section of the Fort William ULFTA to form a mass committee. This proposed committee would “conduct its activity by approaching all bourgeois youth organizations, sport organizations and church clubs.” The purpose was to make them aware of the importance of the anti-war activity and, by “using all available statistics… link our agitation with the economic position” facing young workers.\textsuperscript{108} One of the CPC’s most interesting cultural challenges arose in its struggles with the Junior Wobblies, which performed a significant cultural and social role in promoting the ideal of the general strike and direct action in the Lakehead.\textsuperscript{109}

As Communists and Wobblies jockeyed for position, other political parties began to take advantage of the situation. When the writ was dropped for the 1934 provincial election, Jack Gillbanks, national organizer of the LWIUC, received the nomination for Port Arthur at the United Workers and Farmers Convention. Considering the Liberal and Conservative candidates, the choice of Gillbanks cannot be seen as anything but a calculated attempt to appeal to the hundreds of unemployed lumber workers in the region, as both the other candidates were timber barons whose mistreatment of workers had become synonymous with the problems facing the working class in the region. However, the candidacy of Gillbanks and his ties to the LWIUC did appeal to many voters.

“A Vote for Gillbanks is a Vote Against Poverty, fascism, War,” wrote Peter Zakar, a lumber worker serving time in the Fort William jail farm for his participation in

\textsuperscript{107} The Young Worker, 16 April 1934.
\textsuperscript{108} The Young Worker, 14 May 1934.
\textsuperscript{109} The Young Worker, 28 May 1934.
recent lumber strikes and unemployment demonstrations.\textsuperscript{110} The entry of a candidate for the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), a newly established western-based political party composed of socialist, farm, co-operative, and labour organizations, hampered the Communist ability to secure the labour vote. Gillbanks did win 634 votes; however, this total was down significantly from the left tally in the previous election. The CCF carried the majority of rural polls.\textsuperscript{111}

Although politically unsuccessful, the Tenth Annual Convention of the LWIUC held in Port Arthur in August demonstrated the growing strength of the CPC in the region. Unlike past conventions, Gillbanks focused on the positive aspects of the union and underlined its position within the industry and within the WUL. “Since its formation fifteen years ago,” he reported, “it has grown from a small sectarian group to one of the biggest [Workers’] Unity League unions.” The conference focused mostly on the presence and need for more French-Canadian workers, but also the recent activities of the CBU and the IWW. The report from the conference clearly indicates that a sustained united front with either of these two organizations was viewed as highly improbable.\textsuperscript{112}

Whereas twenty-four delegates attended the LWIUC convention, only members from the local branch of the LWIU and the Port Arthur GRU had attended the Second Annual Convention of the CA of the IWW held in the Finnish Labour Temple in June. Perhaps a testament to the troubles facing the CA was the first resolution carried following the appointment of committee representatives. Article 6, section 6(a), of the constitution, which stipulated that delegates to the Canadian Convention were required to

\textsuperscript{110} The Worker, 16 June 1934.
\textsuperscript{111} The Worker, 30 June 1934.
\textsuperscript{112} The Worker, 29 August 1934.
have been members for 12 months and in continuous good standing 6 months prior, was declared void by a majority vote because of the large number of delegates who did not meet its requirements.\footnote{LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 6, “Minutes of the Second Annual Convention of the Canadian Administration of the Industrial Workers of the World,” 18 June 1934, p. 1.}

When J.D. Golden, the Secretary-Treasurer of the CA, presented his report, it revealed much about the activities of the IWW over the past year. In November, a number of strikes had broken out in the region surrounding the Lakehead. Both the Communist LWIUC and the LWIU had taken part. The LWIUC claimed the settlement of the Pigeon Timber strike was a success; Golden and the Canadian Administration viewed the results as “shameful” and one reached between operators and “perfect leaders” who “were more interested in the welfare of the scabs than the betterment of conditions for the actual strikers.”\footnote{LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 6, “Minutes of the Second Annual Convention of the Canadian Administration of the Industrial Workers of the World,” 18 June 1934, p. 2.}

