

## Labourism and the Canadian Working Class

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# Labourism and the Canadian Working Class

Craig Heron

LABOURISM HAS BEEN THE neglected child of the Canadian left. Between the 1880s and the 1920s workers frequently appeared in electoral campaigns across Canada as "Labour" candidates; yet for most of the past half-century this movement has languished in a dimly lit corner of Canadian intellectual inquiry, while historians and social scientists lavished attention on its ideological step-sisters, angry agrarianism, saintly Fabianism, and feisty Marxism.<sup>1</sup> Recently the flood of new research into individual working-class communities in Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has brought to light the particular histories of several local Labour parties. The essay will attempt to draw together this scattered research, to outline how, where, and when labourism strode onto the political stage, and to scrutinize its ideological complexion more carefully. The purpose of this exercise is to suggest that labourism was a distinct ideological form in Canadian politics, resembling but differing from agrarian populism, contemporary liberalism, and socialism, and the brand of social democracy which emerged after 1930. It was, moreover, the main ideological current in independent working-class politics east of the Rockies before 1920, and thus deserves to be rescued from its relative obscurity and neglect.

<sup>1</sup> Most often labourism appears in hasty, often inaccurate first chapters of books on the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, or as faint background to the biographies of early CCF leaders like J.S. Woodsworth or William Irvine; e.g., Kenneth McNaught, *A Prophet in Politics: A Biography of J.S. Woodsworth* (Toronto 1959), and Anthony Mardiros, *William Irvine: The Life of a Prairie Radical* (Toronto 1979). Norman Penner totally ignores labourism in Canada in *The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis* (Scarborough 1977). The only sustained treatment of the movement nationally remains Martin Robin's book-length study of labour radicalism before 1930, *Radical Politics and Canadian Labour, 1880-1930* (Kingston 1968), which is heavy on institutional development at the provincial and federal levels, but quite light on analysis of social and ideological developments.

## I

THE SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF THIS political movement needs clarification first. Before the latter part of World War I, when Canadians from varied social backgrounds began to jump aboard the labourist bandwagon, there is no doubt that this was a thoroughly proletarian movement. With few exceptions it was blue-collar workers who peopled the Labour parties' executive posts, ran as party candidates, and edited and wrote for the many local labour newspapers which supported the movement.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, however, labourism was the political expression of a distinct layer of the working class — the skilled workers in manufacturing, construction, and mining, who might be referred to collectively as craftworkers.<sup>3</sup> The leadership and active membership of the labourist cause came almost entirely from this group of printers, carpenters, plumbers, cigarmakers, moulders, coal miners, and so on. In fact, there was usually a great overlap in personnel between the local craft-dominated trades and labour council or the district miners' organization and the same community's Labour Party. (Unlike the British experience,<sup>4</sup> however, trades councils

<sup>2</sup> W. Craig Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton, 1895-1930," Ph.D. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1981, 586-713; Michael J. Piva, "The Toronto District Labour Council and Independent Political Action: Factionalism and Frustration, 1900-1921," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 4 (1979), 119; Jacques Rouillard, "L'action politique ouvrière, 1899-1915," in Fernand Dumont, et al., eds., *Idéologies au Canada français, 1900-1929* (Québec 1974), 267-312; Robert Babcock, "Labour, Socialism, and Reform Politics in Portland (Me.) and Saint John (N.B.), 1895-1914," paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association Meeting, 1980, 48. Winnipeg seems to have been something of an exception; that city's ILP did have a minority of middle-class members in the decade before the war. A. Ross McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919* (Toronto 1977), 89-92; Allen Mills, "Single Tax, Socialism, and the Independent Labour Party of Manitoba: The Political Ideas of F.J. Dixon and S.J. Farmer," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 5 (1980), 38-9.

<sup>3</sup> Such a typology of labour activists inevitably needs some qualification. By no means all craftworkers participated in this movement: for the aloofness of bricklayers and certain waterfront crafts, see Wayne Roberts, "Artisans, Aristocrats, and Handymen: Politics and Trade Unionism Among Toronto Skilled Building Trades Workers, 1896-1914," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 1 (1976), 111-13; and Ian McKay, "Class Struggle and Mercantile Capitalism: Craftsmen and Labourers on the Halifax Waterfront, 1850-1902," in Rosemary Ommer and Gerald Panting, eds., *Working Men Who Got Wet* (St. John's 1980), 287-320. Even more important, by World War I, labourist ranks included some important groups of semi-skilled workers, like street railwaymen and longshoremen. What united them all, however, was some degree of workplace autonomy: less skilled workers had joined the craft union movement after winning their own forms of job control through union regulation. In any case, skilled workers certainly seem to have remained numerically predominant in the movement and most influential in shaping and articulating its ideology.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Ross McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party, 1910-1924* (London 1974).

rarely sponsored political candidates directly. Until the end of the war, Canadian Labour parties, like trade unions, were individual membership organizations.<sup>5</sup>)

It is central to an understanding of labourism in Canada to recognize this specific social base on which it was built. As we will see, the ideological hues of the movement would reflect the worldview of the skilled worker. But its social composition also helps to explain its two-stage development. First, craftspersons had to be detached from their traditional party allegiances, especially from the Liberal Party, a process which was well underway by the early 1900s. But then the skilled workers' new political vehicle had to harness broader support within the whole Canadian working class. They regularly proclaimed that their parties were open to all wage-earners, organized and unorganized, and often gave their rhetoric a populist twist by appealing to the vaguely-defined "masses." Winning that broader support, however, was a much slower process, which began to succeed only at the end of World War I, when unusual wartime conditions made many more Canadian workers receptive to the craftworkers' appeal.

The pre-war record at the polls was bleak. Three Labour candidates were elected to the House of Commons before the war — Ralph Smith, Arthur Puttee, and Alphonse Verville — but each slid quickly into the Liberal caucus.<sup>6</sup> The only labourists elected to any provincial legislatures were Allan Studholme, who rode out of a bitter street railway strike in Hamilton in 1906 into a thirteen-year term in the Ontario house, and Donald McNab, who spent only a few months in the Alberta legislature in 1909.<sup>7</sup> (The only other proletarian parliamentarians outside the old parties before 1914 were three socialist MLAs in the British Columbia house and one in Alberta.<sup>8</sup>) The problem was not simply that the Liberal and Conservative parties had put down deep roots into elements of the working class,<sup>9</sup> but, more importantly, that there was a growing disillusionment and cynicism with electoral politics which was translating into much lower turnouts at the polls in many cities.<sup>10</sup> Increasingly the labourists'

<sup>5</sup> Le Parti ouvrier de Montréal, however, allowed union affiliation after 1908.

<sup>6</sup> Robin, *Radical Politics*, 48-53; Robert H. Babcock, *Gompers in Canada: A Study in American Continentalism Before the First World War* (Toronto 1974), 70-1; A.R. McCormack, "Arthur Puttee and the Liberal Party: 1899-1904," *Canadian Historical Review*, 51 (1970), 141-63; Rouillard, "Action politique ouvrière," 276-81, 291-4.

<sup>7</sup> Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 606-19; Charles Allen Seager, "A Proletariat in Wild Rose Country: The Alberta Coal Miners, 1905-1945," Ph.D. thesis, York University, 1981, 229-30.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 231-4; McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, 28-32, 62-4.

<sup>9</sup> Wayne Roberts, "Studies in the Toronto Labour Movement, 1896-1914," Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1978, 473-508; Rouillard, "Action politique ouvrière," 283; Babcock, "Labour, Socialism, and Reform Politics," 14-22; Seager, "Proletariat in Wild Rose Country," 202-71; Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 491-584.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 493-508; Michael J. Piva, "Workers and Tories: The Collapse of the Conservative Party in Urban Ontario, 1908-19," *Urban History Review*, 3-76 (1977), 23-9.

chances of electoral success depended on being able to mobilize these political abstainers.

The great breakthrough came toward the end of World War I. The tendency of so many writers to focus on J.S. Woodsworth and on the House of Commons has obscured both the real gains labourists had made by the end of the war and the decentralized, community-based orientation of the movement. During these years scores of workers won seats as independent labour candidates on municipal councils and school boards and in provincial legislatures across the country.<sup>11</sup> These men and women were typically nominated by autonomous local organizations, most often called Independent Labor parties. Typically too, these little parties initially had short lives and had to be rebuilt for each new electoral assault. But by the end of World War I virtually every industrial community in the country had one. By this point, the local Labour parties were developing more permanence between elections, with social and educational programmes to keep the labourist fires burning and to draw in new members.<sup>12</sup> Some of the newcomers were women, who shattered the male dominance of these organizations in Ontario and the west by creating their own Women's Labor Leagues and Women's Independent Labor Parties.<sup>13</sup> Numerous community-based labour weeklies proclaimed the message of the labourist cause.<sup>14</sup>

Only when there were enough of these local parties with sufficient vitality and strength would they federate at the provincial level. The first attempts at provincial organization in Ontario and Manitoba occurred in 1907, with limited, brief success,<sup>15</sup> but after 1916 more coherent provincial Labor parties with

<sup>11</sup> Canada, Department of Labour, *Labour Organization in Canada* (Ottawa), 1917-25. For detailed studies of the post-war municipal success, see David Frank, "Company Town/Labour Town: Local Government in the Cape Breton Coal Towns, 1917-1926," *Histoire sociale/Social History*, 27 (1981), 177-96; J.E. Rea, "The Politics of Class: Winnipeg City Council, 1919-45," in Carl Berger and Ramsay Cook, eds., *The West and the Nation: Essays in Honour of W.L. Morton* (Toronto 1976), 232-49; Geoffrey Ewen, "Labour Political Action in Quebec, 1917-1929," unpublished paper, York University, 1983; Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 638-97.

<sup>12</sup> Paul MacEwan, *Miners and Steelworkers: Labour in Cape Breton* (Toronto 1976), 18; Anthony MacKenzie, "The Farmer-Labor Party in Nova Scotia," M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1969, 48-50; Rouillard, "Action politique ouvrière," 277, 283; Piva, "Factionalism and Frustration," 120; Heron "Working-Class Hamilton," 588-628; McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, 77-97; Robin, *Radical Politics*, 62-91, 104-18.

<sup>13</sup> Star Rosenthal, "Union Maids: Organized Women Workers in Vancouver, 1900-1915," *BC Studies*, 41 (1979), 36-55; Veronica Strong-Boag, "The Girl of the New Day: Canadian Working Women in the 1920s," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 4 (1979), 153; Norman Penner, ed., *Winnipeg 1919: The Strikers' Own History of the Winnipeg General Strike* (Toronto 1973), 74; Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 459-70.

<sup>14</sup> Russell Hann, et al., comps., *Primary Sources in Canadian Working-Class History, 1860-1930* (Kitchener 1973), 109-10.

