

## Good-bye to Homer Martin

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Volume 29, 1992

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/llt29art04>

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Publisher(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (print)

1911-4842 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Article abstract

People frequently overdo the parallels between events and institutions in Canada and the United States, even confusing them at times. The 1939 split in the United Auto Workers Union was a case in point. The end of the 1930s was a period of stresses and strains for the unions in both countries. For the UAW, relations with the employers went on side by side with a struggle between Socialists, Communists, anti-Communists and their respective allies. Though divided, Socialists and Communists at times took the same side.

One such time was in 1938-39. The high point of the period was when both joined in getting rid of the "International President," Homer Martin. In Canada, the two principal factions carried on a bitter struggle for the leadership of the union, slowing down only a bit while they both lined up with the opposition to Martin in the US. In the process, the first Canadian director of UAW, the Socialist Charles Millard, also lost his post. In the US, meanwhile, the two main factions concentrated on defeating Martin, while jockeying for position for their future struggle for the leadership.

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Cite this article

Benedict, D. (1992). Good-bye to Homer Martin. *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 29, 117–156.

# Good-bye to Homer Martin

Daniel Benedict

## *I — Introduction*

THE YEAR 1939 WAS A CRUCIAL ONE in the history of the auto workers in Canada and the United States — a turning point on the road to what is now a powerful, and Canadian, union. The 1939 split in the United Auto Workers (UAW) opened a period of great influence by the Communist Party in the running of that union, on both the “International” and Canadian levels. It also was to witness a rapid growth in union membership and in the strength of non-Communists in several UAW strongholds. Despite certain significant differences between their role in the two countries, the Socialists and their allies eventually united in the Reuther caucus that was to sweep the Communists and their allies out of any further significant national or international role in the union.

First they virtually all wanted to get rid of UAW international president Homer Martin, whose “administration” forces in the US had been whittled down to an increasingly isolated group of his personal followers and the tiny, dissident Communist group of Jay Lovestone, who had become Martin’s strategist. The opposition was composed of two main groups, who moved further and further apart. They were the Communists and their allies, headed by George Addes, on the one hand, and the group of current and former Socialists and their allies, headed by Walter Reuther, on the other.

In Canada, the fight was quite different at first, and the composition of both groups changed considerably en route. Until mid-1938, Canadian director Charles Millard, Art Schultz, George Burt and many other Canadians supported Homer Martin in Detroit. By the end of that summer, one by one they changed their minds. During the rest of the big battle in Detroit, the Canadians were virtually unanimous against Martin.

Martin’s defeat was a body blow to company-dominated unionism in the auto industry. His inability to see through GM’s attempt to force plant-by-plant agreements had forced CIO leader John L. Lewis to exile the incompetent UAW president from the historic 1937 negotiations. Martin’s incredible attempts in 1938 and 1939

Daniel Benedict, “Good-bye to Homer Martin,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 29 (Spring 1992), 117-155.

at a sweetheart deal with Henry Ford made the high stakes clear; workers had not joined the CIO to play that kind of poker. Martin's defeat also ingloriously ended the Lovestone group's foray into UAW and CIO affairs.

In Canada, nobody talked Martin's company language, except perhaps his small, short-lived UAW Local 622 in Windsor, which was set up after the US split with help from organizers sent across the border by the American Federation of Labor. To no avail, 622 quickly went down the drain. Canadian director Millard was defeated at the 1939 convention by George Burt, of his own local. There were many reasons, both personal and ideological. Millard's stubborn wearing of too many hats caused the resentment among friends and foes that Burt and others rightly pinpointed as a major cause of his defeat. More generally, Millard also paid for the weakness of his angry but ineffectual response to the much better-organized Communist Party challenge to his goal of uniting the union and the Socialist CCF. That was a mistake he was to try to avoid as Canadian head of the Steelworkers during the next 17 years. Millard's refusal to ease relations with some of the staunchly pro-Canadian union people, coupled with the influence of old British ILP Left-Socialist sentiment in Oshawa Local 222 and his slowness in breaking with Martin, certainly lost him the support of many on the non-Communist left. Burt, for his part, basically shared Millard's position on many matters and generally voted with him, but was far less ideological and much more adept at covering his rear. Once Burt made his 1939 convention deal with the CP, they were able to make sure that in the remaining days and hours to the vote, all criticism was trained on Millard. The CP-guided alliances in both countries were later to unravel. Their prime allies in the US, George Addes and his friends, went down to defeat with the CP. In Canada, however, George Burt survived by skillfully changing horses while crossing the Detroit River.

## *II — An International President Goes Down The Drain*

INEARLY 1939, it looked for a while as if the United Auto Workers might not survive the fight that led to the ousting of their international president Homer Martin. Far more so than the UAW's Canadian constituency, its US membership base was badly split; for a time, most workers simply stopped paying dues to anyone. Neither the brief GM collective agreement of 11 February 1937, which ended the most famous Sit-Down strike wave, nor the follow-up agreement of March 12, which set up elaborate grievance procedures at GM, included any dues check-off. This, of course, made it easier for members to drop out.

The sharp contraction of US economic activity during late 1937-38 led to widespread unemployment which cut into the membership of the whole labour movement. About fifty per cent of the half-million auto workers were out of work at the beginning of 1938<sup>1</sup> and most of the others were on short time, as production

<sup>1</sup>UAW President Homer Martin, cited in the *Wall Street Journal*, 8 January 1938.

of passenger cars dropped by almost half that year.<sup>2</sup> The UAW was one of the unions hardest hit. Its dues-paying membership dropped below 200,000 by early 1939, and remained low for another year despite US economic recovery. Major companies, including those in auto, sought to curb the union organizing and bargaining drives, particularly those launched by the new affiliates of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).<sup>3</sup>

After the Fisher-Pontiac, Chrysler-Detroit and some smaller strikes that followed the big sit-down at GM, union leaders in auto and other key industries retreated from the 1937 high point of militancy and popular support. UAW president Homer Martin and his opponents alike called for worker restraint.<sup>4</sup> In June 1937, Martin (and vice-president Ed Hall, though already an opponent of his) signed a supplementary agreement with GM, giving up the right to contest past discrimination by the company — a pact which Walter Reuther later called “one of the worst things that ever happened in this Union. It was done secretly, and we didn’t know about it.”<sup>5</sup> The political climate also chilled. Michigan governor Frank Murphy, who had not used the National Guard to dislodge the GM sit-down strikers in 1937, was defeated in his bid for re-election in 1938.

In February 1939, the US Supreme Court brought down its *Fansteel* decision against sit-downs. Though some called this ruling the decisive blow against sit-downs, it was apparent that “the sit-down as a union weapon for all practical purposes had been abandoned a year (before).”<sup>6</sup>

During the sit-down strikes, John L. Lewis and those around him had lost confidence in Homer Martin. When the UAW official almost threw away the union’s strategic goal of a master agreement in an unauthorized offer to GM vice-president Knudsen to allow the company to make separate or competitive agreements with workers in different plants, Lewis “softly remarked to his lieutenants that a couple of husky automobile workers sitting down on Homer Martin’s mouth would be

<sup>2</sup>The contrast in production was sharp. The Canadian Communist *Daily Clarion* pointed out on 19 April 1938: “GM had a strike in the first quarter of 1937. Nevertheless it turned out 439,000 cars (in both countries) in that period. This year, without a strike, it produced only 298,000.”

<sup>3</sup>The US part of this account and that entire period were reviewed in detail during interviews, 25-26 February 1990, with the well-known UAW veteran Victor G. Reuther. Several documents referred to below were consulted in the Reuther Library of Wayne State University’s Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, where Warner Pflug was specially helpful.

<sup>4</sup>Martin statement in *Windsor Star*, 19 May 1937, 10, entitled: “Martin warns UAW to stop sit-downs....” Emil Mazey, then in the Unity group, in *Windsor Star*, 19 May, 23, “opposing a walk-out in the Briggs Co. in Detroit. Mazey ordered that such walk-outs ‘absolutely must stop,’ because, he said, they violate a union agreement.”

<sup>5</sup>*Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Convention*, St. Louis, Missouri, UAW, 29 July to 6 August 1940, 384.

<sup>6</sup>Walter Galenson, *The CIO Challenge to the AFL* (Cambridge, Mass. 1960), 146-7.

almost as important as sitting down in a GM plant," according to Lewis biographer and friend Saul Alinsky. And John Brophy, one of the few miner's leaders who had dared to contest Lewis' union presidency, and survived to become the CIO's director of organization, wrote that "The least satisfactory of the new [UAW] leaders was, unfortunately, the president, Homer Martin... his strongest point was the ability to give long, emotional speeches... it was not enough of a talent for the job he had to do. He was flighty...he would reverse himself within a day. He had little knowledge of the industry and no interest in the work of negotiating, which is at the very heart of a union president's job." As negotiations neared a climax, Lewis sent Martin on a trip and he "was still out on the road making speeches through all of this," writes Brophy, with one of his satisfied, Cheshire-cat grins.<sup>7</sup>

Shortly after the big GM strikes and the shorter Chrysler sit-down of March 1937, Homer Martin began attacking the Left, especially the Communists and Socialists. The Socialists, or at least most of them, reacted very strongly. The Communist leaders tried to postpone a confrontation with Martin, denying any responsibility for wildcat strikes or for criticism of Martin.

March 1937 also saw Martin acquire a small, peculiar and yet at times powerful group of counsellors, known as Lovestoneites. By dint of advising some important US labour figures (Garment workers' president, David Dubinsky, AFL vice-president Matthew Woll, and eventually AFL and AFL-CIO president, George Meany) Jay Lovestone went from general secretary of the American Communist Party to international affairs director of the AFL-CIO. He had enjoyed Stalin's blessing in purging the CP of real or imaginary left-wing dissidents, but then lost out when he thought some right-wing Communists in Russia would beat Stalin. His "ideological" distinction came not just from being one of the CP leaders to say that American capitalism was exceptionally strong, but from being one of the few to say this at a time when the all-powerful Stalin was moving in the opposite direction. Lovestone then tried unsuccessfully to start a dissident Communist Party. He then set up a close-knit group of extreme anti-Communists, and moved some from one union concentration point to another, as he had when he was their Communist leader. For a time, in the late 1940s, the 1950s and into the 1960s, Lovestone and his key followers, often with US government backing, had considerable influence in some high-level union circles in several countries. He died in 1990 at the age of at least 91, old enough to see his one-time Soviet mentor Nikolai Bukharin, who had been shot at Stalin's order, rehabilitated under Gorbachev. And old enough to see his

<sup>7</sup>Saul Alinsky, *John L. Lewis, an unauthorized biography* (New York 1949), 114. John Brophy, *A Miner's Life* (1964), 268-70, 273. Brophy was one of the rare miners or steelworkers at CIO headquarters to welcome Walter Reuther's 1952 victory as CIO president-elect and to befriend the handful of new and "socialistic" people the Reuthers brought in (including this writer), much to the annoyance of Steelworkers' president David J. MacDonald, who later served as US president Richard Nixon's labour campaign advisor.

extreme Cold War fixation on fighting Communists recede from importance in the minds of most trade unionists and Socialists.