Yet, despite these setbacks, Golden’s report did contain some positive aspects. Between July 1933 and July 1934, funds acquired through entertainments and dances had resulted in the Canadian Administration being able to provide financing to the Junior Wobblies and the payment of all its own outstanding bills. Revenue had doubled since July 1933 and, Golden suggested, “with the proper efforts now on the part of the members the organization will grow steadily in the future as the sentiment for industrial unionism, especially amongst the Finnish workers of Ontario and on the west coast and the Scandinavian [sic] workers of B.C. is better than it has been for several years.”\footnote{LUA, CTKL, E, 10, 6, “Minutes of the Second Annual Convention of the Canadian Administration of the Industrial Workers of the World,” 18 June 1934, p. 3.}

As a result, during the winter of 1934-35, the Workers’ Unity League was once
again forced to call upon the IWW to ensure that strikes could take place once called. Both the District Committee and the YCL took part. The Port Arthur YCL was one of the nine active districts reported across the country. The majority groups found in the Port Arthur District were located in predominately Finnish communities surrounding the Lakehead such as Kivikoski, Nolalu, and Intola. According to Tolvanen, “the united front policy of the W.U.L. which created confusion on the strike front was part of the groundwork for a concerted drive to elect Communist candidates in the Federal election in 1935, for which co-operation between the unions was deemed desirable.”

As the work of A.W. Rasporich has revealed, Port Arthur Mayor Charlie Cox “had also discovered the potency of the ‘ethnic’ vote in Port Arthur, and now extended this discovery to the rural hinterland.” For his 1934 campaign, he recruited Intola Finnish homesteader Anna Koivu who acted as a translator and “ethnic liaison” for Cox and his campaign. This worked as Cox on the strength of the Finnish vote doubled the results of his closest competitor, Tory Don Clarke, 7,449 votes to 4,249. The Communist-backed Gillbanks received only 456 votes. It probably did not help that throughout the

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116 YCL Districts reported active were Nova Scotia, Montreal, Toronto, Timmins, Sudbury, Port Arthur, Winnipeg, Calgary, Vancouver, and Saskatchewan. See The Young Worker, 3 September 1934.
117 Tolvanen, Finntown, 93.
118 Beverly Rasporich, “Anna of Intola: A Finnish-Canadian Woman with Sisu,” in Elspeth Cameron and Janice Dickin, eds., Great Dames (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 196. Anna claims to have been a life long Conservative up until that election demonstrating once again that socialism was not synonymous with Finnish at the Lakehead.
year a rumour had persisted that relief jobs were more likely to go to young workers who belonged to the Liberal Youth Club.\textsuperscript{121}

The second half of 1934 would see a series of strikes and demonstrations sweep the Lakehead and the lumber camps in Northern Ontario. Some of the hardest fought occurred in the Thunder Bay District and in Sioux Lookout. In total, more than 2,045 men were involved.\textsuperscript{122} In one memorable moment, 150 men, women, and children paraded on the evening of 1 October through the business section of Port Arthur carrying, according to RCMP reports, “a Union Jack, the Red Flag and a number of banners” and singing the “International” in support of the strikers.\textsuperscript{123} Attempts by Peter Heenan, MP for Kenora and Minister of Lands and Forests, to negotiate a settlement failed. (Outside of Northwestern Ontario, French-Canadians, at least according to the RCMP, were the “back-bone” of the labour insurgency.)\textsuperscript{124} The efforts of Heenan and the RCMP were ultimately unnecessary as the strike fell apart due to many strikers leaving for other camps and the strikes having been poorly organized and run.\textsuperscript{125}