<sup>15</sup> Robin, *Radical Politics*, 79-91; Babcock, *Gompers in Canada*, 155-82.

common platforms began to appear — the Independent Labor Parties of Nova Scotia and Ontario, the Quebec section of the Canadian Labor Party, the Dominion Labor Parties on the Prairies, and the Federated Labor Party in British Columbia.<sup>16</sup> Local organizations became branches of the provincial party, and in some cases the head office dispatched literature and speakers to help build the movement. Yet for election campaigns the organizational initiative remained with the local branches. National federation never took place in any real sense: the so-called Canadian Labor Party first created in 1917 was never more than a paper organization uniting regional and local efforts, and its few national meetings took place simply as offshoots of Trades and Labor Congress conventions. This was, in short, a highly decentralized political movement, reflecting the equally decentralized organization of the entire labour movement in the period.<sup>17</sup>

The upsurges of labourist organizing between the 1880s and the 1920s mark moments of more generalized class-conscious activity within the working class. First, they invariably took place in periods of burgeoning trade union strength (and, by the same token, political activity receded when unions were weak or on the defensive). And secondly, labourist interventions into local politics invariably occurred in the context of intensifying industrial conflict, reflecting many accumulating resentments and a recognition of common interest across occupational lines. There were four distinct phases: the mid-to-late 1880s, the early 1900s, the half decade before the war, and, finally, the years of most aggressive militancy, 1916-20. The turn to politics was seldom a swing away from the industrial battleground, but rather an attempt to broaden and intensify the same conflict into a unified class initiative.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Robin, *Radical Politics*, 119-59; David Frank, "The Cape Breton Coal Miners, 1917-1926," Ph.D. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1979, 301-5; MacKenzie, "Farmer-Labor Party"; D. James Naylor, "The Independent Labor Party in Ontario," unpublished paper, York University, 1982; Alfred Charpentier, "Le mouvement politique ouvrier de Montréal (1883-1929)," in Fernand Harvey, ed., *Aspects historiques du mouvement ouvrier au Québec* (Québec 1973), 162-4; McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, 143; McNaught, *Prophet in Politics*, 91-6; Mardiros, *Irvine*, 59-62, 78; Dorothy G. Steeves, *The Compassionate Rebel, Ernest Winch and the Growth of Socialism in Western Canada* (Vancouver 1960), 37.

<sup>17</sup> The centre of action of Canadian labour before the 1930s was not in the TLC, as so many writers have assumed, but in the local trades councils, where the common interests of the working class were promoted on a week-to-week basis. Recognizing this fact, the *One Big Union* made city labour councils its basic structural units. David J. Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union* (Toronto 1978), 178.

<sup>18</sup> Gregory S. Kealey, *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1867-1892* (Toronto 1980), 175-253; Sharon Reilly, "The Provincial Workmen's Association of Nova Scotia, 1879-1898," M.A. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1979, 51-106; Paul Phillips, *No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in British Columbia* (Vancouver 1967), 1-84; Stuart Marshall Jamieson, *Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-66* (Ottawa 1968), 62-191; Craig Heron and Bryan D. Palmer,

## II

ESTABLISHING THESE PATTERNS in the occurrence of labourist politics is not so difficult, but attempting to analyze the ideological dimensions of the movement can be a frustrating task. Like activists in the British Labour Party, but unlike those in many European socialist parties or even in large parts of the Socialist Party of America, these working-class politicians usually preferred to discuss issues of practical and immediate importance and seldom presented lengthy or lofty statements of their perspective on the world. It was quite common to hear labourist candidates promising simply "a square deal" for workers. Consequently any attempt to examine the elusive frame of reference of Canadian labourism must penetrate a thick fog and piece together many scattered fragments from men and women who often revealed annoyingly contradictory tendencies in their thinking. We must bear in mind that this was not an intellectualized doctrine, but more like an inclination and a set of political impulses which proceeded from some common ground. It was the politics not of ideologues but of practical people moving outward from their economic struggles. In the words of one historian of the parallel movement in Australia, they "proceeded from the particular to the general — to a collection of ethical catch-cries, subject to an infinity of interpretations."<sup>19</sup>

This ideological woolliness should not lead us to assume, however, that labourist politicians could see no further than a few limited reforms in the interest of organized labour, as Martin Robin has suggested. To dismiss them as "reformists" is also too easy and too imprecise: we need to ask in what specific ways they differed from other reformists of the period (and there were many varieties). Likewise, labelling them simply North American "populists," as Paul Phillips has done, is equally ambiguous, and, more important, ignores the striking similarities with labourism in Britain, Australia, and New Zealand.<sup>20</sup> It is possible, I think, to find a coherence and a consistency in the issues raised, the planks hammered into party platforms, and the rhetoric rolling down from the hustings across the country, and thus to see labourism as a distinct ideological form in the world of the Canadian working class.

Labourist political ideas owed less to books than to experience, especially

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"Through the Prism of the Strike: Industrial Conflict in Southern Ontario, 1901-14," *Canadian Historical Review*, 58 (1977), 423-58; MacEwan, *Miners and Steelworkers*, 9-90; Ian McKay, "Strikes in the Maritimes, 1901-1914," unpublished paper, Dalhousie University, 1980.

<sup>19</sup> Ian Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics: The Labour Movement in Eastern Australia, 1900-1921* (Canberra 1965), 20.

<sup>20</sup> Robin, *Radical Politics*, 294; Paul Phillips, "Power Politics: Municipal Affairs and Seymour James Farmer, 1909-1924," in A.R. McCormack and Ian Macpherson, eds., *Cities in the West: Papers of the Western Canada Urban History Conference* (Ottawa 1975), 160.

experience in the world of work. These skilled workers were wage-earners, but they retained something of the mode of work which had preceded them in the evolution of capitalist production processes — that of the artisan and the “independent collier.” Craftworkers exercised a degree of shop-floor autonomy and took responsibility for exercising complex manual tasks without compulsion from employers.<sup>21</sup> In the language of the theorist, they had yet to make the complete transition from “formal” to “real” subordination on the job. Even in the early twentieth century, these workers held on in the pockets of industry where their traditional skills still enjoyed some integrity. Their libertarian style of work, their rugged shop-floor equality, the self-respect and pride in accomplishment, and the spirit of comradeship, nourished in the workshop, construction site, or mine and reinforced in their craft unions, were all carried outward to social and political relationships in the wider community.

Not surprisingly, then, these people, like the artisans and *sans-culottes* of the more distant past, were the bearers of the natural rights traditions which flowed from the great democratic revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Labourism, in fact, owed its greatest ideological debts to nineteenth-century Radicalism, of both the British liberal and American republican varieties. This form of working-class politics in Britain and her settler dominions had followed a course from Tom Paine and the English Jacobins, through the early nineteenth-century struggles for parliamentary reform and the tumultuous Chartist agitations, and, by the 1860s, into the Radical wing of that dynamic Victorian reform coalition, the Gladstonian Liberal Party.<sup>22</sup> In the United States a democratic radicalism with similar sources in the American Revolution eventually flowed into the Republican Party in the Civil War era.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Kealey, *Toronto Workers*, 53-97; Bryan D. Palmer, *A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914* (Montreal 1979), 71-96; Roberts, “Toronto Labour Movement”; Frank, “Cape Breton Coal Miners”; Ian McKay, “Workers’ Control in Springhill, 1882-1927,” paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association Meeting, 1981; Craig Heron, “The Crisis of the Craftsman: Hamilton Metal Workers in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 6 (1980), 7-48.

<sup>22</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth 1968); I.J. Prothero, *Artisans and Politics in Early Nineteenth Century London: John Gast and His Times* (London 1979); Geoffrey Crossick, *An Artisanal Elite in Victorian Society: Kentish London, 1840-1880* (London 1978), 199-242; John Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party, 1857-1868* (London 1966), 76-82; Royden Harrison, *Before the Socialists: Studies in Labour and Politics, 1861-1881* (London 1965); Trygve R. Tholfsen, *Working Class Radicalism in Mid-Victorian England* (New York 1977).

<sup>23</sup> Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York 1970); David Montgomery, *Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862-1872* (New York 1967); Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge, MA. 1976), 194-219; Leon Fink, *Workingmen’s Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana 1983), 3-17.



And when Wilfrid Laurier finally knit together a coherent national Liberal Party in Canada by the 1890s, there was a recognized place for organized workers alongside the francophones, farmers, Catholics, and corporate capitalists in the Liberal alliance.<sup>24</sup> It is important to recognize that nineteenth-century Liberalism was a coalition of diverse ideological tendencies; a working-class radical, for example, was no Benthamite.<sup>25</sup>

The working-class Radicals who operated on the left wing of Canada's Liberal Party — men like Nanaimo miner Ralph Smith, Toronto printer Daniel O'Donoghue, Hamilton engineer Edward Williams, and Springhill, Nova Scotia newspaper editor Robert Drummond — were prominent trade union leaders who regularly asserted working-class rights and concerns and expected action from party leaders.<sup>26</sup> In the 1880s the independent spirit of these skilled workers was producing the first quasi-independent organizing on the edge of official Liberalism, a phenomenon known as Liberal-Labourism, or, more commonly, Lib-Labism. Party leaders kept these Lib-Lab workers on a loose leash and then tugged into party caucuses any of those who were elected.<sup>27</sup>

As long as Liberal administrations continued to make friendly gestures towards this working-class constituency — as they continued to do most assiduously in the Maritimes and Quebec, and on the Prairies — the Liberal alliance could be held intact. But at regular intervals it had to absorb the seismic shock waves of industrial conflict. Craft unions often looked in vain for

<sup>24</sup> Frank Underhill ignored the working-class presence in his survey of the Victorian Liberal Party in Canada; see *In Search of Canadian Liberalism* (Toronto 1960), 3-20. The social base of the Canadian Liberal Party at the end of the nineteenth century has never been systematically analyzed, but can be pieced together from various secondary sources. See, for example, Oscar Douglas Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier* (abridged edition, 2 vols., Toronto 1965), II, 1-27; Ross Harkness, *J.E. Atkinson of the Star* (Toronto 1963); H. Blair Neatby, *Laurier and a Liberal Quebec: A Study in Political Management* (Toronto 1973); Ramsay Cook, *The Politics of John W. Daffoe and the Free Press* (Toronto 1963); Paul Douglas Stevens, "Laurier and the Liberal Party in Ontario, 1887-1911," Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1966, 1-191; Brian P.N. Beaven, "A Last Hurrah: Studies in Liberal Party Development and Ideology in Ontario, 1878-1893," Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1981.

<sup>25</sup> See R.V. Clements, "British Trade Unions and Popular Political Economy, 1850-75," *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 14 (1961), 93-104.