All this would be but a minor footnote to the history of radical grouplets, were it not for one fact. For about two years, the Lovestoneite faction managed, through its influence on Martin, to play a role out of all proportion to its size in running — and splitting — the UAW. The Lovestoneites' abrasive fight against the Socialists as well as against the "official," or pro-Moscow, Communists started a feud between Lovestone and the Reuther tendency in the American labour movement that was to aggravate bad relations between the Reuther-led UAW and the Meany-led AFL and AFL-CIO for some years. Lovestone's activities helped consolidate the anti-Communist temper of the times and particularly of the AFL leadership; he became Meany's principal advisor in foreign affairs.<sup>8</sup> There is no doubt, however, that in March, 1937, Homer Martin started firing or pushing aside many of those who had played an important part in the first organizing drives and strikes, replacing them with several outsiders sent in by Lovestone. Among those ousted were Roy Reuther, Bob Travis, and Henry Kraus, along with Roy's brother Victor and the latter's wife Sophie Good. They soon came back.

From 1937 to early 1939, Lovestone and several followers appointed by Martin pretty much called the shots in the UAW presidency. These appointees included Martin's key assistants, Bill Munger and Eve Stone, and several lesser lights, one of whom, Irving Brown, later became Lovestone's — and Meany's — roving ambassador abroad and then succeeded Lovestone as AFL-CIO international affairs director. (Even decades later, most of this group continued to be knit together by notes from Lovestone on what was going on — as he saw it — all over the world. While the Lovestoneites had sources of information all over, they had few continuing, organized groups outside the US and virtually nothing in Canada.)

Whatever influence Lovestone had had in Canada dwindled after he lost control of the American CP. An occasional Lovestoneite popped up briefly in some garment or printing union, but Jack MacDonald and others eventually joined former

<sup>8</sup>ILGWU president Dubinsky, spurred on by his vice-president Sasha Zimmerman, an old Lovestoneite trade-union strategist, certainly played a key role in the Lovestone-Martin efforts first to dominate UAW and, when this failed, to set up a rump AFL union. Historian Halpern (see below) says that "On Dubinsky's recommendation, Martin began to rely on Jay Lovestone..." and Saposs says that "Under the Martin regime...—the Lovestoneites rode high," while Galenson even cites "assistance rendered by the ILGWU to the Homer Martin faction in the internal dispute..." in auto, as one of the causes of ILGWU friction with the CIO, leading to their return to the AFL. See, among others: Victor Reuther, *The Brothers Reuther* (Boston 1976), 183-92, 420-4; Irving Howe and B.J. Widick, *The UAW and Walter Reuther* (New York 1949), 71-6; Roger Keeran, *The Communist Party and the Auto Workers' Unions* (New York 1980), 188-98; Martin Halpern, *UAW Politics in the Cold War Era* (Albany 1988), 23-7; Dave Saposs, *Communism in American Unions* (New York 1959), 146-8; Galenson, *CIO Challenge*, 157-77, 315; Bert Cochran, *Labor and Communism* (Princeton 1977) 131-4, 318-20.

CPC chair Maurice Spector in the Trotskyist movement, which in various forms still exists in Canada, and some of whose members later played a role in UAW.<sup>9</sup>

### *Rival Caucuses Organize*

MARTIN AND HIS LOVESTONEITE ADVISORS attended the UAW's August 1937 convention in Milwaukee loaded for bear. Shortly beforehand, they organized a public faction, or caucus, called the Progressives (using the same name as the broad Progressive alliance at the UAW convention of 1936 that had got rid of AFL-appointed president Francis Dillon). The opposition, with its strong Communist wing still preaching reconciliation with Martin, formed its own faction, the Unity Group. This was the beginning of formal, rival caucuses in the UAW.

At the convention, Martin retained his majority on the executive board, but only by retaining Socialists and Communists in important posts. This uneasy compromise did not last. Soon, Martin was also reaching for company support by a letter to General Motors, agreeing that the company could fire union members for "unauthorized" strike activity. From November 1937 to March 1938, Martin pushed through new GM and Chrysler agreements with no new gains. The January 1938 meeting of the UAW executive board was the scene of a bitter battle, as the UAW president went from appeals for wage restraint to acceptance of competitive wage cuts. His approach provoked growing opposition among the members.

At the board meeting, the Martin forces favoured negotiating "lower wage scales with local plants when and as these are sought by plant managements"; the *Wall Street Journal* editorially praised Martin's "responsibility."<sup>10</sup> The praise was premature, for the next day the majority of the board shot down Martin. The big business daily had to headline: "Membership Forces UAW Head to Shift Stand on Wage Cuts." And shift he did. Martin bowed to the revolt and said: "Any curtailment of wages would deepen the depression by lowering purchasing power." The newspaper added that "the Martin statement followed unmistakable indications that left-wing members of the auto union [particularly the Reuther-led 'powerful west side local'] would not stand by [sic] his modified wage policies." As an epilogue, the same newspaper on 26 January quoted CIO president John L. Lewis and US president Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt reportedly was "opposed to wage reductions," because they "threaten spending.... 'The employers take the

<sup>9</sup>In dumping Canadian CP chair Spector in 1928, the Stalin supporters had Lovestone's help. As head of the US CP, he instigated a search of the home of Jim Cannon, one of the old rww revolutionaries who had joined the CP and was suspected of being opposed to Stalin. The Stalin supporters came up with some Spector-Cannon correspondence, which was then used to oust both of them. The wheel turned. In July 1938, when Lovestone was playing his role in the UAW internal battles, his successors in the American CP raided his home and used his correspondence against him and his ally, UAW president Homer Martin.

<sup>10</sup>These and the subsequent quotations are from the *Wall Street Journal*, 14, 15, 20, and 26 January 1939.

profits; they should take the risks,'" he said, and "shifting the burden (to workers) is ... moral bankruptcy." Lewis, for his part, "said that labour 'will fight and resist wage cuts to the bitter end.'"

Reuther's own Local 174, and its paper, the *West Side Conveyor*,<sup>11</sup> actively denounced the drift to concession bargaining. In February, the paper reported: "Defiance on Wage Cuts Applauded by Mass Meeting. A well-attended West Side local mass meeting...loudly applauded the declaration of (local) president Walter Reuther that what the auto workers need is not lower wages but higher wages. They also cheered his demand for supplementary relief for auto workers getting only four or five days' work a month. 'We have faced 20 managements on the west side (of Detroit) in the last two months and 18 of them wanted wage cuts,' he said." A week later, in an article headed, "Reuther Warns Managements," the paper reported him saying: "During every depression industry has tried to maintain high profits and dividends by cutting the wages of workers. Some managements wanted to balance their budgets by cutting wages instead of profits...We raised the slogan, THIS IS NO TIME FOR CONCESSIONS... The strike victories of a year ago were not won for nothing." Two weeks later, Reuther and his allies felt obliged to broaden the attack on Martin's conciliatory policies toward management. Reuther was re-elected local president and called for "complete democracy within our union, (and) a solid front against wage-cutting." The same week, under the heading "Protest GM Pact," the local paper reported: "By unanimous vote the new supplementary agreement between GM and the union was protested last week by stewards from GM plants in Detroit...There was sharp criticism of the secrecy" and "undemocratic" practices.

And, as Wyndham Mortimer put it at the 1939 convention, "the contract was being chiseled away point by point by the [GM] corporation." The Reuthers (Walter and Victor) and several other delegates added accusations of back-door deals with management. They insisted that the union put an end to "officers or representatives meeting alone with management." The delegates in 1939 went on to insist on protecting local unions that won better conditions against "infringement by locals with inferior agreements in plants doing similar work." One delegate, Bill Marshall of Detroit Local 7, asked if "all officers are going to be bound to support favourable working conditions and are against the transfer of business within one big corporation?"<sup>12</sup>

While throughout much of 1937 the Socialists had been the most vociferous in their opposition to Martin, that situation changed early in the new year. Two factors brought about the change. First, in January 1938, as international tensions grew in Europe, both the Socialists and Martin's people opposed the drift toward

<sup>11</sup>*West Side Conveyor*, Local 174, UAW, 22 February, 1 and 15 March 1938.

<sup>12</sup>See 1939 UAW-CIO convention proceedings, 115-6, 137-8, 579-83, 660-2; *West Side Conveyor*, 15 March 1938; Reuther, *Brothers*, 186-90; Keeran, *Communist Party*, 194-6; Sapos, *Communism*, 137, and Cochran, *Labor*, 139-43.



war. The Communists everywhere were at the height of their "Popular Front" period, calling upon everyone — workers, employers, Communists, Liberals and Tories — to join with the Soviet Union in stopping Hitler, until August, 1939, with the Stalin-Hitler pact (which Hitler ended by invading the Soviet Union in June 1941). But in 1938 Communists wanted no union declarations against war.

Then, in April 1938, came a more down-to-earth application of international policies to union politics, one which reaffirmed the break within the Unity Caucus between the Reuther group and the Communists. At the Michigan state CIO convention, largely dominated by auto workers, the Martin forces, led by Richard Frankenstein, put forward Richard Leonard for secretary-treasurer. The Unity Group supported Victor Reuther for that post. Then, in the middle of the convention, Frankenstein called for a ten-minute caucus break to "work out a deal." As Victor Reuther tells it, Walter Reuther followed Frankenstein to the caucus room and found him in a huddle with UAW Communists Nat Ganley and John Anderson and outside Communist leaders William Weinstone, head of the Party in Michigan, and B.K. "Bill" Gebert, a party leader for the auto sector, who was to return to Poland after World War II to assume a top government post. Rejecting Walter Reuther's plea to avoid splitting up the Unity Group, the CP forces at the convention swung support to Leonard, assuring his victory and paving the way for him and Frankenstein, who saw himself as a possible successor to Martin, to join with the Communists. After this "final break," says historian Roger Keeran, no Reuther admirer, "Walter and Victor Reuther and other Socialists began to build their own faction in the UAW." The Communists had evidently decided to "trade off" the Socialists in the Unity Group for some of the conservatives around Martin.

Frankenstein's deal with the Communists shifted the Board majority back to the now fragile Unity Group. On 8 June 1938, when that majority reunited to reject an insurance deal devised by one of Martin's aides, Martin struck back. He suspended five Board members: vice-presidents Wyndham Mortimer, Ed Hall, Walter Wells, and of course Frankenstein (Martin's new pet hate of the moment), as well as secretary-treasurer George Addes. After a controversial trial by the reduced board, where Martin again enjoyed majority support, all the suspensions (except that of Wells) were turned into expulsions.

Briefly, it seemed that Martin had purged his enemies. Very quickly, however, locals all over the US and Canada began to express their members' disapproval. Several other board members, including Walter Reuther, walked out of board meetings as early as 13 June. It soon became clear that the national CIO leadership, including President John L. Lewis, had no intention of letting Martin tear the union to pieces. Lewis wrote directly to every UAW local in both countries, demanding that the expulsions be lifted and the faction fight be stopped. Martin raged, but gave in for a while, early in September. Late that month, however, Martin's purges were back in full swing.