While similar actions in other regions of the province may have been successful, the party suffered from “a lack of organization among the Lakehead strikers.”\textsuperscript{126}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{121} See \textit{The Young Worker}, 6 October 1934.
\textsuperscript{122} Radforth, \textit{Bushworkers and Bosses}, 131 and \textit{Ontario Timberworker} (August 1949).
\textsuperscript{124} Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 10 October 1934, No. 727, “Weekly Summary, Report on Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada, Appendix No. II: Report by Provinces, IV Ontario, 14. Lumber Workers’ Strike Spreading,” in Kealey and Whitaker, 325. This was not Heenan’s first interference in district strikes. See, for example, \textit{The Worker}, 15 September 1934.
\textsuperscript{125} \textit{The Worker}, 3 October 1934.
\textsuperscript{126} Radforth, \textit{Bushworkers and Bosses}, 131 and \textit{Ontario Timberworker} (August 1949).
\end{flushleft}
the winter of 1934-35, the WUL needed to call upon the IWW once again to ensure that strikes could take place once called. To underscore this, the LWIUC executive argued that, nationally, the United Front was necessary for any hope of success – an interesting acknowledgement of the necessity of the IWW. According to Tolvanen, “the united front policy of the W.U.L. which created confusion on the strike front was part of the groundwork for a concerted drive to elect Communist candidates in the Federal election in 1935, for which co-operation between the unions was deemed desirable.”

By 1935, the Lakehead’s Unemployed Association had been integrated into a national framework, and in John Manley’s estimation was one of the strongest of such units in the country. Yet, the strength of the Association did not derive from the Lakehead CPC alone. It arose from the unique symbiosis of Communists and Wobblies in the Lakehead – the inadvertent, often explosive, yet paradoxically functional unity of seeming opposites that made this region such a fascinating and puzzling zone for the left. As Peter Campbell has remarked, “the Communists could not conduct an effective strike without Wobbly support.”

The point can be extended further into other forms of left activism. Whether it was among young people debating the finer points of the general strike or rival strategies of unemployed organizing, the CPC/IWW dynamic was richer and more productive than either side was willing to concede at the time.

No single group of revolutionary socialists at the Lakehead could dominate the

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127 See The Worker, 24 October and 24 November 1934 for these sentiments.
128 Tolvanen, Finntown, 93.
left between 1932 and 1935. The IWW might disparage the Communists as Moscow-liners, but they needed their expertise and their cross-Canada support system. The Communists might officially write off the Wobblies as yesterday’s radicals, but they still needed them as they fought strikes and mounted movements of resistance against a repressive state. Moreover, both drew unacknowledged strength from the resilient and feisty immigrant cultures, especially from the Finns, who seemingly found ways to combine both forms of radicalism in many of their day-by-day activities. The Third Period was in many respects a dire time for the Canadian left, but the Lakehead case suggests that beneath the often icy surface of dogmatism and rigidity stirred powerful new currents of left solidarity and purpose.
Chapter 11
Conclusion

“1935 was the key year in the history of the Canadian labour movement; it was then that the future course of trade union movement in Canada was determined.” As the writer of these words, Irving Abella, goes on to argue, the existing union movement in Canada “was felled by two crushing blows… one from Moscow, the other in Washington.” Between the decision by the Communist International to direct the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) to dissolve the Workers’ Unity League (WUL) and the creation of the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO), the nature and characteristics of trade unionism in Canada and at the Lakehead underwent another fundamental shift.2

Ian McKay also argues that the nature of socialism in Canada irrevocably changed in 1935. The rise of fascism would dominate left policy and actions well into the 1940s.3 “The 1934 slogan – ‘Canada is Ripe for Socialism,’” David Frank points out, “– now gave way to the rallying cry of 1935 – ‘Toward a Canadian People’s Front.’”4 The year signified the consolidation of what Geoff Eley has described as “Radical Plannism”