<sup>26</sup> Kealey, *Toronto Workers*, 124-53, 216-36, 254-73; Reilly, "Provincial Workmen's Association," 72-85; Babcock, *Gompers in Canada*, 157; McCormack, "Puttee," 156-7. This emphasis on Liberal craft-union leaders is not meant to diminish the importance of working-class Conservatives in the Canadian labour movement, especially in the 1870s (see Kealey, *Toronto Workers*, 124-71). But a willingness to work within the Tory traditions of elitism, deference, and loyalism set these men apart ideologically from working-class liberals. They also seem to have been numerically less important by the turn of the century.

<sup>27</sup> In Nova Scotia the dominant Lib-Lab figure, Robert Drummond, was rewarded with a seat in the province's appointed legislative council. Reilly, "Provincial Workmen's Association."

substantial support from Laurier and his provincial counterparts in their increasingly bitter battles with hostile employers. With flourishes of anger and frustration, Radicalism would then move outside the Liberal Party to become labourism. This first wave of disillusionment prompted the organization of independent electoral organizations in the 1880s, like the Workingmen's Political Club of Cape Breton, the People's Political Party of Kingston, the Hamilton Labor Political Association, the London Workingmen's Association, and the Workingmen's Party on Vancouver Island, often as offshoots of the Knights of Labor.<sup>28</sup> By the turn of the century the craftworkers' patience was again evaporating. TLC conventions around 1900 heard loud denunciations of Liberal perfidy, and a new crop of local Labour parties began to spring up: Independent Labor Parties in Cape Breton, Winnipeg, and Vancouver, le Parti ouvrier de Montréal, the Canadian Labor League in Toronto, and the Workingmen's Political Association in Hamilton.<sup>29</sup> "Il faut aller en Chambre et au Conseil et adopter nous-mêmes les réformes dont nous avons besoin," argued Montreal printer J.A. Rodier in denouncing Liberal inaction. After another lull, similar voices were heard in the pre-war years. "Let us quit begging from the present politicians and political parties for what is our just due," a Saint John worker wrote in 1910, "organize our own party, elect our own men, and we can expect then, and only then, to remedy the evils that are confronting us today."<sup>30</sup>

Of course, these dramatic departures did not make all labourists impervious to renewed Liberal blandishments. Many electoral saw-offs were arranged across the country to keep labourists and Liberals from competing for votes (usually, to be sure, in constituencies where the Liberals were particularly weak). Whenever Labour organizations languished, individuals in the movement tended to drift back, and socialists continually denounced the labourists as tools of the Liberals.<sup>31</sup> Men like Smith, Puttee, and Verville had not

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 87; Gregory S. Kealey and Bryan D. Palmer, *Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario, 1880-1900* (Cambridge 1982), 204-47; Phillips, *No Power Greater*, 13-15.

<sup>29</sup> Trades and Labor Congress of Canada, *Proceedings* (Ottawa), 1900-1906; MacEwan, *Miners and Steelworkers*, 17-18; McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, 77-84; Robin, *Radical Politics*, 49-61; Rouillard, "Action politique ouvrière," 269-75; Roberts, "Toronto Labour Movement," 355-57; Gene Howard Homel, "James Simpson and the Origins of Canadian Social Democracy," Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1978, 195-6; Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 594-600.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Rouillard, "Action politique ouvrière," 272; and Babcock, "Labour, Socialism, and Reform Politics," 46.

<sup>31</sup> McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, 90-6. After the final collapse of the movement in the 1920s, several former labourist politicians found their way back into the left wing of official Liberalism, including men like northern Ontario's Peter Heenan and Arthur Roebuck, former ILP members of the Ontario legislatures who ended up in Liberal cabinets. See H. Blair Neatby, *William Lyon Mackenzie King, 1924-1932: The Lonely Heights* (Toronto 1963), 173; Neil McKenty, *Mitch Hepburn* (Toronto 1967), 60.

travelled such a great ideological distance from the Liberal Party that returning to the fold was impossible.<sup>32</sup> Rank opportunism should never be overlooked in these cases; yet it seems that principled working-class Radicals were prepared to pursue their goals either on the left wing of the Liberal Party or through a Labourist party, depending on the responsiveness of the Liberals. At the same time, however, by the early 1900s there was no going back for growing numbers of politically conscious skilled workers. They were convinced of the strategic wisdom of cutting their links with mainstream Liberalism permanently, especially since well before the war they could point to shining examples of independent labourism in Britain and Australia. When William Lyon Mackenzie King approached Allan Studholme, Ontario's lone Labour MLA, for support for the Liberals in 1908, he was firmly informed that for men like Studholme Lib-Labism was finished: "labor men have lost all faith in party men and are determined to have their own class on the floor of the house so as to have some say in making the laws they have to live under."<sup>33</sup> Studholme's unswerving independence during his thirteen years in the legislature testified to this new labourist determination to go it alone.

Ideologically, however, labourists seldom strayed far from their Radical roots. The hallmark of the Radical tradition had been an analysis which "saw privilege and political inequality as the root of social evils."<sup>34</sup> The Halifax labour paper, the *Citizen*, captured the essence of labourist politics when it urged workers in 1919 to "take their places in the army of reconstruction that is someday going to storm the citadel of vested rights and privilege."<sup>35</sup> Like generations of artisans before them,<sup>36</sup> these workers were Canada's foremost champions of parliamentary democracy. Political life, they believed, should be thoroughly re-invigorated with proportional representation, referenda, a more democratic franchise which included women,<sup>37</sup> the abolition of that house of "privilege," the Senate (and its provincial counterparts, the legislative councils), and the sweeping away of all property qualifications and election deposits.<sup>38</sup> In their idealized, liberal view of the state, they argued that all citizens should have full access to a neutral apparatus which could serve an

<sup>32</sup> Montreal's leading labourist spokesman, Gustave Franco, even argued in 1916 that the Labor Party's programme was simply the old Liberal Party programme long-since abandoned. Geoffrey Ewen, "The Ideas of Gustave Franco as Expressed in *Le Monde Ouvrier/The Labour World*," M.A. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1981, 96-7.

<sup>33</sup> Studholme to King, 6 October 1908, William Lyon Mackenzie King Papers, Public Archives of Canada, v. 11, p. 9558.

<sup>34</sup> Crossick, *Artisan Elite*, 240.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in MacKenzie, "Farmer-Labor Party," 68.

<sup>36</sup> See Thompson, *Making*, 84-203; Prothero, *Artisans and Politics*, 73-155, 267-327; Harrison, *Before the Socialists*, 137-209.

<sup>37</sup> Before the war Allan Studholme was Ontario's foremost champion of women's right to vote and hold office. Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 613-14.

<sup>38</sup> The platforms of the various Labour parties can be found in: MacEwan, *Miners and Steelworkers*, 18; MacKenzie, "Farmer-Labor Party," 54, 69; Babcock, "Labour,

undefined common good. Here was the purest legacy of Jacobin democracy.

The craftworkers' commitment to libertarian and egalitarian democracy was deeply troubled by the corruption, mismanagement, and authoritarianism which they saw in the Canadian state by the end of the war. They were disturbed by national registration and conscription, which, they feared, foreshadowed industrial compulsion. Many resented the imposition of prohibition. Most were appalled by the suppression of radical organizations and trade union rights in the fall of 1918, and, even if they did not support the OBU, denounced the suppression of the Winnipeg General Strike. The *Halifax Citizen* greeted the news of the arrest of the strike leaders with the cry that "Prussianism is in power in Canada." Increasingly the labourists seized on the wartime rhetoric of defending democracy and turned it back on the country's political leaders. Immediately after the war, it seems, they concluded that the mantle of true defenders of democratic traditions had fallen to the "masses," especially workers and farmers. The legacy of Radical liberalism was theirs alone to preserve.<sup>39</sup>

At the same time that they promoted and defended individual liberties, however, they vigorously asserted a prickly class-consciousness in politics. "Capital shall not press a crown of thorns on Labor's brow," the *Hamilton Labor News* thundered during the 1919 provincial election campaign. "Capital shall not crucify Labor on a cross of gold."<sup>40</sup> Yet it was not the mere existence of rampant capitalist power which irked these men, but rather the exclusiveness and unchecked tyranny of that power: "the classes versus the masses," as they often phrased it in its Gladstonian idiom. What they demanded was simply the right for working people to the full promise of liberal democracy, to be able to share power with other social groups, including capital. "The upper and middle classes have, in the past been represented by men of their choosing, and from their own ranks, . . ." the Grand Master of the Provincial Workmen's Association in Nova Scotia, Thomas Johnston, reasoned in 1886. "The workingmen claim the privilege of naming a candidate from among themselves to represent, in parliament, the class to which they belong, and all classes."<sup>41</sup> A quarter of a century later a Hamilton ILP activist exhorted his fellow moulders to independent political action by urging that their goal should be "to cultivate and consolidate the whole of the masses when by *aggressive but not dominant*

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Socialism, and Reform Politics," 48; Charpentier, "Mouvement politique ouvrier," 165-7; Rouillard, "Action politique ouvrière," 288-96; Piva, "Factionalism and Frustration"; Naylor, "Independent Labor Party," 11-12; Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 594-697; McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, 77-97; Martiros, *Irvine*, 59-60; *Labour Organization in Canada*, 1919-21.

<sup>39</sup> MacKenzie, "Farmer-Labor Party," 72; Frank, "Cape Breton Coal Miners," 301-5; Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 638-41; Robin, *Radical Politics*, 119-77.

<sup>40</sup> *Labor News* (Hamilton), 10 October 1919.

<sup>41</sup> Provincial Workmen's Association, "Minutes of Proceedings and Other Documents," I (1879-89), April 1886, 107, Labour Canada Library.

action labor may have its fair share of what is due to them who are toiling." Many of the local and regional Labour parties made the right to participate in a wartime government a central theme of their 1917 federal election campaigns.<sup>42</sup> In fact, representation in official political life seemed to become an end in itself for Labourists — the right to be there in legislative halls to present the working-class perspective. Allan Studholme and the many municipal Labour representatives spent the bulk of their time in parliamentary deliberations simply passing comment on the impact of legislative measures and state programmes on workers. Labourists were undeniably class-conscious, but did not view the liberal-democratic state as an instrument for the working-class majority.