Meanwhile, Homer Martin's position on his own executive board was becoming extremely weak. Having been forced to take back the five board members and

having failed completely in his bizarre attempt to work out some kind of secret sweetheart deal for union recognition with Henry Ford, he blew up at the January 1939 board meeting. One of his few remaining board supporters, Roland Jay "R.J." Thomas, denounced Martin's secret meetings with Ford management. Martin retaliated, "firing" 15 of the 24 board members, including the five original "frees," as well as Thomas (who was to succeed Martin), Thomas's future successor, Walter P. Reuther, and the first Canadian director of the union, Charles H. Millard.

Three of the remaining nine board members immediately joined the fifteen, and two more did so shortly after. Thus 20 of the 24 board members were able to meet and unseat Martin before he tore the union to bits. They named Thomas acting president. But Martin, egged on by his advisors, was in no mood to accept defeat quietly.

### *The Rival Conventions of 1939*

AS A RESULT, there was not one but two UAW conventions in March 1939. One, held 4 March in Detroit, was called by Martin and his headquarters after the board split; the other, on 27 March in Cleveland, was called by the board majority when the split loomed. Martin claimed that "slightly more than 100,000 members were represented at [his] convention." The same newspaper article records the UAW-CIO response: "R.J. Thomas, leader of the anti-Martin group, said Monday that only 17,580 members were legally represented by the official delegations." Martin's convention proceedings<sup>13</sup> speak of 373 delegates with 1152 votes, but about a third of them, with over 500 "votes," are listed as "Rank and file" delegates from locals that had not voted to take part in that convention. Among the latter were the only two Canadians mentioned, Robert McCartney and M. Fargo of Windsor Local 195. They are listed, however, as having a voice but no vote. They apparently did not use their voice, at least in public. It soon became evident that McCartney was busy preparing an attempt to launch a Martin drive in Canada.

Martin's report to the convention, which did not even mention Canada, reflects the vocabulary of his Lovestoneite mentors, repeatedly denouncing the "Lewis-Stalinist conspiracy," the "Lewis-Stalinist machine." Although Martin got rid of the leading Lovestoneites as soon as the rival conventions confirmed the split, he continued to share their "conspiracy" approach. He charged "that national leaders of the Communist Party in the United States met in Detroit last month and laid plans for the Communists to take over the automobile industry here in the event of war."<sup>14</sup> As it became clear that most of the UAW membership and the CIO leadership both supported the board, Martin moved publicly to disaffiliate from the CIO. On 6 April, just as the marathon, eleven-day UAW-CIO convention was drawing to a

<sup>13</sup>*Detroit News*, 7 March 1939; *Proceedings of Special Convention*, UAW, Detroit, 4 March 1939, 83 and 186.

<sup>14</sup>*Windsor Daily Star*, 31 March 1939.

close, Martin announced in Detroit that he and his rump union were officially rejoining the AFL. His "UAW-AFL" did not fare too well.

At the 1937 convention, Martin's staff had distributed copies of a song, to be sung to the tune of the American navy song, "Anchors Aweigh." It went:

Martin, we sing your praise,  
Honor your name,  
Years come and years may go,  
But you'll retain your fame, fame, fame, fame.

A year and a half came and went; but in March, 1939 there does not seem to have been any "theme song" at Martin's convention. The UAW-CIO convention did distribute one that went:

My name is Homer Martin,  
I am a most important man.  
For the poor and lowly worker,  
I do not give a damn.<sup>15</sup>

The UAW-CIO convention in Cleveland elected R.J. Thomas president. He was a "compromise candidate" urged on the delegates by CIO leaders Phil Murray (of the United Mine Workers and the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee) and Sidney Hillman (of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers). The various union and political tendencies opposed to Martin would have had difficulty agreeing on any strong, common candidate. On one side stood the Communists, their sympathizers and their allies, some of whom were quite conservative. From 1939 to 1946-47, it can be said that when they were together (which was not always the case), they tended to dominate the International UAW. Outstanding leaders of that group were Wyndham Mortimer of White Motors in Cleveland and Bob Travis who played a prominent role in organizing GM in Flint, Michigan, both of whom generally spoke for the Communists, backed by "the" John Anderson (not to be confused with old left rebel John W. Anderson), who had tried to bring the skilled workers of the Mechanics Educational Society of America (MESA) into UAW, and union editor Henry Kraus. George Addes, long-time international secretary-treasurer and a leader of the Toledo Auto-Lite strike, was the Communists' most capable ally in the union. Then there was Richard Frankenstein of Chrysler, leader of the very conservative and largely Chrysler-based Automotive Workers' Industrial Alliance (which before it joined UAW had been under the influence of the ultra-right wing radio preacher, Father Coughlin). Frankenstein had been Martin's chief lieutenant at the 1937 convention, but as we have seen, had shifted to the Unity Group in

<sup>15</sup>UAW Scrapbooks of Walter & Lucille Wells, 1937 Convention and Henry Kraus Collection, Clippings File, in Reuther Library, Wayne State University.

1938, while Ed Hall, one of the original UAW officers named by the AFL in 1935, had declared for the Left by 1936 and in 1937 helped set up the Unity group.

Opposing them was a caucus largely made up of Socialists, ex-Socialists and their friends and allies, who were also from various horizons. This caucus was led from the beginning by Walter Reuther, accompanied by his brothers Roy and Victor, by Canadian-born Emil Mazey, (who had left the Proletarian Party, a Michigan-based revolutionary group that considered the Communists unprincipled reformists, and joined the Socialist Party), who had been working with the Reuthers since the Briggs strike of 1933, and by a number of other active auto-worker Socialists, such as George Edwards and Merlin Bishop.<sup>16</sup>

Like their rivals in the Unity caucus, the Reuther group's supporters eventually came from a wide area. To the right were somewhat more "bread-and-butter" unionists, such as Harvey Kitzman of Milwaukee and Ray Berndt of Indiana, along with more-conservative union officials, such as Jack Livingstone of St. Louis and the tough and complex Richard Gosser (whom Walter Reuther later had to push off the International Executive Board). Later there were people such as Dick Leonard, originally a Martin supporter, who moved back and forth between the Reuther group and the Communist-influenced Addes group, which was sometimes even called the "Addes-Frankensteen-Leonard" group.

The Reuther forces were also joined by the militantly anti-communist Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU), formed in New York in 1937, active in Detroit from 1938 and in Windsor, Ontario from 1939. Perhaps the earliest mention of the ACTU in the Canadian press was in 1939, when an article<sup>17</sup> copied from a

<sup>16</sup>For a time, the Reuthers had even helped form a short-lived Socialist Auto Workers' Council.

<sup>17</sup>*Windsor Star*, 29 July 1939 headed: "Christianity In Unions Is Aim of Catholics. Workers' Catechism Is Issued by ACTU: Works to Offset Communist Influence in 'Locals.'" Their anti-communism went much further than that of most of the Reuther caucus to encompass support for some government witch hunts, even those denounced by Walter and his more Left-leaning supporters. The ACTU did support the union's social policies, including those put forward by Walter Reuther during the big GM strike of 1945-46, but historically its philosophy was based on cooperation between labour and capital. It dwindled away in 1949.

Prominent ACTU-activist Monsignor Charles Owen Rice writes in the "Catholic Worker," New York, October-November 1989, "In Memoriam: Two Good Men," on the death of US Socialist leader (and friend of many Canadian Socialists and trade unionists), Michael Harrington and of I.F. Stone. He calls attention to Harrington's earlier, and not very friendly, account of ACTU intervention in internal union politics: "Catholics in the Labour Movement," *Labour History*, Fall 1960, 231-63. For other US descriptions of ACTU, see Irving Howe and B.J. Widick, *UAW*, 155-7; John Cort (a founder and "ideologue" of ACTU), "Ten Years of ACTU," *Commonweal*, 23 May 1947, 143-4; Douglas P. Seaton, *Catholics and Radicals — The ACTU and the American Labor Movement* (Lewisburg 1981); Philip Taft, "The ACTU," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* (January 1949), 210-8; and Frank Emspak, "The ACTU and the UAW," MA Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1968. Reference is made to ACTU and above all to Catholic Action in the Windsor UAW in a chapter in Brian Hogan, "Salted

Church paper appeared in the *Windsor Star*. Their eventual influence in Windsor became a small part of what was to be an important factor indeed — the Catholic Action element of the right wing that “cleaned out” the Communists and those of their allies who did not swing over to the winning side at the time of the 1947 election of the UAW’s international executive board. In any case, ACTU certainly did play a role in Reuther’s victory over the Addes forces in Detroit that year, although the group as such was officially neutral in the 1946 election battle.<sup>18</sup>

Another sector generally leaned toward the Reuther camp, albeit with varying degrees of criticism or opposition. These were mainly left-wing groups and individuals: independents, left Socialists, Industrial Workers of the World, and Trotskyists or “Muste-ites” (for a while called the American Workers Party, until they merged with the Trotskyists and together joined the left wing of the Socialist Party). In this sector at the time were the tireless pamphleteer and ex-Wobbly, John W. Anderson, the briefly prominent Flint sit-downer Kermit Johnson, his wife Genora, of the famed women’s Red Berets, and B.J. Widick of Akron. While most of them supported the Reuthers, some left-wingers and more “hard-line” Trotskyists ended up supporting Addes or others on his side.

Thomas had been a welder at Chrysler and co-leader with Frankenstein of the Alliance that eventually joined UAW. A conservative lieutenant of Homer Martin until the break in January 1939, he was, like Frankenstein, willing to trade support with the Communists, but was somewhat more careful to keep some distance between himself and them.

The CIO leadership was not anxious for a convention fight between the Addes-Communist forces and the Reuther supporters for the UAW presidency. With backing from Communist Party leaders, from its chief Earl Browder on down, they pushed Thomas into the presidency. Apparently this was done despite the grumbling of such Communist auto workers as Wyndham Mortimer, who felt he or at least George Addes should — and could — have won the post.<sup>19</sup> Thomas thus

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with Fire: Catholic Social Thought and Action in Ontario,” PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1986, which tells the story of Father Garvey, his caucuses and the Pius XI Labour College.

<sup>18</sup> Carl Haessler, UAW press aide close to the CP, however, claimed years later that “...Reuther made an alliance with the ACTU at or about the 1939 convention....” He cites the shifts within the Catholic Church on labour that saw Archbishop (later Cardinal) Mooney taking a much more pro-union stand than his predecessor, and virtually closing the book on the strikebreaking “radio priest,” Father Coughlin. See Haessler, “Oral History,” Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, 263-4; *Detroit News*, 18 January 1939.