2 The Committee for Industrial Organization did not have a presence at the Lakehead until the early 1950s. In large part this resulted from the Lumber Workers Industrial Unions’ decision to rename itself and join the American Federation of Labor’s Carpenters’ Union. See Jean Morrison, “The Organization of Labour at Thunder Bay,” in Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity, ed. Thorold J. Tronrud and A. Ernest Epp (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1995), 135.
3 Local Communist efforts until the party was banned during the Second World War appear to have gone into the Lumber and Sawmill Workers’ Union and the League Against War and Fascism.
which would come to dominate the Canadian left between 1935 and 1960. Rather than the revolutionary overthrow of the existing state and the capitalist order, which was a vibrant unifying thread of much of the “second formation” of the Canadian left between 1919 and 1935, many leftists now looked to the reform of the existing Canadian state system. Such a goal was not conceptualized as a minor adjustment in social relations, but rather as part of a comprehensive program of egalitarianism. Moreover, while revolutionaries would continue to fight past 1935, other leftists whose struggles and strategies were quite different from theirs would increasingly drown out their voices.

The shift in policy of the CPC resulted from decisions made at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International held in November 1935. The focus of the CPC and the Communist movement throughout the world shifted from that of revolutionary class struggle to fighting the rise of fascism. National parties were instructed to “discard all doctrinaire attitudes and all dogmatic positions and to recognize that the decisive key to defeat of Fascism was working class unity, and that the only possibility for broad parliamentary advance required working class unity, and that the trade union movement needed working class unity.” By 1934, the rise of Hitler and the menace of fascism throughout Europe and in North America, A.T. Hill later recalled, “became an all-embracing political fight, to defend the living standards, and also to defend the democratic organizations, free institutions, and national independence of various

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In reality, the move to the new paradigm had already been underway at the Lakehead. In early January, Charles Stewart, recently appointed secretary of the Port Arthur District Council of the Canadian Labour Defence League, had spoken to the Unemployed Association in Port Arthur and Fort William urging them “to become organized and fight for unemployed insurance and against Fascism.” As a result, “between 1935 and 1939 Popular Front imperatives forced the indefinite postponement of socialist revolution and made the party’s main objective the construction of cross-class alliances to defend bourgeois democracy.”

The dismantling of the WUL was ostensibly designed “to strengthen the trade union ranks and to lay a solid foundation for a broad united front against fascism and against another imperialist war.” It also effectively alienated thousands of socialists and threw the Communist movement in Canada into chaos. The decision to dissolve the much maligned, but now established, WUL occurred just as non-socialists went on the

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7 A.T. Hill, “Basic Highlights of Labor History – Lakehead and Canada,” (c. 1970), p. 5. This anti-fascism was of particular concern for many workers at the Lakehead due to the right-wing extremism favoured in some quarters of the two cities. In January 1935, for example, The Worker reported the organization of the “Italian Blackshirts.” Modelled directly after Mussolini’s blackshirts, they had begun a campaign to organize all Italian workers, a segment of the local population that had not become heavily involved in either the Trades and Labour Councils, the CPC, or the IWW in the region. See The Worker, 19 January 1935.


10 Abella, Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour, 3. For more on the Communist Party of Canada’s presentation of delegates, proposals, and resolutions for the Seventh Comintern Congress, see LAC, Communist International fonds (hereafter CI), MG10-K3, Reel 21 [K-289], 495, 98, 172 and 495, 98, 176.
attack at the Lakehead. For example, the theme of the speech given by Robert Manion, Port Arthur MP and future leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, to inaugurate the completion of the Trans-Canada Highway paid little attention to the event itself. Instead, he spoke about the conflict between police and the On to Ottawa Trekkers occurring in Regina and the radical atmosphere he felt was present at the Lakehead.11 “On a day like this and at a time when subversive activities are so apparent,” Manion declared, “all true Canadians should be prepared to take their part in maintaining law and order and the respect for those in authority that has made Canadian life and citizenship worthwhile. Let us guard our country and its institutions against any revolutionary groups’ doctrines.”12

As local authorities, with support from many trade unions, moved to crush the unemployed workers’ movement in Port Arthur, Communist leaders increasingly believed that “it is better to retreat now than be crushed altogether.” The rank-and-file were informed that a need existed “to consolidate our organization, that we must mobilize