This attempt to create an independent political base for workers actually paralleled the emergence of a more professional, bureaucratic unionism at the turn of the century: both represented efforts by craftworkers to solidify formal, institutionalized niches for workers in monopoly-capitalist society. Their goal seemed to be to carry their new bureaucratic model of collective bargaining into the political sphere, in the hopes of avoiding bitter industrial conflict. A piece of election rhetoric from the 1919 provincial campaign in Hamilton is revealing in this regard. A *Labor News* writer explained to working-class voters:

This is not a contest of personalities. It is a contest for a principle. It is literally a contest between the capitalist and the laborer. The man who labors has in his hands the power to bring his employer to terms on a reasonable basis. It is a power much more to be prized than that gained by strikes. It is a power which places the integrity of the workingman on a par with the capitalist. And when the capitalist realizes beyond a doubt that the workingman is in possession of equal legislative rights as himself, then, and only then, will he consider the rights of his employees in actual earnestness.<sup>43</sup>

Thus the liberal heritage of equal rights for individuals would assure equal rights for classes. It was through this class-conscious participation in the Canadian state that the working class could then press for the specific reforms of working conditions which filled up Labourist platforms, especially at the municipal and provincial levels (proper inspection of workplaces, abolition of subcontracting and child labour, weekly payment of wages, and so on). From this point, of course, labourism was only a stone's throw from the agrarian-inspired notion of "group government," expounded in the west by that pivotal figure in the farmer-labour connection, William Irvine.<sup>44</sup> Significantly, the

<sup>42</sup> *International Molders' Journal*, 49 (1913), 1048 (emphasis added); Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 639-40; Robin, *Radical Politics*, 119-37. By the same logic the Hamilton Women's ILP decided they had a right to be involved in the National Council of Women.

<sup>43</sup> *Labor News*, 10 October 1919.

<sup>44</sup> See Irvine's *The Farmers in Politics* (Toronto 1920); Mardiros, *Irvine*; C.B. Macpherson, *Democracy in Alberta: Social Credit and the Party System* (Toronto 1962). The similarities to agrarian populist ideology should not blind us to important differ-

collaboration between farmers' and workers' organizations across the country seems to have been typically joint and concurrent sponsorship of the same candidate by each "group," rather than fusion into a single party.<sup>45</sup> Their interests remained separate and distinct.

These class-conscious waters were thoroughly muddied, however, by various pronouncements of labourist spokespersons which suggested labour's commitment to public service, not class identity. Ontario's future Minister of Labour, Walter Rollo, for example, promised in his 1914 election campaign "to legislate in the interests of all the people, and not a favored few," and Hamilton's new ILP municipal office-holders emphasized to a victory rally in 1919 that "primarily they intended to legislate for the best interests of the community wholly — not class."<sup>46</sup> In the same vein, Montreal's Gustave Francq wrote: "Le contrôle de l'État doit être le fait du concours de tous et non d'une classe ou d'un caste."<sup>47</sup> And Cape Breton's A.R. Richardson argued that "no class should be barred from having a say in the government of their country."<sup>48</sup> The same perspective was carried into the Ontario Farmer-Labour government, and after four years the Labour MLAs' hesitation to press working-class demands left them with virtually no record to defend. No real breakthroughs were made in social welfare legislation, and the legislated eight-hour day remained an unfulfilled dream.<sup>49</sup>

The labourist critique of Canada's political system, after all, emphasized domination by capitalist and other manipulative interests, and these craftsworker-politicians were not about to propose a further perversion of liberal democracy by imposing their own "class rule." Their campaigns, therefore, were contradictory appeals to class solidarity and community service, as in the following 1914 report of Rollo's stump oratory:

The [Labour] party stood for legislation for the masses and not the classes, and would not fail to support any move which would benefit the community. It did not seek merely to advance legislation solely beneficial to Labor, but the time had come when Labor should be regarded in a higher light than it was by the men who occupy seats in the house at present.<sup>50</sup>

The strong emphasis in labour's Radical baggage on the "brotherhood of man" and community of interest among citizens evidently overrode the experience of

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ences. As Macpherson has argued, farmers were independent commodity producers with a limited understanding of the world of wage-earners. This fundamental difference would make relations between the two movements difficult in most parts of the country, as workers and farmers split over such key issues as the eight-hour day and the tariff.

<sup>45</sup> Mardiros, *Irvine*, 109-10; MacKenzie, "Farmer-Labor Party," 27-32, 77-108; Naylor, "Independent Labor Party," 38; Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 645-46.

<sup>46</sup> *Labor News*, 13 November 1914, 3 January 1919.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Ewen, "Francq," 103.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Frank, "Cape Breton Coal Miners," 355.

<sup>49</sup> Naylor, "Independent Labor Party," 60; Robin, *Radical Politics*, 219-36.

<sup>50</sup> *Hamilton Herald*, 16 November 1914.

class divisions in capitalist society. In the ringing words of labourist campaign rhetoric in 1911: "The working class was the only class that was not a class — it was the nation."<sup>51</sup> Perhaps Wayne Roberts is right to dub this ideology "radical rotarianism."<sup>52</sup>

The labourist faith in liberal-democratic parliamentaryism, naturally enough, also included a commitment to gradualism. "To obtain a perfect state of society when everything shall be changed at a given time, even altho[ugh] a majority are in favor of it, seems to me impossible," wrote one of Hamilton's most prominent labourist politicians, George Halcrow, in 1916.<sup>53</sup> Gradualism was well established in the labourist tradition (and, we should recall, in the pre-Bolshevik Marxist tradition in Britain and Canada<sup>54</sup>), in part because of the craftworkers' libertarian sensitivity to freedom from coercion, and in part because of the long series of small victories which craftworkers believed they had won, in a piecemeal fashion, within industrial capitalist society. They had built up their many institutions of self-defence, especially their unions, to consolidate a small space for themselves in that society, and could countenance no abrupt changes which threatened those gains.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, industrial capitalist society in Canada, as in Britain, rarely presented itself as a rigid, immovable monolith which seemed to require a sudden, cataclysmic overthrow. In the early twentieth century it was only the wartime convergence of economic and political oppression which would push many labourists as close to outright rejection of capitalism as they ever ventured. Even then, the limited political perspective evident both in the Winnipeg General Strike and in the Ontario ILP's performance in the Farmer-Labour government tell us that, however many of them began to see a substantially new social order on the horizon, they still expected to get there by gradual steps.

The same Radical heritage also framed the labourist view of economic relationships and the state's role in adjusting them. In general they saved their harshest criticisms for the monopolists and the middlemen — the evil forces of economic "privilege" — who interfered with the productive life of the country and threatened working-class living standards. While they might lambaste individual industrialists for their heartlessness, Labour leaders seldom questioned their right to exist in an idealized society. The "single tax" on unimproved land values hung on in labourist platforms well into the twentieth century as a solution to social problems.<sup>56</sup> Besides "landlordism," the villains most com-

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 December 1911.

<sup>52</sup> Roberts, "Toronto Labour Movement."

<sup>53</sup> *Labor News*, 30 June 1916.

<sup>54</sup> McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, 53-76.

<sup>55</sup> See John Saville, "The Ideology of Labourism," in Robert Benewick, R.N. Berki, and Bhikhu Parekh, eds., *Knowledge and Belief in Politics: The Problem of Ideology* (London 1973), 219-22; E.P. Thompson, "The Peculiarities of the English," *Socialist Register*, 1965, 343-4.

<sup>56</sup> Ramsay Cook, "Henry George and the Poverty of Canadian Progress," *Canadian*

monly attacked were utility monopolies (gas, electricity, telephone, railway, and so on) and the unscrupulous but elusive "profiteer" who gouged the consumer.<sup>57</sup> The only public ownership planks in their platforms were aimed at utilities and, by the war, banks and some natural resource industries.

This limited critique is not surprising, given the social composition of this labourist movement. These were preponderantly people with traditional manual skills who carried into the early twentieth century some of the artisanal consciousness of the independent producer. From this perspective, an entrepreneurial industrialist was a co-producer, facing the same enemy in the economic "parasites" who lived off the honest toil of the "producing classes." In 1909 Ontario's regional labour paper, the *Industrial Banner*, argued that "the merchant, the mechanic, and the small manufacturer" were all victims of the same oppressive system: "The trouble lies in the fact that both employed and employer are chained fast in the grasp of an unjust and unworkable social system, which is the producer of the gigantic trusts and combines that are crippling the merchant, bankrupting the small manufacturer and pauperizing the masses."<sup>58</sup>

The hardy "producer" consciousness which lay behind this particular demonology rested not only on the assumption of common "parasitic" enemies, but also on an element of respect and admiration towards the accomplishments of one's fellow "producers." Labourism contained a strong belief in advancement according to merit — meaning implicitly, through manual or mental proficiency and honest labour. "Character, not wealth, should be the test of citizenship," the *Industrial Banner* insisted in 1904; and a few years later Allan Studholme regretted that "money was given preference to brains."<sup>59</sup> These craftworkers knew the social value attached to their own manual skills which they worked so assiduously to develop and defend, and they always insisted on wage differentials which recognized their exalted status over helpers and labourers. Their view of a liberal-democratic society was egalitarian in the sense of opposing privileged access to power and wealth, but they were quite prepared to accept some limited degree of hierarchical stratification, with industrialists well up the ladder, as long as the differentiation was honestly earned on the basis of merit. This perspective helps to explain the deference which was so marked among numerous craftworker-politicians towards many

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Historical Association, *Historical Papers* (1977), 142-57; James K. Chapman, "Henry Harvey Stuart (1873-1952): New Brunswick Reformer," *Acadiensis*, 5 (1972), 92-4; Mills, "Dixon and Farmer"; Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 678-9; *Labour Organization in Canada*, 1919, 57; 1920, 52-4; 1921, 51.

<sup>57</sup> Rouillard, "Action politique ouvrière," 294-5; Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 678-9.

<sup>58</sup> *Industrial Banner*, August 1909; see also Rouillard, "Action politique ouvrière," 295-7.

<sup>59</sup> *Industrial Banner*, October 1904; *Hamilton Herald*, 3 April 1912.



of Canada's economic and political leaders.<sup>60</sup> Yet the craftworkers believed this advancement should be open to all, and the free, compulsory education for which they all campaigned would facilitate that kind of equal opportunity for all.<sup>61</sup> They demanded, in addition, that the Canadian civil service should be recruited only on the basis of merit, not patronage. A meritocratic perspective within labourism, then, fed the "producer" consciousness.

This strain within labourist ideology had taken shape in an earlier stage of Canadian capitalist development — one which was rapidly disappearing by the 1890s — in which the skilled worker had still been assured a respected place in industrial society, and in which community solidarity to promote industrial growth in single towns and cities had been a crucial dynamic.<sup>62</sup> As anachronistic as it seemed in the early twentieth-century context of continental and transnational corporations, this "producer" mentality remained an important element in the political thinking of those skilled workers who still held on in the nooks and crannies where their craft skills were still valued. At the same time, of course, it also contributed a strong dose of pride and dignity to working-class politics and thus strengthened the class-consciousness of the movement.