<sup>19</sup> See Wyndham Mortimer, *Organize! — My Life as a Union Man* (Boston 1972) 162-4; Keeran, *Communist Party*, 199-201, n34, n35, which cite various additional accounts. Mortimer’s feelings may also have been strengthened by the decision of the 1939 convention (see *Proceedings*, 322-34 and 402) to accept the CIO’s demand that the UAW vice-presidencies be wiped out. Unlike some of the others affected, Mortimer was not elected to the board, but instead was sent to the West Coast and later fired.

became the CIO-recognized UAW board appointee as acting president from January to March 1939, and then the "official" presidential candidate at the Cleveland convention. Thomas won overwhelmingly, with 1233 votes (including all but one of the 34 Canadian votes) against 404 (including the one other Canadian, Bill White of Windsor Local 502) for Carl Shipley, an old militant of Bendix Local 9 in South Bend, Indiana, and 59.5 for Frank Tuttle, sometimes called "The Philosopher," a one-time supporter of Socialist leader Eugene Debs, of Dodge Local 140 in Detroit.

Somewhat bear-like and often (accidentally or on purpose) something of a bumbler, with a wad of tobacco frequently swelling one cheek, Thomas certainly was no great leader.<sup>20</sup> The Reuther group recognized its minority status at that convention. However, Walter Reuther got an essential concession, in which CIO vice-president Sidney Hillman, according to Victor Reuther, played an important part. Thomas named Walter director of the union's powerful GM department.

The choice of Thomas, uncomfortable as it may have been for a while for some auto-worker Communists, was accompanied by tension over the naming of the five vice-presidents. Motions were made to continue with five or to cut them down to one. Before a vote was taken, CIO leaders Murray and Hillman intervened to urge eliminating vice-presidents altogether. After a series of favourable speeches, mostly by those about to see their post eliminated, the convention voted almost unanimously for (the proceedings mention "a show of two or three hands" against) the CIO recommendation. This move weakened the Unity group, and particularly the Communists within that group.

Basically, the Cleveland convention was an assertion of loyalty to the UAW-CIO and to the CIO itself. Factionalism was simmering, not always below the surface, between the two major caucuses and at times within them. To a considerable degree the convention was also an assertion of rank-and-file belief in union democracy and some local autonomy. Martin's autocratic presidentialism led the convention to amend the union constitution to make the president more answerable to the executive board. Delegates voiced anger that GM had taken advantage of the split to cancel the agreement on shop stewards, and to reduce the rights of committee members. They denounced the fact that "the contract was being chiseled away point by point by the corporation," as Wyndham Mortimer put it.<sup>21</sup> Walter and Victor Reuther and other delegates went on to demand that there be no more "backdoor deals" by union leaders meeting with management without the bargaining commit-

<sup>20</sup>In 1954, this author checked with Thomas (when we both were on CIO staff) about the text of his speech to the 1945 preparatory conference of the World Federation of Trade Unions, much of which was hard to understand. With disarming frankness, RJ replied that whenever he went someplace to please some allies, but did not want to be quoted and criticized by others for something touchy he might say, he would shift his wad of tobacco to the front of his mouth and shout his next few words loudly, enthusiastically, and unintelligibly. Who knew what he meant? In any case, his enthusiasm won applause.

<sup>21</sup>*Proceedings*, 137-8, 580-3 and 660-2.

tee. Amendments spelled out, but limited, rights of the district councils.<sup>22</sup> Similar discussion led to an evening meeting of GM delegates, followed the next day by a resolution and a further constitutional amendment setting up Corporation Councils. Canadian delegates did not often take the floor, and when Millard, Doughty, and others did, it was usually to support some consensus proposal or to object to some phrase that neglected Canadian concerns. This time, Leo Grondin of Windsor Local 195 asked if the proposed corporation councils would include the Canadian units. The chair, R.J. Thomas, assured him they would. That was later to work out quite differently. The convention also broke new ground by electing regional educational directors in the same fashion as it did regional directors. The Canadians chose John Doughty of St. Catharines Local 199 (who did not last long). Members of the international executive board were barred from holding posts in their local or district, after a discussion aimed at Frankenstein (in Canada, Millard too had held such posts for a while, but a few months earlier had given up the Local 222 presidency and the chair of the regional committee). And, though the Canadians joined in electing Thomas, one of the last to abandon Homer Martin, they voted for George Burt over Charlie Millard as regional director.

On the ninth day of the convention, a flash of sarcastic humour from delegate Ed Stubbe of Cleveland Local 27 sent a succinct message to the entire leadership which they carefully avoided answering. Said Stubbe: "All that I've heard in this convention is that they're all afraid of...[Homer] Martin. My God, they must have been weak! What was wrong with those 23 Board members that they were so weak and afraid of one man?... I know [Martin] went crazy... but are we going to do away with the rest of them now?... give them a pension...."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Article 29, section 3, Proceedings, 674-7: "The propose of the District Council shall be to recommend to the Regional Director and the International Union, constructive measures for the welfare of Local Unions and their members. It shall discuss comparative wages, rates, agreements, methods of approach, organizational problems, National and State legislative programs, and ... other problems ...."

Resolution, Proceedings, 264-6: "...That this convention instruct the International Executive Board to: 1) Form a General Motors Council whose function it will be to carry on organizational work, research and negotiating for the General Motors plants... 3) That a similar council be formed for Chrysler and the Independent Automobile Manufacturers."

<sup>23</sup>*Proceedings* of Special Convention, UAW-CIO, 27 March to 6 April 1939, 624. Those who enjoy historical comparisons may remember the story (true, perhaps) about the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956. After listening to Nikita Khrushchev, one of Stalin's regional leaders and successors, denounce the long list of Stalin's crimes, one delegate shouted: "And where were you when all that was happening?" Khrushchev is supposed to have shouted back: "Who said that?" No one replied. After a moment of silence, Khrushchev grumbled: "That's where I was too." But who could imagine anyone being afraid to speak out against the leadership in a American union?

*The "Strategy Strike" of 1939*

THE GENERAL MOTORS WORKERS made another important contribution to UAW history in 1939, as they had done in 1937 and were to do again in their strike of 1945-46. But their July 1939 job action differed in many ways.

In April, Martin had rejoined the AFL. In May, after a two-week strike, the UAW-CIO won an arbitrated award of sole recognition at Briggs Body in Detroit. Martin opposed that strike. Perhaps warned by a sixth sense, or by company or police agents, that the UAW-CIO was preparing something for July at GM, Homer Martin tried to gain a jump on them by calling a GM strike of his own on 8 June. He didn't bother with any kind of strike vote, even in the plants where he had some supporters. Nor had he even polled his own "UAW-AFL" executive board, as its members later complained. The workers paid little or no attention to Martin's strike call and his "strike" disappeared in less than a week. Already on 12 June, the *Detroit News* reported: "Strike Call by Martin is Failure... First results of today's strike indicated Martin's UAW had lost its first skirmish with the CIO group. Walter P. Reuther, national GM director for the CIO union, predicted 'the last traces of the strike will disappear tomorrow. It already has flopped.'" Martin called it off on 15 June.

The UAW-CIO needed to prove that it indeed represented the GM workers. GM, on the other hand, had seized the opportunity to proclaim that because the union was split in two it would not recognize either side's national bargaining rights. The union was too poor financially to take on this most powerful corporation with a full-scale strike. Yet it had to prove its mettle.

Back in 1933, an unusual craft union, the Mechanics Educational Society of America, led by a very independent-minded, British-born Socialist and skilled worker named Matt Smith, had organized a strike of the tool and die makers of GM and a number of feeder plants. That strike failed to win MESA's demands, but it did seriously delay production of GM's new-model cars that year.

Using the same strategy as MESA, Walter Reuther and the GM department of UAW-CIO, after a strike vote of more than 90 per cent and GM's refusal to bargain, launched a national strike by GM tool-and-die makers on 5 July, just as the company was preparing to build its 1940 model. The union was able to carry the financial weight of the skilled workers' strike, while the production workers, laid off for lack of work, drew unemployment insurance. By halfway through the strike, the company's model preparations were down the drain. So that strategy worked.<sup>24</sup>

Walter Reuther and the GM workers had an important strategic goal, aside from their call for specific wage increases and some innovative demands such as getting the company to hire more workers instead of increasing overtime. That goal was

<sup>24</sup>This part of the narrative was revised after reflecting on two worthwhile articles: John Barnard, "Rebirth of the UAW: The GM Tool and Diemakers' Strike of 1939," and Kevin Boyle, "Rite of Passage: 1939 GM Tool and Die Strike," both in *Labor History* (Spring 1986).



to knock out Martin's "UAW-AFL" and win company-wide recognition of UAW-CIO. This is basically what happened. With the strike settlement, GM gave in on exclusive recognition of UAW-CIO in 42 plants but held out for two rival shop committees in the 11 others until a GM-wide vote on 17 April 1940. Then, UAW-CIO won a victory by a margin of more than three to one, and majorities in 48 of the 53 plants that had by some 120,000 (almost 96 per cent) of the eligible workers.

Having lost, Martin soon threw in the towel (or Henry Ford and AFL president Bill Green did it for him, according to Ford's close collaborator, the notorious Harry Bennett). Martin himself was forced out of his "UAW-AFL" in late 1940 and it soon fell under gangster control. (It later changed its name to the Allied Industrial Workers, and has apparently been cleaned up; one of Martin's successors as international president, John Kilpatrick, was shot dead, reportedly by the Angelo Inciso mob.) Martin himself was given the parting gift of a "completely furnished home in Detroit" by Ford, along with "a couple of accounts" as a Ford representative, said Bennett.<sup>25</sup> Exit Homer Martin.

### III — UAW Canadian Director Millard Caught in the Wringer.

IT WOULD BE TEMPTING to say that nothing like the turmoil caused by the Martin split among US auto workers occurred in Canada, but this is not entirely the case.

In fact, two developments in Canada brought the split home to the Canadian UAW. One was the ongoing rivalry, since before 1937, between Canadian director Charles Millard, active in the Oshawa Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and his group made up mainly of mainstream CCFers, and the opposing, more

<sup>25</sup>Harry Bennett, *We Never Called Him Henry* (New York 1951), 115-6. The above quotation follows these remarks: "Soon the factional wars being waged within UAW reached a climax, in which Homer's desire to get along with us was used against him. He was expelled from the union. After that happened, I got [AFL President William] Green and his attorney in my office. I told them that I'd sign an AFL contract covering the whole plant, providing they'd take Homer over. Green agreed to this and Homer went to work trying to organize an auto workers' union within the AFL. Homer worked on this about a year. His efforts were not particularly successful... When this happened, Homer was pretty hard up. Mr. Ford came to see me about Homer's plight, and said, 'Harry, I guess this is our fault. Let's help Homer. So we gave Homer'...' the home, et cetera, as indicated. How accurate is Bennett's account? Martin's rump union did indeed join the AFL. In fact, a later attempt at a deal, complete with a visit by Green to Ford and Bennett, was made just as UAW-CIO was at the height of its big Ford Drive, as President Green reported to the AFL Executive Council meeting of 10-20 February 1941. He too failed.