11 The trek became the subject of open air and closed meetings in both Fort William and Port Arthur that featured local and imported speakers. See, for example, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 27 August 1935, No. 767, “Weekly Summary, Report on Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada, Appendix No. II: Report by Provinces, V Ontario,” in R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part II, 1935, 437-438. Steve R. Hewitt demonstrates that the On to Ottawa Trek was favourably received in Port Arthur and Fort William and although a renewed Trek never made it to either City, hundreds signed up and pressured Manion and the Bennett government for improvement in the conditions of work camps. Steve R. Hewitt, “You are making history, you are making history’ The On to Ottawa Trek in Northern Ontario” (Thunder Bay: Lakehead University Centre for Northern Studies Research Report #38, 1995). While Ronald Liversedge’s published recollection remains the classic and most thorough account of the On to Ottawa Trek, it is by no means the only examination. For general surveys, see Liversedge, Recollections of the On to Ottawa Trek, edited by Victor Hoar (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973); Victor Howard, ‘We are the Salt of the Earth’: the On-to-Ottawa Trek and the Regina Riot (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1985); Doug Smith, “On to Ottawa,” Horizon Canada 9-99 (1987): 2353-2359; and Bill Waiser, All Hell Can't Stop Us: The On-To-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot (Fifth House Ltd., Calgary, 2003). Decent discussion of the Trek and the communist involvement can be found in Avakumovic, The Communist Party in Canada, 78-81 and Lorne Brown, When Freedom was Lost, 125-208.

all workers, employed and unemployed, trade unions, churches, etc. for our support.”

The change in position of the CPC also signified an end to the predominance of the idea of revolution as the Party’s main goal. While the WUL’s position had been “revolutionary,” the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada favored concessions and industrial harmony over militancy. The decision, Douglas Thur suggests, was also “in complete contradiction to the resolutions adopted at the Seventh Annual Convention of the [Lumber Workers’ Industrial Union of Canada (LWIUC)] which was held in Port Arthur in April 1930.” At the convention, delegates had condemned the actions of the AFL as differing little from the policy of “American imperialists.” As a bushworker and member of the CPC Tulio Mior later recalled, the demise of the two lumber workers’ unions was spurred by the rise of fascism, and “the results of the Spanish Civil War demonstrated clearly what could be expected if it was left unchecked.” Ironically, renewed talk of a united front occurred just as RCMP agents were reporting a substantial increase in the WUL’s membership

13 The Young Worker, 26 January 1935.
resulting from the disintegration of the ineffectual Canadian Bushmen’s Union.

The turn to the Popular Front also coincided with a heightening of Stalin’s intolerance towards Finns and Finnish nationalism. As Oiva W. Saarinen suggests: “With no basis in fact, he charged that Finns were planning a counterrevolution in Karelia in an effort to rejoin Finland. Branded as traitors of the fatherland, Finns in the Sudbury area became victims of the purges.”\(^{17}\) The same held true for Finns at the Lakehead. Many Communists in Canada were unwilling to believe that Moscow would actively persecute ardent supporters. Instead, those who suggested such things, as reflected in the pages of Vapaus, were dismissed as “‘servants of capitalism.’” Their allegations of hunger and death in the Soviet Union were only “‘foolish talk.’”\(^{18}\) Unfortunately, such “‘foolish talk’ turned out to underestimate the severity of the sufferings of the Finns, especially those who had gone to construct a new and better society in Soviet Karelia.