An idealized view of the state and a naive perspective on political economy, however, were complemented by an equally old-fashioned, but nonetheless potent, moral sensitivity, a concern to infuse political life with principles of natural justice (a concern, of course, which often contrasted with the dominant faith of nineteenth-century political economists). Labourist rhetoric in this period rippled with appeals to "fairness." The Greater Toronto Labor Party, for example, urged new members in 1917 to "dissociate . . . from the old party affiliations and play the game fair,"<sup>63</sup> and promises of a "square deal" were heard repeatedly. To be "unfair" seemed to mean to violate customary standards for living and working, especially the notions of social equality and honest toil as the basis of social worth. In all social and political relations, they expected citizens to treat each other equitably, honestly, and impartially, and there were frequent invocations of the "golden rule." We have already seen that there were "fair" and "unfair" ways of accumulating wealth — diligent labour

<sup>60</sup> In 1912, for example, Allan Studholme made a crucial distinction between "two kinds of honor" in criticizing his fellow Hamilton MLA, the wealthy industrialist John S. Hendrie. "The political honor was to beat the other fellow at his game at any hazard, with cards up his sleeve and the dice loaded," he said. "The business honor of the honorable gentleman was unquestioned." *Labor News*, 22 March 1912.

<sup>61</sup> Leon Fink has correctly noted that this individualistic streak lacked the aggressive competitiveness of "the possessive individualism that anchored the world of the workers' better-off neighbours." *Workingmen's Democracy*, 12.

<sup>62</sup> See, in particular, T.W. Acheson, "The Social Origins of Canadian Industrialism: A Study in the Structure of Entrepreneurship," Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1971. On the early forms of the "producer" ideology, see Lillian Gates, "The Decided Policy of William Lyon Mackenzie," *Canadian Historical Review*, 40 (1959), 185-208; Palmer, *Culture in Conflict*, 97-122; Kealey, *Toronto Workers*, 154-71.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Naylor, "Independent Labor Party."

versus parasitic draining of wealth produced by others' labour. From this perspective, exploitation was, fundamentally, immoral.

Similarly the labour movement had long ago encapsulated this notion of equity and justice in social relationships with the old adage, "a fair day's work for a fair day's wage."<sup>64</sup> Their experience, however, had taught them that political measures were necessary to buttress "fair" employment practices — like abolishing subcontracting and prison labour, stemming the tide of immigrants who flooded the labour market, and barring Asians or women and children from jobs, all to prevent unfair degradation of the craftsmen's work experience. A legislated minimum wage was also necessary to maintain fair wages for the unskilled. "Fair wage" clauses in government contracts would set the appropriate tone for all employment. Equity also demanded equal pay for men and women on the same jobs, although not a word was uttered about the relegation of women to low-wage job ghettos. Most particularly, it was to standards of natural justice that labourists appealed when they demanded a legally sanctioned eight-hour day: it was not fair to work men and women for excessive lengths of time and thus deprive them of a full life as citizens and family members. As the *Industrial Banner* argued in 1912:

Long hours of labor have a tendency to stifle the intellect, to impair the energy and the vital organs of the body, and to reduce the opportunity for physical and mental improvement. The reduction of the hours of labor to eight out of each twenty-four, only six days per week, in all branches of industry is a stepping stone to a higher state of civilization.<sup>65</sup>

Both Alphonse Verville and Allan Studholme repeatedly introduced eight-hour day bills in their respective houses in the decade before the war,<sup>66</sup> and the post-war Labour programmes all highlighted this demand.

The same moral criteria also inspired the small package of welfare measures in the labourists' platforms. Society, they argued, had an obligation to maintain those who could not support themselves by their own labour — the old, the sick, the unemployed, and the single mothers, all of whom deserved pensions, and the victims of industrial accidents, who deserved compensation. They did not, however, campaign for broad programmes of income subsidy for the poor in general. They seemed, on the whole, too suspicious of state intervention into social life,<sup>67</sup> and preferred self-help and self-improvement through individual and co-operative activity on a voluntary basis — from temperance, to

<sup>64</sup> For an extended discussion of the implications of this phrase, see Richard Hyman and Ian Brough, *Social Values and Industrial Relations: A Study in Fairness and Equality* (Oxford 1975).

<sup>65</sup> *Industrial Banner*, September 1912.

<sup>66</sup> Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 610; Rouillard, "Action politique ouvrière," 292-94.

<sup>67</sup> In this sense, the legacy of Tom Paine persisted. See Prothero, *Artisans and Politics*, 29; Thompson, *Making*, 100-2; and, from another perspective, Henry Pelling, *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain* (London 1968), 1-18, 61-81. The influ-

technical education, to trade unionism. Being an independent, self-disciplined, respectable worker meant leaning on no one for material support, least of all the state. Some British historians have detected in this attitude a hint of condescension and implicit criticism of the unskilled labouring poor.<sup>68</sup> In the same vein Canadian labour publications sometimes carried moralistic scorn for those among the less skilled who refused to defend their "manhood" through collective self-help.<sup>69</sup> Throughout the period under discussion, the moral fibre that labourists expected of all citizens included self-reliance, mutual assistance, and community responsibility.

### III

HISTORIANS' DISCUSSIONS OF labour's moral sensitivity invariably short circuit to the pervasive influence of the Christian faith, especially Methodism. Diverse writers have suggested that this religious influence was vitally important either in establishing the moral basis of working-class politics,<sup>70</sup> or in blunting class-consciousness and radicalism by encouraging notions of the "brotherhood of all men," along with an analytical fuzziness which contrasts with the "scientific" socialism of the European labour movement.<sup>71</sup> Both positions seem to have been overstated, though we know too little at this stage about the actual role of the church in Canadian workers' lives to be able to reach firm conclusions. For example, we do not yet know how many workers went to church, or how often, aside from the stray outcries of clergymen who feared for the souls of the godless masses.<sup>72</sup> We do have hints that, like so many other institutions by the early twentieth century, many Protestant congregations had distinct class colourations and therefore may have reinforced a sense

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ence of Gompersite unionism was equally strong, however; see William M. Dick, *Labor and Socialism in America: The Gompers Era* (Port Washington 1972).

<sup>68</sup> Prothero, *Artisans and Politics*, 328-32; Fred Reid, *Keir Hardie: The Making of a Socialist* (London 1978), 177-84.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, Heron, "Crisis of Craftsman," 44.

<sup>70</sup> Most particularly, Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-28* (Toronto 1973); see also Nelson Wiseman, "An Historical Note on Religion and Parties on the Prairies," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 16 (1981), 109-12.

<sup>71</sup> Most outlandishly, Tom Nairn, "The English Working Class," in Robin Blackburn, ed., *Ideology in Social Science: Readings in Critical Social Theory* (London 1972), 187-206.

<sup>72</sup> The 1901 Census of Canada gives a rare chance to compare stated religious affiliation and church attendance. Christopher Armstrong and H.V. Nelles used these statistics to calculate that within Toronto's five largest religious faiths, only a third of the adherents were church members, and that the Protestants had much lower rates of membership than the Roman Catholics. See *The Revenge of the Methodist Bicycle Company: Sunday Streetcars and Municipal Reform in Toronto, 1883-1897* (Toronto 1977), 183. On irreligion in general, see Eric Hobsbawm, "Religion and the Rise of Socialism," *Marxist Perspectives*, 1 (1978), 14-33.

of class identity rather than undermining it. Moreover, historians have often encountered the angry barbs thrown from labourist ranks at the official churches for their insensitivity to workers' needs.

We might well ask if religion was the only source of morality. Did appeals to the "brotherhood of man" descend from Jesus Christ or from Tom Paine? Were moral critiques drawn from the Bible or from the great Romantic critics of mainstream political economy, especially Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and William Morris, whose impact on British working-class leaders was so profound? Or were they picked up second-hand from England's irrepressible ethical socialist, Robert Blatchford, publisher of the *Clarion*, whose work was widely read in Canada?<sup>73</sup> Arguably, the small minority of clergymen who had joined the labourist cause by the early 1920s have drawn far more attention to the religious context than its real impact on working-class politics deserves.

Yet there is no denying that various labour leaders were church-goers and revealed an evangelic cast of mind, with their emphasis on such forms of personal moral regeneration as temperance.<sup>74</sup> Certainly religious imagery runs through much labourist rhetoric. The president of the Winnipeg Labor Party in 1899 believed the movement originated in "an upper room in Jerusalem,"<sup>75</sup> while twenty years later a "Working Woman" in Sydney declared: "We want a little bit of heaven on earth, just the same as the monied fellows . . . we want true religion; the brotherhood of man the world over."<sup>76</sup> About the same time a man from Temiskaming on the Ontario ILP speakers' circuit indicated his readiness to speak on "The Democracy of Moses."<sup>77</sup> Nor can we ignore the flourishing Labour Churches in western Canada after the war, though we might want to re-examine them in the light of Fred Tipping's claim that it "was a misnomer to call them churches. They held no religious dogma. . . . Many, if not all of the sermons were economic in character rather than religious."<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Stuart Macintyre, *A Proletarian Science: Marxism in Britain, 1917-1933* (Cambridge 1980), 50; Stanley Pierson, *British Socialists: The Journey from Fantasy to Politics* (Cambridge 1979); McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, 78; A. Ross McCormack, "British Working-Class Immigrants and Canadian Radicalism: The Case of Arthur Puttee," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 10 (1978), 26-7.

<sup>74</sup> Allen, *Social Passion*, 13-15, 82-103; Fred Tipping, "Religion and the Making of a Labour Leader," in Richard Allen, ed., *The Social Gospel in Canada* (Ottawa 1975), 63-5; McCormack, "British Working-Class Immigrants," 22-37; Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 615-18.

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in McCormack, "Puttee," 151.

<sup>76</sup> *Canadian Labor Leader* (Sydney), 13 April 1918.

<sup>77</sup> Naylor, "Independent Labor Party," 19-20. For an extended discussion of this sort of imagery, see Herbert G. Gutman, "Protestantism and the American Labor Movement: The Christian Spirit in the Gilded Age," in *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working Class and Social History* (New York 1977), 79-117.

<sup>78</sup> Tipping, "Religion," 80. The ex-clergymen who had joined the movement were no longer seen as religious figures either. See McNaught, *Prophet in Politics*, 158-59;

The crucial question remains whether working-class leaders got their politics from Christianity, or turned to a common cultural reservoir to express their politics. After all, religious metaphors were the common coin of public discourse in Canada. Some of these women and men undoubtedly found their personal political inspiration in religion, but ultimately to see the social gospel as the driving force behind labourist politics seems to be putting the cart before the horse. First and foremost, what brought these men and women into this political movement was the material reality of their unsatisfactory experience as workers in capitalist society. For the devout among them, religious faith helped to validate and discipline their struggles for a better world. On the whole, however, the mode of thinking which appeared in the pages of the labour press and on the hustings in labourist campaigns reflected much more often the secular influence of working-class liberalism. Religious imagery might be invoked to inspire alternative social visions which little else in popular culture could summon up, but it was the doctrine of the "rights of man" which underlay the message.