In fairness, let us add that Martin was certainly not the only former union leader to get a management job. See *Detroit Free Press*, 24 June 1990, on the death of George Addes: "After leaving the UAW in 1947, Mr. Addes began a sales career at Ford Motor Co., retiring in 1975 as a parts sales executive." Frankensteen became an executive in another company, and John Anderson "left the union and the (Communist) party for a key management post." See Keeran, *Communist Party*, 284.

left-wing, group, that included some other CCFers and was heavily influenced by the Communists. The other development was the short-lived attempt by a handful of Martin supporters in one local, egged on by others in the US and Canada, to set up a Canadian local of the rump UAW-AFL in 1939.

The number of people employed and organized in the auto industry, the wages paid and vehicles produced, all rose sharply in 1937, but tapered off in 1938 and 1939, as the figures show:

TABLE I  
Auto Manufacturing in Canada, 1936-40\*

Year	Average employed:	Aver. yrly blue collar wages	Vehicles produced	UAW Members
	Male	Female		
1936	12,156	777	\$1,286.05	**
1937	14,092	854	1,370.60	8-10,000
1938	14,169	703	1,262.78	7-9,568
1939	13,805	622	1,262.16	4,700
1940	16,069	729	1,780.55	5,000

\*On Auto Statistics: Dominion Bureau of Statistics (Ottawa, 1940), 5-13. On UAW membership see H.A. Logan, *Trade Unions in Canada* (Toronto 1948), 619; *Labour Organizations in Canada* (Ottawa various years); UAW Canadian Council reports.

\*\*A UAW membership figure for 1936 of 6,000, also cited by historian Logan, was way out of line and deleted. Locals 195 and 199 (Windsor and St. Catharines) were the only ones chartered by December 1936; at best they had a few hundred members between them. 1937-38 Logan figures were also a bit high and were modified by us in line with UAW records.

The drop in membership of the UAW and to some extent of the Canadian labour movement as a whole in 1938-39 (the latter's total slipping from a pre-war peak of 383,492 in 1937 to 358,967 in 1939) added to tensions within the labour movement. The newly-organized Oshawa Local 222 (mainly GM) took a beating; at one point its dues-paying members dropped from 3,500 to a few hundred. At the GM-McKinnon plant in St Catharines, dues payments dropped "from 90 percent to almost nothing," according to future regional director George Burt.<sup>26</sup> Burt also said that "one of the reasons" for the drop was that in December 1938 and January 1939, the international union, in crisis, levied an additional one-dollar monthly assessment, and members "dropped out...by the hundreds." The Brantford local was soon alive in name only, the Peterborough local never really got off the ground, and the

<sup>26</sup>G. Burt, "The CIO and Charlie Millard," brief manuscript written in 1979 as part of a projected but unfinished book on Millard soon after his death, and kindly made available to this author by Mary Millard. Thanks also to Carol Conde and Karl Beveridge, UAW interviews, 1982; G. Burt, "CIO," 15.

second Windsor local, 502, led by dedicated Communist Bill Emery, came to grief after a long, unsuccessful strike at Walker Metals. (Emery, sorely disappointed, eventually reemigrated to his native England.) Mutual recriminations, charges of incapacity, of failing to support one another, flew hot and fast and weakened all.

The period from autumn 1937 through 1939 was a difficult one for industrial workers and their unions.<sup>27</sup> To workers, the renewed depression after so brief a recovery in early 1937,<sup>28</sup> meant renewed layoffs and short time (Table III). Fear again became a factor to be reckoned with whenever workers thought of organizing or striking. All over Canada, the 1930s had been a period when many thousands of workers had given up hope for hometown prospects and left to hitchhike, jump railway freight cars, scrounge or beg bus fares to go from one town or province to another, seeking work. The fears of losing jobs and homes, of seeing hunger in the eyes of children and anger in the eyes of spouses, and the humiliating experience of going on relief — “on the dole” — remained vivid. The official dedication by King George and Queen Elizabeth of Queen Elizabeth Way in St. Catharines, on 7 June 1939, occasioned great rhetoric in the press, but also the imminent end of a rare job opportunity for many. The outbreak of World War II in September 1939, frightening as it was, seemed to many people, especially the young recently out of school, a welcome escape from unemployment or its threat. They often “joined up to get a steady week’s pay,” said one GM worker, and “it was funny,” mused one one-legged veteran, “lining up for days to get into a war, to get yourself killed.”

AFL pressure increasingly deprived the CIO unions of whatever advantage they had derived from being part of the mainstream Trades and Labour Congress in Canada (TLCC). At the same time, conflict grew between Communist and anti-Communist tendencies within the unions. But factionalism, as destructive as it often was, only added to the glum picture. Unions, whether of right- or left-wing leadership, soon found their wings clipped. CIO organizing attempts weakened as key unions — whether in auto, steel, rubber, or electrical — saw their numbers dwindling instead of growing. This was also a period of continuous repression by Ontario premier Mitch Hepburn and his Quebec counterpart Maurice Duplessis,

<sup>27</sup>Logan, *Trade Unions*, 277; Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism and Canadian Labour* (Toronto 1973), 27; Bryan Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980* (Toronto 1983), 27; Desmond Morton and Terry Copp, *Working People* (Ottawa 1980), 165.

<sup>28</sup>Interview with GM worker Ivy Imerson, 3, by Carol Conde and Karl Beveridge, part of a very interesting collection studied and cited with their kind permission; Barry Broadfoot, *Ten Lost Years: 1929-1939* (Toronto 1973), 375-9; Paul Martin, *A Very Public Life, Vol. 1* (Ottawa 1983), 103, tells of 13,000 workers leaving Windsor alone in three years of Depression. Academic references on this point will seem a bit redundant to those who, like this author, lived through those days, when it took us months to get used to earning enough money in 1939 (making aircraft engine parts) to stop the common practice of using half the restaurant’s bowl of hot water meant for tea, to shake in a good amount of the table bottle of ketchup and turn the water into a more filling tomato soup.

allied in their hatred of unionism and their drive for power. Not for nothing did prime minister Mackenzie King call them a pair of "incipient dictators."

Another important factor has been increasingly emphasized recently, as Canadian nationalism has grown in labour ranks and among academics writing about labour. This concerns the scarcity of material support from the CIO in the US, then so much embroiled in its own battles that stretched its resources to the limit. While such aid certainly was very limited, the moral or psychological strength that came with the very term "CIO" was of real value to Canadian workers. They did not just join their industrial union, important as it was; encouraged by the news of victories in the US, they joined CIO. At the same time, there was clearly a feeling in the US — reflected partly in the UAW recalling international representative Hugh Thompson from Oshawa to Buffalo in 1937, where he became CIO regional director (though for a short while he continued to "cover" and visit Canada) — that the Canadians would have to develop their own leaders and meagre resources. They had to and they certainly did, though it wasn't easy; the check-off and union shop, still far from general in the US, were even less so in Canada.

The surge of union activity in 1937 — organizing, demanding, striking (twice as many strikes, twice as many workers involved and three times as many "days lost" as in 1935 or 1936) — had been followed by a sharp drop during 1938-39, with only a slight increase in 1940 (Table II). Although Canada went to war on 10 September 1939, the tightening up of the labour market and more labour-management friction, amid intensifying war production and the exit of workers into the Armed Forces, really only made themselves felt by 1941, as national strike totals began to rise toward their 1943 peak.

Industrial conflict in Nova Scotia, with scarcely five per cent of Canada's population, was the 'exception that proved the rule.' During 1939-40 more Nova Scotian workers went on strike than all the rest of Canada put together; their strikes accounted for almost half the Canadian total of workdays lost. A few of these strikes were in the fish and steel industries, but most were the work of the miners, centred in Cape Breton.<sup>29</sup>

The auto workers continued to fight on, often to win or hold recognition, though under increasingly difficult conditions. From 1937 to 1939 there were a series of UAW-led strikes, with varying degrees of length, arrests on the picket line, success and failure in organizing and bargaining, at Ontario Steel Products in Oshawa and at Walker Metals, Phillips-Duplate glass, LA Young Industries and Chrysler in Windsor.

<sup>29</sup>For more details on this period and area, see Michael Earle, ed., *Workers and the State in Twentieth Century Nova Scotia* (Fredericton 1989), particularly 116; Douglas Cruikshank and Gregory S. Kealey, "Strikes in Canada, 1891-1950," *Labour/Le Travail*, 20 (Fall 1987), particularly the tables; and Stuart Jamieson, *Times of Trouble* (Ottawa 1968), 268-70, 277-80.

The Walker Metals conflicts were particularly sharp. The company had been the last to sign a union agreement in 1937, and when it came up for renewal in 1938, refused to negotiate. And despite agreeing to give strikers priority in rehiring, the company openly discriminated against European-born workers, many of whom were active in the union, and hired other, "native born Canadians, ...free of any possible subversive elements." Two years later the union was still complaining to the government official who had mediated the strike settlement that laid-off unionists continued to walk the streets hungry and that at least one "had been looking in garbage cans" for food.<sup>30</sup>

A number of women had been active in the GM strikes in Oshawa in 1937 and even back in 1928, including (in the late 1930s) Gladys Wragg, recording secretary, and Gertrude Gillard on the shop committee,<sup>31</sup> but few were employed elsewhere by the big auto companies. In 1939, when women accounted for nearly 18 per cent of the Canadian labour force, they held only 13 per cent of the jobs in auto parts and 4.3 per cent in auto manufacturing. Indeed, there were even fewer women among production workers: 765 (11 per cent) in the 97 parts plants and only 145 (1.2 per cent) in the 12 assembly and in-house parts plants. Nevertheless, the UAW's first, signed contract in Canada was at the Coulter plant in Oshawa, and one of the union's three signing officers was Doris Little. And in St. Catharines, where UAW Local 199 had named Jean McKenna as its recording secretary, Joan Blair was in at the signing of the first GM (McKinnon Industries) agreement in 1937, though her name does not figure on the agreement. At Windsor's L.A. Young Industries Ltd., Margaret Chauvin, an active Franco-Ontarian unionist, helped negotiate and was one of the three local officers to sign the 1937 agreement. Women were also prominent among workers at Walker Metals, and several were very active in the union. As the *Windsor Star*<sup>32</sup> put it: "The most diligent picket at Walker's was a woman... The pickets carried placards reading: 'No more beer for Pete,' 'No more silk shirts for Kollie' and 'No more blind pig and chew tobacco.' The latter was translated to mean that workmen [sic] had to buy beer and chewing tobacco for foremen..." The *Globe* reported that one woman's picket sign at Young Industries read "No more beer for Slim." Then there were the efforts of strikers' families in the 1937 Oshawa GM strike, which saw the chartering of a Women's Auxiliary in April, and long-serving activist Mabel Mayne's emergence as an important figure

<sup>30</sup>Walker Metal Products manager H.M. Gregory to government chief conciliation officer Louis Fine, 16 September 1940; George Burt to Fine, 3 June 1940: both in Ontario Archives, RG7 V-1-B, Box 2.

<sup>31</sup>GM management paid attention to which women were active in the union. See one of the many "confidential" reports that GM vice-president and general manager for Canada, Harry Carmichael, passed on to provincial conciliator Louis Fine, in Ontario Archives, RG7 V-1-B, Box 3, the "arbitration McKinnon Industries" folder, with copy in this author's files. It reports on a Local 222 general membership meeting on 18 October 1939 at which attendance was "about 35 including 6 women, one of them G. Gillard."