The shift to the Popular Front did influence the position of the Finnish Organization of Canada. Just as the CPC abandoned its extreme radicalism and calls for immediate revolution, the Finnish Organization of Canada (FOC) returned to its pre-war roots. It once again became a largely cultural and educational organization (two things it had truly never abandoned) that favoured non-political activities.\(^{19}\) The influence of the Karelian exodus and the gradual improvements in the economic conditions led to a


\(^{18}\) Vapaus 27 June 1935, p. 8 quoted in Saarinen, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, 146

gradual decline in the FOC membership during the mid-1930s. Although an estimated 80 locals still operated throughout the country, membership decreased from a peak of 4,000 to 6,000 in 1933 to below 2,700 after 1935.20

“The year 1935,” Ian Radforth writes, also “marked the end of an era in the history of the Ontario bushworkers’ union movement,” the main source of socialist agitation in the region. The rise of Bruce Magnuson at the Lakehead signified a fundamental change in both leadership and purpose. The strikes of 1933 had marked the 24-year-old Magnuson’s first appearance at the Lakehead. “I got involved in the Port Arthur strike,” Magnuson later recalled, “by acting as recording secretary at the striker’s [sic] meetings… It was a big strike and I was blacklisted after it was over.” Through his involvement in the strike, he argued that he “started to read books on socialism and the Communist Manifesto and to think about political activity and the working class struggle.”21 The last strikes involving the LWIUC took place in June and July 1935.22 By 1936, the union, under the leadership of Magnuson, entered into an affiliation with the AFL and became the Lumber and Sawmill Workers Union Local 2693, with links to the


International Carpenters and Joiners of America. What had once been a revolutionary union, pugnaciously devoted to fighting capitalism and less radical labour movements, became part of the mainstream “house of labour.” In addition, Finns “would play a somewhat less prominent role and, more significantly, its leaders would begin to pursue a less confrontational approach within a different union structure.”

A sign of the CPC’s strength is evident during the 1935 civic and federal elections. The Trades and Labour Council in Port Arthur refused to put forth joint candidates in the civic election because of certain passages describing the role of labour leaders in the council in the Communist election manifesto. In Port Arthur, Garfield Boutler and D.S. Reid ran under the Communist banner. Although Boutler received 741 votes, a modest gain from the previous year, it was nowhere near the number achieved by Alex Gibson. Gibson, running openly for the CCF, was reelected to city council. However, while The Worker made much of another CCF backed candidate Sam Wright receiving only 21 votes more than Boutler, no other openly Communist candidate would again come that close to winning.

Local Liberals, riding a wave of national support, swept both federal ridings encompassing Port Arthur and Fort William. The election of 1935 was a pivotal moment

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23 For Bruce Magnuson’s recollection of these events, see Lakehead University Archives (hereafter LUA), Jean Morrison Labour History Collection (hereafter JMLHC), General Series 186a, Tape 22, Interview with Bruce Magnuson, 1972.
24 Radforth, Bushworkers and Bosses, 132.
25 Alex Gibson argued that the Communists put the passages in to assure that the Trades and Labour Council would not agree to joint candidates. See The Worker, 15 December 1934 and 5 January 1935.
27 The Worker, 12 January 1935.
in the history of Canada, the Lakehead, and the Canadian Left. Nationally, the election swept into power William Lyon Mackenzie King’s Liberals and ushered in a new era in federal politics. At the Lakehead, the election of Port Arthur candidate C.D. Howe began the career of one of this country’s most significant and influential politicians. For the left, at least regionally, it signified the ascension of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) as the socialist political party of choice. It also signaled a shift in the Finnish vote in the region. Even combined, the CCF and CPC vote amongst Finns in Port Arthur, the ‘heart’ of the Lakehead left, did not come close to the 1925 total. Instead, Finns overwhelmingly voted for the Liberals and, based on poll results, actual assisted in propelling their candidate to victory (see table 4).