Much of the confusion arises from the presence of working-class leaders on platforms with crusading churchmen and other "Progressives" or "New Liberals," like Samuel Chown or William Lyon Mackenzie King. For labourists there were evidently some practical advantages in these alliances for securing specific reforms, like a day of rest on Sunday, mothers' allowances, or favourable labour legislation. But the differences which set these workers apart from their middle-class allies were at least as striking as their areas of agreement. The strong libertarian, democratic basis of labourism contrasted sharply with the Progressives' elitist preference for professional expertise and their eagerness to meddle with the child-rearing practices or leisure pursuits of the working class.<sup>79</sup> Perhaps most important, labourists usually stood alone in defending what they considered the pivotal institution of working-class life, the trade union.<sup>80</sup> Whatever their willingness to cooperate, these workers were neither Progressives nor New Liberals.

There were other allies available, however. Alongside labourism, an alternative working-class ideology had been flourishing since the 1890s. Marxist socialism had appeared first in the Socialist Labor Party and then, after 1904, in the Socialist Party of Canada. The particular brand of Marxism which became dominant in Canada drew first on the rigid formulations of the American theoretician, Daniel De Leon, and then on the SPC's own west-coast

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Mardiros, *Irvine*, 76-7; Reginald Whitaker, "Introduction," to Irvine, *Farmers in Politics* (1976 ed.), xvi.

<sup>79</sup> For a sampling of these elitist schemes of social engineering, see Paul Rutherford, ed., *Saving the Canadian City: The First Phase, 1880-1920* (Toronto 1974).

<sup>80</sup> See, for example, Reginald Whitaker, "The Liberal Corporatist Ideas of Mackenzie King," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 2 (1977), 153-8.

ideologues of so-called "impossibilism." In the pages of the socialist press, party theoreticians poured scorn on economic struggles as a waste of time, and on street corners across the country, workers were treated to soap-box denunciations of the "labour fakirs" in the craft union movement.<sup>81</sup>

Labourist craftworkers consequently developed a deep distrust and dislike for socialists and their doctrine. In an age of relentless challenges from ruthless corporate employers,<sup>82</sup> skilled workers placed defence of their workplace organizations above all else, and the ceaseless attacks from the left on these craft unions created a virtually unbridgeable gulf between socialism and labourism. The craft unionists' continental leader, Samuel Gompers, summed up their resentment in a letter to a Canadian correspondent: "It is not Socialism that we have been called on to combat, but the pernicious activity of Socialists who seem to have made it their particular mission in life to either dominate or destroy the trade unions. They defame and assassinate the character of men who dare to defend their convictions and who stand for the organization of trades unions." One of Canada's leading craft unionists, John Flett, who had supported socialism within the TLC a decade earlier, likewise lashed out in 1907: he and his fellow unionists objected "to being maligned by these men who call themselves Socialists and who shout their doctrines at us from every soap-box on the street corner."<sup>83</sup> British visitors like Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald were astonished at the bitterness and mutual hostility between the two camps, and Winnipeg's Arthur Puttee lamented to them his inability to bring about the equivalent of the British labour alliance of 1900 known as the Labour Representation Committee.<sup>84</sup> Outside of the militant mining communities of Nova Scotia, Alberta, and British Columbia, therefore, Marxist socialism remained a marginal phenomenon in the Canadian working-class experience, largely owing to its doctrinal rejection of trade unionism.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>81</sup> See McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, 53-76; Robin, *Radical Politics*, 44-61, 79-103; Penner, *Canadian Left*, 40-76; Carlos Schwantes, *Radical Heritage: Labor, Socialism, and Reform in Washington and British Columbia, 1885-1917* (Seattle 1979), 103-83; George T. Troop, "Socialism in Canada," M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1922, 10-42; David Frank and Nolan Reilly, "The Emergence of the Socialist Movement in the Maritimes, 1899-1916," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 4 (1979), 84-114; Roberts, "Toronto Labour Movement," 357-64; Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 649-56.

<sup>82</sup> It is worth noting that British and European craftworkers, who tended on the whole to have better relations with socialists, were not encountering the same systematic, hostile attacks from capitalists that were shattering the North American trade union movement.

<sup>83</sup> Quoted in Babcock, *Gompers in Canada*, 160, 172. Babcock lays too much blame for the socialist-labourist strife at the door of Sam Gompers and his AFL henchmen. Canadian craft unionists developed their own sensitivity to attacks on their industrial organizations without waiting for orders from Washington.

<sup>84</sup> McCormack, "British Working-Class Immigrants," 31-3.

<sup>85</sup> Paradoxically, however, several militant socialists played important roles as individu-

Something of a thaw appeared in socialist attitudes after a large group, including most of the central Canadian membership, split away to form the Social Democratic Party of Canada in 1911. In several Canadian cities labourists and Social Democrats worked out a degree of electoral co-operation just before the war, though not without some occasional backsliding into mutual recrimination.<sup>86</sup> Some of the main architects of this new socialist-labourist collaboration were an assortment of working-class radicals who were ethical socialists rather than hard-boiled Marxists, and who had had difficulty finding a natural home in Canadian political life since the turn of the century.

In Britain their counterparts worked through a socialist society known as the Independent Labor Party, whose chief spokesmen were Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald. The British ILP propagated a brand of ethical socialism with a more transcendent vision (the "co-operative commonwealth") than the somewhat more narrow-minded labourists, but without the analytical rigour and hard-nosed skepticism of the Marxists.<sup>87</sup> In the 1890s Canada's ethical socialists had spawned numerous little societies and clubs, including the short-lived Winnipeg Labor Party, before consolidating in the Canadian Socialist League.<sup>88</sup> But intensifying industrial conflict had left these men and women on the sidelines, and after the decline of the CSL at the turn of the century, men like New Brunswick's H.H. Stewart, Toronto's James Simpson, Winnipeg's Fred Tipping, and, above all, the energetic William Ulric Cotton, publisher of the popular socialist paper *Cotton's Weekly*, had held an uncomfortable position on the right wing of the SPC. Eventually, however, they had found more room to manoeuvre in the SDP, especially in larger cities like Toronto and Winnipeg.<sup>89</sup>

als in the trade union movement. See Homel, "Simpson"; Roberts, "Toronto Labour Movement"; Babcock, "Labour, Socialism, and Reform Politics," 39-41; McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, 56-7.

<sup>86</sup> Roberts, "Toronto Labour Movement," 417-25; Piva, "Factionalism and Frustration," 123-4; McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, 92-7.

<sup>87</sup> Henry Pelling, *The Origins of the Labour Party, 1880-1900* (Oxford 1965), 99-168; Stephen Yeo, "A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-1896," *History Workshop*, 4 (1977), 5-56.

<sup>88</sup> Gene Howard Homel, "'Fading Beams of the Nineteenth Century': Radicalism and Early Socialism in Canada's 1890s," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 5 (1980), 7-32; Roberts, "Toronto Labour Movement," 333-40; McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, 77-84; Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 588-93; Frank and Reilly, "Socialist Movement," 87; Chapman, "Stewart," 84-5; Gerald Henry Allabee, "New Brunswick Prophets of Radicalism: 1890-1914," M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1972, 13-50.

<sup>89</sup> Homel, "Simpson," 565-714; McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*; Tipping, "Religion," 74-7; Leo Heaps, *The Rebel in the House: The Life and Times of A.A. Heaps, MP* (London 1970), 1-7; Edward M. Penton, "The Ideas of William Cotton: A Marxist View of Canadian Society (1908-14)," M.A. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1978.

During the war the sectarian spirit retreated still further, and many Social Democrats joined the labor parties, especially after the SDP was banned in 1918 and former party members began to part company over affiliation with the Third International. In Cape Breton the miners' radical leader J.B. McLachlan became an official and a candidate for Nova Scotia's ILP. In Montreal Marxists like Michael Buhay, Richard Kerrigan, and Albert Saint-Martin participated in the Quebec section of the Canadian Labor Party. In Toronto the veteran socialist Jimmy Simpson helped to weld together an ILP-SDP alliance whose mouthpiece was the *Industrial Banner*. In Hamilton the socialists' leading light, Fred Flatman, plunged into ILP work, eventually assuming the editorship of the local *Labor News* in 1918-19. In Winnipeg the alliance of socialists and labourists was perhaps most thoroughly developed, but even in British Columbia the original theorist of dogmatic "impossibilism," E.T. Kingsley, was active in the province's Federated Labor Party.<sup>90</sup>

The significance of this wartime development in the history of Canadian working-class politics should not be underestimated. For the first time on a national scale, working-class liberalism had linked up with elements of Marxist and ethical socialism in a dynamic alliance, which, under the old label of labourism, provided the ideological dimension of the unprecedented post-war upsurge of the Canadian working class. The presence of the radicals within the house of labour by the end of the war helped to sharpen the focus of the movement's analysis and to give the rhetoric a more visionary quality. The new Cape Breton ILP formally set its sights on "the working class ownership and democratic management of all the social means of wealth production and distribution at the earliest possible date." British Columbia's Federated Labor Party likewise promised "the collective ownership and democratic operation of the means of production," and the Manitoba party declared its goal was the "transformation of capitalist property into social property, with production for use instead of for profit." Even the cautious Ontario ILP incorporated a plank calling for "the democratic control of industry," and by the fall of 1919, was hailing the arrival of the "New Democracy."<sup>91</sup> In Halifax an aging socialist stirred a Labor Party meeting in 1919 with his cry that "this was no time for

<sup>90</sup> Frank, "Cape Breton Coal Miners," 301-5; MacKenzie, "Farmer-Labor Party," 33-76; Fred Thompson, "A Rebel Voice: Fred Thompson Remembers Halifax, 1919-20," *This Magazine*, 12 (1978), 8; Charpentier, "Mouvement politique ouvrier," 161-5; Ewen, "Labour Political Action," 14-20; Naylor, "Independent Labor Party"; Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 659-66; McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, 143; Steeves, *Compassionate Rebel*, 37; McNaught, *Prophet in Politics*, 119-37; Ian Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks: The Early Years of the Communist Party of Canada* (Montreal 1981), 3-26; Elizabeth Ann Taraska, "The Calgary Craft Union Movement," M.A. thesis, University of Calgary, 1575, 56.