<sup>32</sup>*Windsor Star* and *Toronto Globe & Mail*, 17 and 19 May 1937.

in both the UAW and the Oshawa Labour Council. Generally, however, in unions, including the UAW, as in the surrounding, sexist society, women were often the last to be considered, as well as the last to be hired.

The 1937 General Motors agreement in Oshawa had been negotiated at a time of intense anti-CIO propaganda by employers, media, and government. While the agreement recognized a shop committee "of nine members, who shall be variously elected from their fellow employees who are members of the local union," it did not name the union. The final clause said: "the union employees hereunder...signed on behalf of themselves and their successors in office representing the employees of the company who are members of the local union." These persons were Charles Millard, E.E. Bathe, and G.H. Day (respectively president, vice-president and chair), who were listed without naming their union. Yet the UAW was mentioned in a clause saying: "The agreement shall continue in force until and so long as and concurrent with the agreement between General Motors Corporation in the United States, dated February 11th, and the United Automobile Workers of America." Virtually identical clauses were included in the GM agreements in St. Catharines and Windsor at the time. Yet, Millard participated, as UAW representative, in the St. Catharines bargaining. In some smaller shops, agreements of this period referred only to shop committees "elected by the employees" (that is, regardless of whether they were union or not), but many UAW agreements until 1942, such as the ones with LA Young Industries in Windsor and Phillips-Duplate in Oshawa, referred to shop committees and union negotiators in terms similar to the GM contracts. In practice, GM and other companies gradually dropped the pretense of dealing with a nameless union. (Only in the 1950s, however, did one master agreement cover all GM plants in Canada.)

Some unusual clauses were adopted at a Windsor GM conference on 13-14 May 1937 between the (still nameless) union negotiating committee, headed by plant chair McCartney and accompanied by UAW legal counsel Cohen, and the company vice-president Carmichael and plant manager Church, together with Ontario conciliator Fine. A memorandum signed by Fine notes that "The company agreed that no change would be made by it either by way of step-up or step-down of production volume or rate without consultation or agreement with the Chairman of the Negotiating Committee and representatives of the group to be affected... and that all such matters will be handled by mutual understanding." Furthermore, "The Company also agreed that before 1938 production commences that production plans will be agreed upon between the management and the men for the whole of the ensuing productive season." Yet only a few days later McCartney complained to Cohen that at a meeting with plant management, "Mr. Church refused to let Brother Millard come in with the committee and also refused our request to bring the steward."<sup>33</sup> Oddly enough, at about the same time, Millard was taking part with

<sup>33</sup>Copy of Fine's memorandum and McCartney's letter of 16 May 1937, in author's collection. For St. Catharines, see *Globe and Mail*, 17 May 1937.

Fine, Carmichael, and Cohen, in GM negotiations in St. Catharines. (As at Ford, the long battle in Windsor over union recognition was to lead in December 1941, to a UAW election victory over the company's "employee representation" plan, followed by a collective agreement signed 15 January 1942, which in principle recognized the UAW-CIO by name as the "exclusive bargaining agency.")

Ideological factors complicated union life and each side was convinced that their rivals were a menace, though here and there voices were raised, if not often heeded, against factionalism in general. One example was the reply of UAW Local 222 to the request of Local 362 in Bay City, Michigan for "financial assistance for fighting internal union affairs," with a letter "stating that our finances are needed for more progressive purposes."<sup>34</sup> Even on the eve of the two rival UAW conventions in March 1939, and although Local 222 had already voted to go to the anti-Martin convention, Tommy McLean made a motion (defeated) to call a special membership meeting, "getting speakers from both sides of (the) International dispute to present their case."

Bitter party rivalries added considerably to the difficulties. While the Communists were active and sometimes, as in auto, better organized than the Socialist CCFers, the CCF was far stronger in popular and electoral support, as well as in several of the other industrial unions. On both those counts, the CCF was much better off than the older, weaker, and divided Socialist Party in the US. Nevertheless, the CCF was well aware of the weakness of its members' activity in many unions, due in part to their rejection of the very idea of "party discipline" inside a union. The Communists did not share this attitude; they set great store by discipline, even if they did not always carry it out. In Canada, such partisan tensions sometimes coincided with the unity group's drive against Martin in the US, but not at the time of the 1939 split in itself, when Canadian CCFers and Communists finally came to the same conclusions about Martin.

The struggle to organize the GM workers in Oshawa before, during, and after their historic strike in April 1937, had seen carloads of members of the Young Communist League (YCL) and of the Cooperative Commonwealth Youth Movement (CCYM) members trooping out to Oshawa, mostly from nearby Toronto. Their rivalry in trying to help the GM workers, at a time when the union was openly appealing for volunteer organizers,<sup>35</sup> was not wholly negative. The recollections of such figures as J.B. Salsberg, who called many shots in CPC trade union activities at the time, and Murray Cotterill, a leading figure of the CCYM and later of the Steelworkers, bear that out.<sup>36</sup> Despite the positive effects of dedicated trade union

<sup>34</sup>Minutes of Local 222 Executive Committee, 22 August 1938 and 4 March 1939, texts in author's files.

<sup>35</sup>See the *Oshawa Daily Times*, 28 April 1937.

<sup>36</sup>For Salsberg, see: Carol Conde and Karl Beveridge, *Oshawa Interview Transcripts*, Salsberg, 18 November 1982, 9-10, in which he says, "I had no objection to the CCF coming in.... and I don't suppose I could have done anything about it even if I'd wanted to, but I

work by both sides, the situation between Socialists and Communists became increasingly tense.

Oshawa Local 222 President Millard had been appointed Canadian UAW director in April 1937, and held the post until April 1939. The Milwaukee UAW convention of August 1937 recognized the Canadian region's right to its own director with a seat on the executive board. The Canadian delegation met separately and re-elected, or more accurately elected, Millard, with some delegates absent and only two voting against. The two were the union's first international representatives in Canada — (other than director Millard) — Jim Napier, Windsor Communist and member of the pioneering Canadian (UAW) Local 195, active in the Kelsey Wheel strike of December 1936; and Jim Smith, a staunch Millard-opponent from Oshawa. The vote also elevated Millard to the union's international executive board. (Napier was fired as soon as he returned home, to be rehired in 1939 by Millard's successor. He quit in 1941; when the union failed to get some Chrysler strikers' jobs back, he felt it his moral duty to resign his staff job — and actually did.) Napier later became a dissident Communist for most of his older years, moving to Hamilton, where he wrote an often angry and sometimes moving little book on the UAW in Canada.<sup>37</sup>

Despite Millard's unopposed re-election as Local 222 president in March 1938 there is no doubt that his almost obsessive accumulation of responsibilities — in Local 222, in the Canadian and International UAW, in the Canadian CIO, on the provincial executive of the CCF, later in Steel, provisionally in Packinghouse and the Shoe and Leather workers, as well as unofficially in Rubber, almost always several at a time — irritated others besides the Communists. In September 1938, when he stepped down from his Local 222 presidency, the Communist *Daily Clarion* ironically headlined that: "Millard resigns as local head; Oshawa UAW feels (his) other tasks need full attention." As George Burt, Millard's rival and eventual successor as Canadian director, put it, "It was Charlie's job to service these plants (in St. Catharines and Windsor) and this took him away from Oshawa a great deal, but he foolishly held on to his presidency of the Oshawa Local, and this caused a great deal of criticism, not only by his opposition in the local but also by his friends." Millard's long-time ally, NDP leader David Lewis, wrote more softly,<sup>38</sup> of the need "to help keep him (Charlie) pointed in one direction at a time

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didn't want (to). All I was worried [about] was that they don't try to lead or direct this lava that came from the eruption, in the direction of a narrow channel of so-called Canadian unionism." Cotterill: Interview and review of Millard's life, with this author, 7 May 1990.

<sup>37</sup>J.S. Napier, *Memories of Building the UAW* (Toronto 1975). The CPL, which Napier has since left, was a Canadian political group inspired by the Chinese break with the Soviets; it was generally considered an offshoot of the US Maoist Progressive Labor Party. By the late 1980s, Napier indicated in talks with this author that he had toned down his harsh judgments of some opponents.

<sup>38</sup>*Daily Clarion*, September 1938; Burt, "CIO," 5; D. Lewis, *The Good Fight* (Toronto 1981), 137, 303. Lewis was harder on Burt, whose alliance with the Communists led the late



— in his case not nearly as easy as it sounds....” Meanwhile, the *Toronto Star* reported rather routinely that Art Shultz, “publicity agent [sic]” of Local 222, had stated that Millard’s resignation “was purely voluntary,” whereas the *Telegram* carried a strange report from Detroit UAW headquarters, quoting “a spokesman” and headed “Union Resignation Explained In ‘Plot.’”<sup>39</sup> Actually, Local 222 executive minutes show that the subject of Millard’s resignation had been discussed for months, and had been submitted in writing to the executive, and accepted in August “after hours of discussion,” but not presented to the membership until September.<sup>40</sup>

In auto, both sides were also muttering about possible Canadian autonomy and then accusing the other side of doing so. In reality, the most vocal Canadian “separatism” came from non-Communist Left UAW members, mainly of British ILP background, in Oshawa.

The Canadian Communists, closely linked to their American comrades, certainly followed more closely, and felt themselves more a part of, the battle over Homer Martin that was developing within the UAW in the US than did Millard and other CCFers. To some degree, the latter viewed this fight as a purely US affair which did not much concern them until it became clear that Martin was heading for a break with CIO.<sup>41</sup> As well, Millard was convinced that Martin had significantly pressured GM to give in to the Oshawa strikers, according to his friend Murray Cotterill. This notion was definitely not shared by major US union leaders, who kept Martin on the sidelines as much as possible during the big US strike and negotiations.<sup>42</sup> Certainly, the strength of the UAW in the States had an effect on GM senior management strategies, and undoubtedly was a factor to be reckoned with by GM Canada, but not because of Martin.

While almost all US Socialists and their friends backed the Unity group along with the Communists against Martin, Millard thus stood, at first, with Martin’s majority on the International Executive Board. For a few weeks in mid 1938 he even seemed ready to follow Martin and what appeared to be his Board, “if a majority of the membership votes to leave the CIO,” although he uneasily denied he had said that was “likely.”<sup>43</sup> He eventually took a firm position against Martin,

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Socialist leader to call Burt a “consummate political opportunist” (303). In a discussion about early days, Victor Reuther reminded this author that “wearing more than one hat” was not uncommon in the CIO.

<sup>39</sup>*Toronto Star*, 9 September 1938, and *Evening Telegram*, 9 September 1938. The search for a plot in the latter article may have come from Homer Martin and his Lovestone advisors.

<sup>40</sup>Local 222 executive committee minutes, 15, 22 and 25 August 1938, 1 and 25 April, 16 and 22 May: texts in author’s files.

<sup>41</sup>Victor Reuther Interview, 26 February 1990.