Table 4: Urban voting patterns for Port Arthur during the 1935 Federal Elections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>&quot;Finnish polls&quot;</th>
<th>City Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCF</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Formed in 1932, the CCF fundamentally altered the socialist landscape in Canada. When the Port Arthur Unemployed Council sponsored in 1933 a meeting entitled, “The Role of the CCF in Class Struggle,” it marked a significant change in the structure of the socialist movement at the Lakehead. This period was marked by open hostility between
those who had turned to the CCF following its foundation in 1932 and the revitalized Communist Party. The latter, Jean Morrison states, viewed the CCF as equivalent to “social fascists” and argued “the CCF is the more dangerous to the workers than the capitalists.”28 As Joan Sangster has suggested, the entry of the CCF resulted in “two parties differing in approach to socialism and often quarrelling with each other.”29 On the youth question, for example, the CPC claimed the CCF was attempting to delude workers “with glib phrases about ‘ordinary British justice,’ ‘democracy,’ ‘and constitutions.’”30 “For the non-Marxist Left between the wars,” J.S Woodsworth’s biographer Allen Mills suggests, “the founding of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) stood out as a beacon of hope in an otherwise tenebrous political landscape.”31

The CCF was able to make inroads into a segment of the working class at the Lakehead that had long eluded the Communist Party of Canada and the Industrial Workers of the World. “At the Lakehead,” contends Jean Morrison, “its early supporters were mainly British- and Canadian- born skilled workers or tradesmen, small proprietors, and union leaders.” It also had support from most of those who had at one time or another managed to be elected on the labour ticket in Fort William or Port Arthur. This was no more apparent then in the federal election of 1935, when Alex Gibson opposed A.E.

28 Morrison, “The Organisation of Labour at Thunder Bay,” 134-135. The CPC, though, did initially have a period where members questioned what the CCF could offer. For examples of this discussion, see The Young Worker (30 June 1934), p. 4. For the CCF’s early years see Gerald Caplan, The Dilemma of Canadian Socialism: The CCF in Ontario (Toronto, 1973); and D. McHenry, The Third Force in Canada: The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation 1932-1948 (Berkeley, 1950).
30 The Young Worker, 1 November 1933, p. 5.
Smith and ran as a CCF candidate.32

Support for socialism, in particular the brand espoused by the CPC, was a significant phenomenon in the atmosphere of 1935. When the CPC had a mass meeting in the Port Arthur Arena on 26 September 1935, over 2,500 attended to hear the recently-released Tim Buck. A combination of old guard and new guard in the region appeared on stage:33 Bruce Magnuson had replaced Alf Hautamäki (who appears to have vanished) as head of the LWIUC in the region and now spoke for the YCL. Harry Bryan had moved over to head the FUL. The ILP was also present in the form of Alfred Batters, although the party later informed the press he was there on his own accord. CPC ideologue Stewart Smith was also present, speaking at some length after welcoming Buck. He criticized other national and local politicians, saving his appeals for members of the newly-formed CCF. Interestingly, no mention of Mary Gilbert is found in the available documents.

Those in attendance, as well as those tuning into Radio Station CKPR, heard Buck speak at some length on the role of the CPC if elected to parliament and, most importantly, the need for a united front, specifically between the CPC and CCF. This message met an enthusiastic response with hundreds in attendance carrying banners reading “Towards Soviet Canada” and “For the United Front of the Communist Party and the C.C.F.”34 Buck’s speech mattered little in the end. Although only electing seven

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32 For Communist coverage of Smith’s campaign, see The Worker, 7, 14, and 17 September and 1, 5, and 10 October 1935
33 The Worker, 19 September and 1 October 1935. Buck’s presence at the Lakehead was not without controversy. Considering, shortly after being defeated in the election, Robert Manion in a Fort William speech let loose a diatribe against the CPC and told those present that Tim Buck would be back in prison before long. See The Worker, 19 October 1935.
MPs despite running candidates in 119 of 294 seats in the 1935 federal election, the CCF received 10.8% in Port Arthur, edging out Smith by 1.6%. In Fort William, where no Communist candidate ran, the CCF candidate Garfield Anderson achieved 11.8% of the popular vote.35 These results at the Lakehead and elsewhere showed that the CCF had now become the political party of choice for many radicals within the working class.36