<sup>91</sup> Frank, "Cape Breton Coal Miners," 304-5; Phillips, *No Power Greater*, 71; *Labour Organization in Canada*, 1919, 51; 1920, 52.



small things, but a time for old men to have dreams and young men to have visions."<sup>92</sup>

The hard-core labourists were often tugged along by these more articulate socialists, but all working-class leaders were actually being pushed from below by the discontent of Canadian workers by the end of the war. Not only did the war experience generate dissatisfaction with soaring living costs, profiteering, and government mismanagement, as well as unleashing a powerful new rhetoric of democracy and public service; but it also provided the economic security of full employment at high wages which gave workers a more secure base from which to launch their battles.<sup>93</sup> It was clearly the surging working-class confidence, aggressiveness, and self-consciousness which encouraged socialists and labourists to bury the hatchet and co-operate in building unified working-class parties.

By 1919, however, the strength of that alliance, and of the millennial quality of labourist politics, varied across the different regions of the country. The extent to which working-class politicians moved towards a thorough-going rejection of industrial capitalism seemed to depend on the political economy of the region. The most cautious could generally be found in Ontario's manufacturing centres. There a series of campaigns, stretching back over at least two decades, had drawn them into some kind of working partnership with the industrialists who employed them. Most of the organized workers in manufacturing could be found in the consumer-goods industries, where intensifying competition had encouraged an alliance between bosses and workers in the form of the union label, first introduced in Canada in the 1890s. Most union-label employers expected the unions in their shops to promote the sale of the firms' clothing, cigars, beer, stoves, or whatever, to working-class shoppers; and the Ontario labour movement had obliged with local Union Label Leagues in several industrial centres.<sup>94</sup> In a similar fashion, many local craft-union leaders had been swept up into the municipal boosterism which characterized southern Ontario manufacturing towns in the early twentieth century. Promoting new industry meant expanding job prospects for workers in construction as well as in manufacturing. The most dramatic form of this sort of campaign was the "public power" movement, which united the labour movement and the local manufacturers across southwestern Ontario in a struggle against the huge private utilities corporations.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Thompson, "Rebel Voice," 8.

<sup>93</sup> Bercuson, *Fools and Wise Men*, 1-86; McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, 118-64; Robin, *Radical Politics*, 619-53; Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 638-49.

<sup>94</sup> Roberts, "Toronto Labour Movement"; Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 87-9.

<sup>95</sup> See H.V. Nelles, *The Politics of Development: Forests, Mines, & Hydro-Electric Power in Ontario, 1849-1941* (Toronto 1974), 215-306; Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 536-44.

The real cement of this alliance with manufacturers, however, was the tariff issue. Through their political mouthpiece, the Conservative Party, Ontario's industrialists repeatedly terrorized the province's workers with apocalyptic scenarios of unemployment and starvation if the Canadian market were opened to unfettered foreign competition. In virtually every federal election campaign, working-class voters were rallied to the defence of the region's industrial life against would-be agents of destruction, whether free-trade Liberals or militant farmers. Soon after the war, the Ontario ILP was thrown into turmoil over the tariff question. The Hamilton branches led a successful fight to overturn a free-trade resolution at a party convention in 1920.<sup>96</sup> Thus, however militant they may have become in asserting workers' rights in the political arena, these Ontario labourists were committed to helping their employers survive in the uncertain climate of the post-war economy. Some labour papers in the region even rallied to the Canadian Manufacturers' Association's "Buy-Canadian" campaign, once again to help save workers' jobs. These concerns inevitably drove a wedge into the always fragile relations with the Ontario farmers' movement, which was opposed to tariff protection. In the Maritimes a somewhat similar pattern unfolded in many of the smaller, crisis-ridden communities of the region, with the added twist of regional discontent against a common enemy, central Canada. By the early 1920s some labourist leaders were drifting into the Maritime Rights movement, the political expression of hard-pressed small business operators of the east, while the labourist Halifax *Citizen* similarly boosted the cause of regional rights.<sup>97</sup>

This particular alignment of the "producing classes" which emerged in Ontario and parts of the Maritimes had few counterparts in the west. Manufacturing was an insignificant part of the economy west of the Lakehead, which was dominated by resource extraction and transportation industries. For the most part, owners of the means of production were either independent farmers or powerful corporations, which had no need for collaboration with their employees to strengthen or maintain their market position. The urban craftworkers who promoted labourism in the west were preponderantly in the building trades and in the repair and maintenance departments of the transportation sector, notably Winnipeg's huge railway yards and related contract shops.<sup>98</sup> The bitter, often violent confrontations between workers and their corporate bosses in the mining, forest, and transportation industries helped to breed the most radical forms of socialism in the country — as they did in the

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 527-36; Paul Craven and Tom Traves, "The Class Politics of the National Policy, 1872-1933," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 14 (1979), 14-38.

<sup>97</sup> MacKenzie, "Farmer-Labor Party," 137-88; Ernest R. Forbes, *The Maritime Rights Movement, 1919-1927: A Study in Canadian Regionalism* (Montreal 1979); Babcock, "Labour, Socialism, and Reform Politics," 35-6.

<sup>98</sup> Paul Phillips, "The National Policy and the Development of the Western Canadian Labour Movement," in A.W. Rasporich and H.C. Klassen, eds., *Prairie Perspectives 2* (Toronto 1973), 41-62.

coal-mining regions of Nova Scotia at roughly the same time.<sup>99</sup> Countervailing patterns of co-operation between capital and labour to defend industry, especially the Conservatives' tariff campaigns, never had the bite they had in southern Ontario. Moreover, the peculiarities of the western political economy also bred a bumptious movement of independent commodity producers against sundry monopolists and middlemen.<sup>100</sup> Dialogue between the western farmer and labour movements began before the war, and the co-operation of these "producers" helped to send William Irvine to Ottawa as Calgary's Labour MP in 1921.<sup>101</sup> These regional contrasts clearly suggest that the "producer" ideology of the skilled workers was quite an ambivalent phenomenon.

Whatever the regional variations, however, labourism had collapsed as a significant force in Canadian politics by 1925. The waning membership of the various parties and their increasingly dismal performance at the polls reflected the final defeat of the craftworker in Canadian industry. Technological and managerial innovations had already transformed craft jobs or pushed craftworkers to the margins of the work world, and the severe economic slump of the early 1920s allowed employers to eliminate the last major strongholds of craft unionism outside printing and construction. The Winnipeg General Strike was only one of the most dramatic of numerous battles lost across the country.<sup>102</sup> The self-confidence and optimism which had swelled up in the ranks of Canadian workers during the war quickly turned to demoralization and defensiveness once the wartime prosperity disappeared. Labourist politics languished without the full union treasuries which had funded their efforts, and the aggressive class consciousness which had provided the momentum.

In this context of weakness, labourism underwent two important changes. The first was a disintegration of the socialist-labourist unity which had been so

<sup>99</sup> David Jay Bercuson, "Labour Radicalism and the Western Industrial Frontier, 1897-1919," *Canadian Historical Review*, 57 (1977), 154-75; Frank and Reilly, "Socialist Movement"; Frank, "Cape Breton Coal Miners"; Donald Macgillivray, "Industrial Unrest in Cape Breton, 1919-1925," M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1971. Bercuson has exaggerated the differences in radicalism between Nova Scotia's miners and those in western Canada, as the work of Frank and Macgillivray indicates.

<sup>100</sup> The many studies of western farmers' movements include: L.A. Wood, *A History of the Farmers' Movements in Canada* (Toronto 1974); W.L. Morton, *The Progressive Party in Canada* (Toronto 1950); Macpherson, *Democracy in Alberta*; R.J. Brym, "Regional Social Structure and Agrarian Radicalism in Canada: Alberta, Saskatchewan, and New Brunswick," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 15 (1978), 339-51; J.F. Conway, "Populism in the United States, Russia, and Canada: Explaining the Roots of Canada's Third Parties," in J. Paul Grayson, ed., *Class, State, Ideology, and Change: Marxist Perspectives on Canada* (Toronto 1980), 305-21; P.R. Sinclair, "Class Structure and Populist Protest in Western Canada," *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 1 (1975), 1-17.

<sup>101</sup> Mills, "Dixon and Farmer"; Mardiros, *Irvine*.

<sup>102</sup> Jamieson, *Times of Trouble*, 164-213.

marked in the 1917-20 period. The policy of collaboration had caused uneasiness on both sides from the start and could not survive the disagreement over appropriate industrial tactics which brought the OBU into existence. More and more labourist craftworkers drew the line at industrial unionism and full-scale socialism. In Nova Scotia the ILP began to splinter in the early 1920s. In Montreal Gus Francq raged against the left both in his newspaper, *Le Monde Ouvrier*, and in a pamphlet, *Bolchevisme ou Syndicalisme, lequel?*, published in 1919. In Toronto and Hamilton the more cautious labourists drew back from the alliance with the socialists, and James Simpson was forced into a successful libel suit by his political foes in the Toronto labour movement. In Manitoba the Dominion Labor Party split, and the socialists formed a new Independent Labor Party. Probably most devastating in the long run was the withdrawal of TLC backing for the labourist movement by 1921, on the grounds that the socialist presence had become too strong.<sup>103</sup>

Across the country, moreover, most of the Marxist socialists were gravitating to the emerging North American Communist movement by 1920, and the old sectarian hostilities to labourism re-emerged. The efforts of the new Workers' Party to rebuild the links after 1922 by using the federated structure of the Canadian Labor Party proved largely fruitless, since most of the labourist remnants had withdrawn by 1925.<sup>104</sup> The ethical socialists who remained — including Simpson and John Buckley in Toronto, Sam Lawrence in Hamilton, and Ernest Steeves in Vancouver — and the non-Communist Marxists, many of them Jewish Social Democrats, regrouped in the late 1920s and welcomed the creation of the CCF in 1933.<sup>105</sup> Many more of the old-style labourists, however, retained their skepticism about a "cooperative commonwealth" and held aloof from the new party throughout the 1930s. Labour MP Humphrey Mitchell, for

<sup>103</sup> MacKenzie, "Farmer-Labor Party," 137-88; Ewen, "Francq," 37-9, 98-9; and "Labour Political Action," 24-46; Piva, "Factionalism and Frustration," 126-7; Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 669-75; Mills, "Dixon and Farmer," 48-9; McNaught, *Prophet in Politics*, 147-53; Heaps, *Rebel in the House*, 56; Robin, *Radical Politics*, 237-67.