<sup>42</sup>Murray Cotterill Interview, 7 May 1990. See also beginning of Section II, above, on Martin, with quotations from Brophy and Alinsky, referring to Martin and John L. Lewis.

<sup>43</sup>*Globe and Mail*, 30 August 1938.

however, partly no doubt under the hammering of opposition by a majority in every UAW local in Canada, partly perhaps as a result of a long talk with John L. Lewis (according to Napier, Lewis was convinced that it was he who had persuaded Millard to abandon Martin), and largely and certainly because Martin was getting more extreme, more erratic, more mixed into deals with employers, and more anti-CIO every day. Thus Millard was neither the first nor the last to come to the conclusion that Martin had to go.

### *Starting a Canadian Council*

THE FIRST STEP toward setting up what was to become a distinct, important part of the Canadian autoworkers' movement, the Canadian Council, was taken at a meeting on 30 May 1937, a few weeks after the Oshawa strike. Announcing the meeting to the Local 222 executive committee on 16 May, Millard said its purpose was "to organize a Canadian Division of the UAW." In all, 28 delegates from the existing Canadian UAW locals, in Oshawa, Windsor, St. Catharines, and Brantford, met in Toronto. They set up a Canadian Committee for "coordination and conducting the affairs of the union in Canada." They were joined by international vice-president Walter Wells of Detroit, who set a UAW goal of 75,000 members in Canada, called for the union to sign up auto salesmen, and announced that he would work with them and their future Toronto office (though there is no evidence he played any subsequent role in Canada).<sup>44</sup> The meeting also elected the first, temporary officers of the UAW in Canada: President Charles Millard; Vice-President Harold Barnes of St. Catharines; Secretary-Treasurer Bob Lawrie of St. Catharines; Recording Secretary John Wright of Windsor; and Trustees A. Cowper of Brantford, Harvey Haines of St. Catharines, Bill Walker of Oshawa, and John Natcliffe of Windsor.

What has more frequently been referred to as the first Canadian regional conference (perhaps because its minutes have survived) took place in Brantford in June 1938, after an exchange of correspondence among UAW Locals 195, 502, 222, and 199.<sup>45</sup> Neither the May 1937 nor June 1938 meetings called themselves "Councils" as yet, although the initial Constitution of UAW (1935) carried an historic paragraph authorizing the Board to charter District Councils.<sup>46</sup> The

<sup>44</sup>*Windsor Daily Star*, 31 May 1937 and *Oshawa Daily Times*, 31 May 1937. Unfortunately, Wells' report to the UAW's 1937 Milwaukee convention mentions his Toronto trip, but with no details.

<sup>45</sup>Local 222 minutes, 16 February and 30 May 1938: texts in author's files.

<sup>46</sup>First Constitution of the UAW, as adopted at the first convention, August 1935, in Detroit, and completed by the Constitution Committee, which met 21-26 September 1935. Section IV deals with the duties of the general executive board (later the international executive board). It includes the following paragraph: "Upon the application of five Local Unions, the General Executive Board shall have authority, if deemed advisable, to issue a District Council Charter. Local Unions making application for a Charter shall have authority to

Brantford conference was again chaired by Millard, with Art Shultz of Oshawa as secretary, Bob Lawrie of St. Catharines chairing the resolutions committee, and George Burt of Oshawa chairing the credentials committee. The delegates came from Oshawa Local 222, Windsor Local 195 and 502, Brantford Local 397 and St. Catharines Local 199. They discussed "plans for the continuation of the organizational work now being done...and for completely organizing the balance of the industry in Canada, comprising 60,000 workers." The conference also expressed workers' concern with the continued importing of vehicles (the Tariff cuts of 1937 had really hurt production in Canada by 1938 — see Table I). They denounced the "arbitrary attitude" of the Workmens Compensation Board and its wrong decisions, particularly with respect to lead poisoning and to that "growingly alarming feature of industrial disability...hernia."<sup>47</sup>

Disagreement among delegates from Locals 195 and 222 led to a divided vote on a majority resolution calling on the locals to take up "retaining two cents (per member, per month) of the International Education Fund, to cause to be set up a Canadian Educational Service for our membership, such as the Workers' Education Association." Soon, the WEA did conduct for a while the UAW's educational work and much of its research in Canada. This later became a bone of contention between George Burt and the Ontario leadership of the Canadian Congress of Labour, which felt that the WEA leadership was too pro-Communist. After Burt quit the losing Unity caucus in the International UAW, he too dropped the WEA.

The delegates at Brantford also discussed the "very unhealthy situation within our International Union...caused by the recent actions of the President in suspending five executive board members." Early in the conference, delegates were informed that suspended officers Ed Hall and Wyndham Mortimer were there; they were admitted as observers and then invited to speak by a weighted vote of 23 to 10, with George Burt, who was to oppose and succeed Millard, and Art Shultz, Millard's close associate (both from Oshawa Local 222), along with Leo Grondin of Local 195 and W.L. Townsend of Local 397 voting against. Eleven others, including most of the Local 222 and 195 delegates, as well as those from Locals 199 and 502, cast the favourable votes. The conference finally adopted a motion calling upon "President Martin to immediately show cause for this suspension or reinstate the five members." Should charges be preferred, they called for a "non-partial trial committee" to be set up by CIO president Lewis; if Martin failed to comply by 7 July, they proposed a "special convention...to pass judgment on all board members." The motion passed, according to the minutes, by 18 to 15

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formulate local laws governing the policy and activity of the Council. The Council shall have authority only to function as a deliberative Body and shall have no legislative or executive authority." That last sentence was to cause some headaches, at least in Canada — the only place the District Council idea really took root.

<sup>47</sup>Minutes, Resolution, Regional Director's report, and undated UAWA Press release: in author's files; *Daily Clarion*, 28 June 1938. v

weighted votes, cast by nine and six delegates, respectively. Two delegates had changed sides, Cockbain of Local 195 and Lawson, changing his local's majority, of Local 222. Most of the six who voted against, such as Burt and Shultz, changed their minds in the following period, as of course did Millard himself. The election of Shultz as recording secretary early in the conference, by a weighted vote of 24 (by nine delegates) to 8 votes (by five delegates), though he was in the minority on the later votes, illustrates the fluidity of the factional situation at this time. By including in the main resolution an assertion that: "We, the members of the Canadian Regional Conference are definitely opposed to any factional disputes entering into the Canadian locals and are opposed to taking sides on this question," a majority combined anti-Martin and anti-factionalist sentiments. It worked, regardless of whether that sentence was written in by genuine anti-factionalists and accepted by the Communists so as not to lose their support, or even written by Communists in order to solidify their alliance.

Nothing about the visit of the two suspended international vice-presidents nor the resolution on internal politics was mentioned in the union's own press release on the conference; there was no mention of these matters, either, in the Communist *Daily Clarion*. The union document mentions all four of the "officers" of the Brantford Conference mentioned above; the *Clarion* identifies only three, Millard being the one left out. The delegates also called on Millard to convene another conference to set up a more permanent Regional Committee.

Between March and June 1938, a process of polarization had gone on in the Oshawa local. Its March meeting, which re-elected Millard president, was considered by the CCF as a victory for its slate and approach. By summer, however, the changing situation in the international union, and hard work by the Unity group, sparked by its Communist key contingent and their allies, helped muster up the support needed to elect their slate of delegates to the next regional meeting.

US Unity Group leaders Wyndham Mortimer and Richard Frankenstein (the latter having just broken with Martin) visited St. Catharines, where the Canadian Unity Caucus "met in a farmhouse on Ontario Street...[and] briefed us on the developments on the American side."<sup>48</sup>

In July 1938, the Communists and their allies attacked Millard for not working for a special convention to reinstate the officers who had been purged by Martin.<sup>49</sup> At a "regional committee" meeting on 20 August in Toronto, again chaired by Millard, the ten delegates present talked a bit about everything, but mostly concentrated on the difficulties of the Walker Metals strike, and on the procedure to regularize the regional committee. George Thomson of Local 222 was elected chairperson, Bill Emery of Local 502 secretary, and Bob Lawrie of Local 199 treasurer; importantly, all three were of the Unity Group. They also voted to set up a regional fund, with a five-cent per-member monthly per capita and a one-dollar

<sup>48</sup>Napier, *Memories*, 44.

<sup>49</sup>*Daily Clarion*, 28 July 1938.

minimum per local. A curiously-worded press release stated that "It was expected by some observers that the recent dismissal of high-ranking officers of the International Union would be a hotly disputed order of business, however from a press statement issued by the Regional Director and concurred in by the attending delegates, it was learned that the question was not discussed."<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile, St. Catharines Local 195 took the initiative of suggesting that all GM shop committee chairpersons in Canada meet "in the Regional Office (in Toronto) to discuss plans for uniform demands."<sup>51</sup> This led to a "GM sub-committee of the Regional Council" later in 1938, and eventually to the establishment of the Canadian GM Council. (In May 1939, the council was to meet in St. Catharines with the participation of Walter Reuther, shortly after he became the international union's new GM director.)

On 11 September the next Canadian conference met in Windsor and started calling itself the Canadian Regional Council. The delegates took a strong stand against splitting the union. Millard rushed to and fro across the Detroit River, much to the irritation of many delegates and of the union's lawyer J.L. Cohen, all of whom made themselves heard on the subject. In Detroit, Millard tried to get greater support for the Walker strike (succeeding to some extent, but not enough to win the strike), and to take part with other UAW board members and top CIO representatives in settling the Martin leadership battle. For the first time, he publicly but carefully supported the forces that were pushing to topple Martin, saying: "I am doing everything in my power to restore peace...It has been necessary for me to make an about face in some instances." While Millard still criticized the Unity group for meeting apart from the conference to set the latter's agenda, this was the occasion for him to state: "I have nothing against a Communist so long as he is a good union man." Bill Emery interrupted Millard's report to deny the part about the Unity group and to claim that he alone had prepared the agenda. Barrister Cohen, in a "report" twice as long as the director's, expressed his appreciation of Millard's "about face," saying that "This shows a desire to bring about peace in the union, and...we must remember that it sometimes takes a big man to admit he was wrong. But brother Millard must be consistent...He must realize that those that have held in the past the same views as he now holds were due proper consideration...." In other words, the faction fight in Canada had shifted to a lower key, but was not over. To some extent, as historian Irving Abella put it, "the (Communist) party opposed Millard less because he was in Martin's camp than because, as an executive of the CCF, Millard would undoubtedly move the UAW from the Communist into the CCF orbit."<sup>52</sup> Events in the mid 1940s would seem to bear that out.

In any case, by 20 September 1938, the CP's *Clarion* had adopted friendlier language about Millard. An article headlined: "Peace established in Auto Union"

<sup>50</sup>In author's files.

<sup>51</sup>Local 222 executive minutes, 22 August 1938: text in author's files.