A new moderation can be found even among the Finns, whose tenacious radicalism had set so much of the tone of Canadian and Lakehead leftism since the first years of the twentieth century. The newly-formed Finnish Workers’ and Farmers’ Federation (FWFF) rejected revolutionary politics and threw its lot in with the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation.37 Although the Finns remained important players in Lakehead politics – even Robert Mannion would attribute his defeat in 1935 in part to

35 “Federal Election Results in Fort William and Port Arthur, 1917-1940” in Roy Piovesana, Robert J. Manion: Member of Parliament for Fort William, 1917-1935 (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1990), 33-34. For The Worker’s coverage of the Smith’s involvement in the election, see every issue of The Worker between 7-19 September and 1-10 and 19 October 1935. Local coverage of Smith’s candidacy can be found in the Fort William and Port Arthur newspapers.

36 As in past campaigns, Smith appears to have relocated to Northwestern Ontario in late August. He led a number of high profile parades and speeches throughout the region that, judging from reports, were well attended. The RCMP reported, for example, that his 12 October parade in Port Arthur consisted of approximately 2,000 people and another in Fort Frances drew 300. However, despite these numbers, his election meeting was poorly attended. See Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 27 August 1935, No. 767, “Weekly Summary, Report on Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada, Appendix No. II: Report by Provinces, V Ontario,” 436; 21 August 1935, No. 769, “Weekly Summary, Report on Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada, Appendix No. II: Report by Provinces, IV Ontario, 10. A.E. Smith’s Election Meeting Poorly Attended,” 453; and 123 October 1935, No. 778, “Weekly Summary, Report on Revolutionary Organizations and Agitators in Canada, Appendix No. II: Report by Provinces, IV Ontario,” 550 in R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Depression Years, Part II, 1935.

37 The FWFF’s full impact is yet unknown, as it awaits its first major historical study. For more, see Pilli, Finnish-Language Press in Canada, 143-144. Pilli, however, comments that while 15 locals were reported to exist in 1935 most existed in name only.
the weight of the “foreign” vote against him – they would no longer be the Reds of old. Many of them would find their way into the CCF or even the Liberal Party.

During the years following the change in tactics of the CPC, the virtual disappearance of the IWW, and the rise of the CCF as the political voice of the left at the Lakehead, the Trades and Labour Council of Fort William experienced revitalization. Over 23 unions joined, including previous communist controlled ones such as the Lumber and Saw Mill Workers Union, Local 2786. J.R. Pattison was one of only a few leftists from the 1920s. Fred Moore was no longer active in the council and A.H. Dennis, William Welsh, Ed. Smith, and many others had since died. Magnuson, shortly elected head of the local Carpenters’ Union, was the only real success for the popular front before the Second World War.

For 35 years, Lakehead socialists had fought hard and won important victories. They had subdued the unbridled ferocity of exploitation in the woods. They had fed the poor, sheltered the homeless, and fought for democratic rights of assembly and organization. They had brought a measure of justice to the outlying lumber camps. To an extent unusual in North America, they had evolved a sturdy, resilient, multi-faceted and often lively left-wing counter-culture. Like Prometheus, they had displayed an enormous resilience and strength, qualities at times imprisoned by the shackles of ethnic intolerance and doctrinal narrowness. As Frederick Urry remarked in 1908, only once the divisive tactics of the left-wing parties and organizations had been abandoned could “the

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revolution we hear so much of but see little chance of consummating” come to pass.\textsuperscript{39} Or, as one commentator remarked during one of the splits within the One Big Union in 1920, “the degree of solidarity which is essential before workers as a whole can take a united and confident action to deal with the big questions with which they are confronted as a class, has not yet been reached.”\textsuperscript{40} Leftists themselves were not free of prejudices based on race and creed. Yet, sometimes inadvertently, and sometimes with a winning combination of pragmatism and idealism, the movement they created in the Lakehead at its best reworked the politics of difference into a politics of solidarity. The next socialist formation would have much to learn from them.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Western Clarion}, 20 February 1909.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{The One Big Union Monthly} (December 1920): 42.
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