<sup>104</sup> Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks*, 27-127; William Rodney, *Soldiers of the International: A History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1919-29* (Toronto 1968), 28-106; Robin, *Radical Politics*, 237-67.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 262-3, 268-73; Steeves, *Compassionate Rebel*, 70-84; John M. McMenemy, "Lion in a Den of Daniels: A Study of Sam Lawrence, Labour in Politics," M.A. thesis, McMaster University, 1965; Rae, "Politics of Class," 232; David Lewis, *The Good Fight: Political Memoirs, 1909-1958* (Toronto 1981), 29-30; Ewen, "Labour Political Action," 46-71; McNaught, *Prophet in Politics*, 204-14, 255-77; Gerald Caplan, *The Dilemma of Canadian Socialism: The CCF in Ontario* (Toronto 1973), 22-4; Walter Young, *The Anatomy of a Party: The National CCF, 1932-61* (Toronto 1969), 21-8; Doris French Shackleton, *Tommy Douglas* (Toronto 1975), 59-70; George Hoffman, "The Saskatchewan Farmer-Labor Party, 1932-1934; How Radical Was It At Its Origins?" in D.H. Bocking, ed., *Pages from the Past: Essays on Saskatchewan History* (Saskatoon 1979), 210-24.

example, Mackenzie King's future minister of labour, refused to join, as did his political organization, the Central Hamilton ILP.<sup>106</sup> Even Winnipeg's Labour MP A.A. Heaps was uneasy in the new social democratic organization.<sup>107</sup> Only the upsurge of industrial unionism in the 1940s brought the CCF its coveted trade union base.<sup>108</sup>

The second change was more subtle but no less significant in the long term. For their electoral battles in the early 1920s, the beleaguered labourist craftworkers turned more often for candidates to the articulate middle classes who had drifted into their political camp towards the end of the war. In 1920 Manitoba's new Labour caucus included the former clergymen A.E. Smith and William Ivens, and the next year, among the Labour candidates for the federal house were the Reverends William Irvine of Calgary, J.S. Woodsworth of Winnipeg, and E.J. Etherington of Hamilton. Later in the 1920s, of course, middle-class men like M.J. Coldwell, Stanley Knowles, and T.C. Douglas would follow the same path into the labourist fold.<sup>109</sup> They brought a new emphasis on the spirit of the social gospel, but also, especially in the person of J.S. Woodsworth, a strong dose of Fabianism. This new national spokesman for the movement had been inspired by the British Labour Party's new programme of 1918, a solidly Fabian document,<sup>110</sup> and his public utterances would place increasing emphasis on social planning — an element which had never been strong in pre-war labourism. In fact, he became the fragile link between the labourism of the past and the group of young Fabian intellectuals who formed the League for Social Reconstruction in 1932 and who made him their honorary president. Ultimately the Fabian emphasis meshed more easily with the highly-centralized, more bureaucratic unionism which emerged under the CIO banner in the 1930s and 1940s, than it did with the remnants of craft unionism.

#### IV

LABOURISM, THEN, WAS A DIFFUSE, unsystematic ideology, but one with clearly identifiable characteristics which set it apart from other currents on the Canadian left. Like agrarian populism, it levelled an anti-monopoly, "producerist" critique at capitalist society, but its programme expressed the con-

<sup>106</sup> McMenemy, "Lion in a Den of Daniels," 37.

<sup>107</sup> Heaps, *Rebel in the House*, 137-9.

<sup>108</sup> Young, *Anatomy of a Party*, 77-8, 82-90; Penner, *Canadian Left*, 213-16; Irving Martin Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist Party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour, 1935-1956* (Toronto 1973), 66-85.

<sup>109</sup> A.E. Smith, *All My Life: An Autobiography* (Toronto 1949), 64-70; McNaught, *Prophet in Politics*, 145-53; Mardiros, *Irvine*; Heron, "Working-Class Hamilton," 667; Shackleton, *Douglas*, 58-70. Besides these clergymen the labourist tickets included several doctors. *Labour Organization in Canada, 1921*, 55-6.

<sup>110</sup> McNaught, *Prophet in Politics*, 92-7.

cerns of wage-earners, not independent commodity producers. Like middle-class Progressives, labourists sought a wide range of immediate social reforms, but put much greater emphasis on independent working-class self-help through trade unionism. Like their socialist contemporaries, the men and women of the labourist movement bristled with class consciousness, but generally had not accepted the need for the fundamental transformation of capitalist society which both the Marxists and the ethical socialists demanded. And like the social democrats of the CCF, the labourists envisaged an orderly, gradualist process of social and political change; yet they shied away from a greatly expanded economic role for the state and never proposed the centralized planning role projected by later Fabian intellectuals. Labourism remained, for the most part, the direct heir of nineteenth-century working-class liberalism.

However inchoate, the labourists shared a loose consensus about what a properly constructed society ought to look like. It was a vision of a decentralized society of small-scale production, where social and political power were widely diffused, where citizens were not far separated in social status, were treated equally under the law, and enjoyed equal opportunities, and where self-reliance, voluntary association, and mutual assistance would be more important than state coercion. For an anonymous proletarian poet in 1905, all these ingredients went into "The Workman's Ideal":

What does the workman want? He wants his own,  
 His honest share of what his hands produce;  
 He craves no charity and begs no bone  
 But only asks for freedom from abuse.

What does the workman want? He wants good will,  
 But not at the cost of justice and of life;  
 Not if it means that he must need be still  
 While others rob his babies and his wife.

What does the workman want? He wants fair play  
 And equal rights and equal chance for all  
 And privilege for none to steal and slay  
 Or force his weaker brother to the wall.

What does the workman want? He wants the right  
 Against the vain traditions of the law,  
 Against the sophistries of age and might,  
 Against religion's oft mistaken awe.

The workman wants the reign of common sense;  
 He wants the true democracy of man.  
 Nor any patronage nor all pretense  
 Will hold him long to any other plan.

The common welfare is the workman's goal,  
 The common use of all the common wealth,

The common rights of every common soul  
 And common access to the springs of health.

And every man a workman by and by,  
 His own employer, his own king and priest,  
 Nor any rich or poor, nor low or high,  
 When all the world's monopolies have ceased.<sup>111</sup>

Labourism was the political expression of skilled men and women who worked with their hands and thus made "honest toil" the touchstone of their value system; it was also the politics of people who cherished the personal freedoms which the great struggles for popular democracy in the British political system had brought. In its narrowest, probably most common form, this meant the freedom to be left alone. Certainly it involved a suspicion of too much intervention into their lives by either their employers or the state. In its more aggressive manifestations, however, freedom became the right to full participation in all aspects of social and political life. The bitterness at the exclusion of the working class from this full life prompted labourists' most militant, class-conscious flourishes. Despite the individualistic thrust of the liberal heritage, they wanted to raise the whole working class to full equality.

In contrast to contemporary and latter-day denunciations of their conservatism and opportunism, the record of labourist political activity in Canada reveals men and women who were principled, on the whole, but all too often simply naive. Their outlook on social and economic relations, in particular, was rooted in a world which was fast disappearing by the early twentieth century. Yet it was precisely their outrage at how the emerging monopoly capitalist society violated their more old-fashioned sensibilities that gave their politics its cutting edge. The war brought the craftworkers' outrage to its sharpest point. Bitter industrial conflict and political chicanery pushed labourism as far to the left as it could go. The new alliance with socialism which emerged during the war gave labourist politics a clearer focus and helped to crystallize the admittedly vague alternative vision of society which had always lain buried in the ideological fuzziness. If these working-class politicians were not always fundamentally at odds with capitalism, they were certainly opposed to the version of it which was reshaping Canadian society. This was not a revolutionary challenge, but it was a resistance movement.

The brake on any further radicalization of labourism was precisely the force which set this brand of politics in motion — an unswerving commitment to craft unionism. In 1919, just as at the turn of the century, labourists faced a new left-wing attack on their most highly prized class institutions, this time from the industrial unionists in the OBU. They quickly recoiled from their wartime alliance. Gradualism and restraint surfaced again, and the weakness of labourist ideology and practice as a tool for the wider working class became

<sup>111</sup> *Industrial Banner*, May 1905.

apparent. The halting, lacklustre performance of the labourists in the Farmer-Labour government — the only situation where they had substantial legislative power — revealed the deep ambiguities in their thinking, particularly the tension between asserting working-class interests and governing in the interest of all classes. The British Labour Party would reveal the same problem during its terms in office.<sup>112</sup>

For those in search of the articulate, visionary proletarian voices of the past, the labourists will almost inevitably appear muddled, uninspiring, often annoyingly narrow-minded, at least in comparison with many of their working-class counterparts in the socialist movement, who usually exhibited remarkable erudition, analytical skills, and eloquence. Yet, to be fair, we should recognize a salient feature of Canadian labourism. As a movement it reasserted a faith in radical democracy in the face of political corruption and manipulation and, perhaps more importantly, in the face of new elitist theories of the state which were modelled on the private corporation.<sup>113</sup> This rigorously democratic ethos, along with the decentralized, community-based focus and the more limited use of the state to right social wrongs, was eclipsed by subsequent movements on the Canadian left, both Fabian and communist.<sup>114</sup> Without casting any heroic mantle over these working-class politicians who have settled into such ill-deserved historical obscurity, we owe them some respect for trying to keep alive the legacy of "liberty, equality, and fraternity."

*I am grateful to those participants at the Winnipeg conference whose specialized knowledge of various communities across Canada encouraged them to buttonhole me with gentle hints about egregious errors of fact and interpretation. A subsequent discussion with the inter-faculty seminar of the York Social Science Division was also fruitful. For more detailed comments, I am particularly indebted to Irving Abella, Ramsay Cook, Ian McKay, Jim Naylor, and Bryan Palmer.*

<sup>112</sup> See Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism: A Study in the Politics of Labour* (London 1973).

<sup>113</sup> See, for example, John C. Weaver, "Efficiency and Order: Samuel Morley Wickert and the Urban Progressive Movement in Toronto, 1900-1915," *Ontario History*, 69 (1977), 218-34; and Nelles, *Politics of Development*, 489-95.

<sup>114</sup> See Allen Mills, "The Forum and Canadian Socialism, 1920-1934," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 13 (1978), 11-27; Michiel Horn, *The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada, 1930-1942* (Toronto 1980); Angus, *Canadian Bolsheviks*.



### LABOUR ARCHIVES

The Committee on Labour Archives of the Association of Canadian Archivists will hold its founding session during this year's ACA conference at Victoria College, University College, University of Toronto, 21-25 May. The committee's purpose is to improve communication among archivists collecting labour records, and to foster closer relations among archivists, labour historians, trade unionists, and others interested in labour history on a local, regional, or national level. Proposals for special projects that could be undertaken by the committee, in terms of acquisition strategies, or thematic guides to collections, are most welcome.

All those interested in attending the labour archives session, in submitting proposals, or in receiving the committee's newsletter should contact either, George Brandak, Special Collections Division, University of British Columbia Library, 2075 Wesbrook Mall, Vancouver, B.C., V6T 1W5, or Rod Young, Federal Archives Division, Public Archives of Canada, 395 Wellington Street, Ottawa, K1A 0N3.