<sup>52</sup>Abella, *Nationalism*, 31.

reported that "Canadian automobile workers are congratulating Charles H. Millard, Dominion regional director of the United Automobile Workers Union, for taking a leading part in having the union's general executive board accept the CIO pact to end factionalism and establish unity in the UAW ranks." Despite nice words on a few such occasions, the Communists and Millard never really stopped fighting each other over the years, in UAW and elsewhere in Canada, rarely recognizing each other's positive work. It nevertheless came as no surprise that Millard was one of the 15 board members — Socialists, Communists and non-political unionists alike — whom Homer Martin "removed" from office on 20 January 1939. Millard thus lent his weight to the new board majority that then removed Martin from office and named R.J. Thomas acting president pending the March 1939 convention.

The reaction among Canadian auto workers was overwhelmingly against Martin. The *Daily Clarion* portrays Millard as being "confident the Canadian locals were firmly in support of the action to preserve democracy in the union."<sup>53</sup> The same edition of the Communist newspaper also reports an Oshawa shop stewards' resolution: "That we...concur with the action taken by Brother C.H. Millard as our representative in the international executive board in reference to the Canadian policy and the affairs of the international union and tender a vote of confidence in his future activities as our international representative."

The Canadian district council met on 28 January 1939 in St. Catharines. The twelve delegates of Locals 222, 199, 195, and 502, voted eight to four (or, on a weighted, membership basis, 22 to 10) to support the CIO and urge all locals to send delegates to the UAW-CIO convention. The motives of some of those voting against were somewhat confused, mixing a strongly anti-Martin, left supporter, Tommy McLean of Local 222 (who was to have a long and prominent service in the Canadian region of the UAW) with a leading Martin supporter, Robert McCartney of Local 195. McCartney soon recognized, but complained about, the overwhelming support for the CIO among Canadian auto workers. In a letter to a government official that March, he wrote: "In my opinion, locals 195, 199 and 222 were stampeded into making a hasty and ill-advised decision to support the CIO-UAWA [sic], headed by R.J. Thomas."<sup>54</sup> And Millard was quoted in the *Clarion* as saying: "Withdrawal from the international union was raised but found little support."

#### *Canada and the Rival U.A.W. Conventions*

ONE PRE-CONVENTION voting strength estimate, region by region, in the files of a prominent pro-CP member of the Unity Caucus for February 1939, shows a less optimistic (for them) estimate of a tied vote in the Canadian Region (then known

<sup>53</sup>*Daily Clarion*, 25 January 1939.

<sup>54</sup>R.H. McCartney, president, Local 622, UAWA(AFL) to Louis Fine, chief conciliation officer, Department of Labour, Toronto, 20 March 1939, in Ontario Archives, RG7 V-I-B, Box 2. On Millard, see *Daily Clarion*, 31 January 1939.

as Region 12). While the Unity forces counted on the solid "anti-Martin" vote of Local 199, and half of Local 222, they prematurely and wrongly conceded the rest as "theirs" (that is, pro-Martin, in their US terms).<sup>55</sup>

Of the two rival conventions in March 1939, the Martin forces met earliest, in Detroit, with no Canadian locals really participating. In fact, though McCartney and M. Fargo were listed at the Martin convention as "rank and file delegates" of Local 195, with "voice but no vote," the proceedings do not show any use of this voice. The convention called by the international executive board in Cleveland, soon afterward, had representatives of the three major Canadian UAW branches: Leo Grondin and Tom Johnson of Windsor Local 195; John Doughty and Albert Hillier of St. Catharines Local 199; and George Burt, Tom Cassidy, Tommy MacLean, Charles Millard, and Art Shultz of Oshawa Local 222. The credentials committee also approved those of the moribund Local 502, but apparently Bill Emery of that local either was stopped by US border authorities, or by his fear of being stopped, while Bill White did attend. Some (such as Jim Napier) suspected anti-Communist unionists of complicity in stopping Emery.

As it turned out, the Canadian delegates did not play a big role on the convention floor.<sup>56</sup> Within the Canadian delegation, though it was united against Martin, the fight for the director's post grew quite heated. Art Shultz and George Day (like Shultz prominent in Local 222, but not a delegate) both said later that they had been asked (in Shultz's case by CIO's Hugh Thompson) to run against a clearly doomed Millard, and refused. In Day's case, the reasons evoked by his friends in the local showed support for a Canadian national union.<sup>57</sup> Burt had

<sup>55</sup>Henry Kraus files in Reuther Library, Wayne State University: "Estimate of Strength of Anti-Martin Group," February 1939. The page for Region 12 shows:

	Delegates	Votes	Ours	Theirs
195	2	4		4
199	2	5	5	
222	6	24	12	12
397	1	1		1

<sup>56</sup>See above, on the rival conventions of 1939.

<sup>57</sup>Shultz: interviews with this author, particularly 2 November 1987; with James A. Pendergest, "Labour and Politics in Oshawa and District," MA Thesis, Queen's University, 1973, 286; Conde-Beveridge, UAW interviews, Shultz interview, 15. The author appreciates the cooperation of Pendergest during the research phase of this study. Day: Conde-Beveridge, 1 September 1982 interview with Ellen Thompson: "... they wanted George Day ... only George Day would have taken the job of director had he been given the go sign for Canadian autonomy," July 1982 interview with Harry Benson: "With Charlie Millard there was a bit of a fight. I liked (him) personally, but when this thing began to develop we wanted a strictly Canadian set-up, and we wanted George Day to run (for) regional director ... George would not run unless it was going to have a 100 percent Canadian union." See also Pendergest, "Labour and Politics," 284: "Some of the men wanted George Day as a candidate ... (He) agreed to run, but only if local autonomy in the sense of a national union was obtained."

already decided to run against Millard, and had told him so in harsh terms, although as he tells it, CIO leaders Phil Murray and Sidney Hillman "tried to discourage me by telling me that the CIO had every faith in the ability of Charlie Millard to do the best job for the UAW members in Canada." That Burt had not been too optimistic, before leaving Oshawa for Cleveland, was shown by his attempt in February to get a job as city tax collector; Oshawa City Council named a retired Admiral instead, causing a public outcry.<sup>58</sup>

According to Napier, at his suggestion Burt dined with US auto worker Communist leaders Mortimer and Travis, and "there the final decision to support Burt was made."<sup>59</sup> Napier also tells of going to Cleveland, even though he had been beaten (narrowly) by moderates Johnson and Grondin for the two delegates' spots the local could afford. Local 195's votes were considered crucial at that time, Napier confirms, and goes on to say: "[Rooming] arrangements had been made for me, but I elected to play broke and asked Johnson and Grondin if I could sleep on the floor of their room...I wanted to be very close to them...I started to make known to [them] that Millard could be defeated and that the Unity Group was prepared to have them appointed to staff jobs, provided... [They] agreed."

The convention proceedings list ten delegates with 34 votes and reports say seven delegates with 27 votes supported Burt as against three with nine votes for Millard. (It would be difficult to correct that loose arithmetic 50 years later.)<sup>60</sup> Unlike Homer Martin, the more committed Millard did not leave the labour movement, but went on to other activities in the CIO (which named him Ontario representative a few days later), the Steelworkers, and elsewhere. George Burt was the new director and, though sharply partisan, he was persistent if not overly consistent, and played a prominent role in guiding the region through the rough waters of the next years without a shipwreck. Until 1947, he worked with the Unity Group to lead the Canadian Region through the factional battles within the UAW international executive board, the fights within the Canadian Congress of Labour, and the drive by Communists and Liberals to hinder CCL ties with the Socialist CCF. He began by closing the Regional Office in Toronto, moving it first into the Oshawa local's office and then to Windsor.

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Some of the non-CP left and their allies went along against Millard and certainly Martin, but disagreed with the CP about Canadian autonomy. This contributed to the tension in Local 222, said Benson.

<sup>58</sup>Oshawa Labour Press, 16 February 1939. Burt, "CIO," 8; Conde-Beveridge, Burt interview, 19.

<sup>59</sup>Burt, "CIO," 8; Napier, *Memories*, 45-6.

<sup>60</sup>Abella, *Nationalism*, 32. Newspapers of the day, including *Daily Clarion*, report the vote, but without figures.



*The Attempt to Set Up a Dual Auto Union in Windsor.*

THE POLITICAL AND PERSONAL rivalries within the Canadian auto workers were eclipsed throughout much of 1939 by an energetic but sporadic and unsuccessful campaign to break up the UAW-CIO in Canada by setting up a "Homer Martin Unit" (as the *Windsor Star* called it) of the UAW-AFL. First, Martin loyalist Robert McCartney, chair of the Walkerville (Windsor) GM unit, broke away from (and was expelled by) the large, amalgamated Local 195, which he sometimes had represented at UAW regional conferences.

Upon his return from the Martin convention in Detroit, finding only a few supporters in Local 195, he brought together a separate group, limited to some of the GM Windsor workers, which Homer Martin quickly chartered in March as Local 622. McCartney claimed 200 members "ready to join," while "other UAW officials claim the number does not exceed 50."<sup>61</sup> In April, Martin himself, ever proud of being a good speaker, announced he would come speak for them in Windsor. But when he appeared at the Dom Polski Hall, he was booed so badly he could not be heard. He left the hall — and the country.

In April, at the Canadian council in St. Catharines soon after the Cleveland convention, Fred Joyce of Local 195 reported "on the dual union situation, [likening] it to a case of infantile disorder... Steady gains were being made and the Martin membership was being won back into the CIO... Brother McLean [of Local 222] pointed out that there was no dual unionism in Oshawa... Two hours were spent on the discussion of dual unionism." By July, Canadian director Burt's report to the newly baptized District Council 26 speaks of the need to get "GM bargaining again with the UAW-CIO in Windsor, where dual unionism has become extinct." But perhaps it was not entirely extinct, for in August the Canadian Council minutes record that "with 330 men (members?) in the GM plants, 111 are paid up... We recommend Windsor take a vote to decide the dual union situation." In November, Burt wrote Clarence Breen, chair of the GM sub-council, in Oshawa, still talking of fighting the AFL people, though they were "washed up."<sup>62</sup> By then they really were, but it had taken some time and effort.

In July-August 1939, starting even before the end of what was clearly a successful UAW-CIO "Strategy Strike" at GM in the US, the AFL tried to launch a

<sup>61</sup>*Windsor Star*, 18 April 1939.

<sup>62</sup>Minutes, Canadian conference, St. Catharines, 22-23 April 1939, 1, 3 and 4; George Burt, Director's report, District Council 26, 8 July 1939, 2; Minutes, District Council of 27 August 1939, 3; George Burt to Breen, 10 November 1939, (in Box 70, File 5, UAW Canada Councils, Reuther Library). See also Burt's letter of 27 April 1939 (in the same file) to Bill Emery, announcing that the International executive Board had now "granted" the request of the Canadian Council for a charter. However, "the Board approved the entire resolution as it was presented in your minutes with this exception (namely, the power to legislate for the Canadian membership)." That "exception," a bone of contention in Millard's time, continued to be one for years to come.

counteroffensive in both the US and Canada. They "announced that Frank Fenton, director of organization for the Federation and thirty AFL organizers would arrive [in Detroit] Saturday [29 July] to revive the UAW-AFL headed by Homer Martin."<sup>63</sup> Then, two "organizers of the AFofL (T.N. Taylor, of Terre Haute, Indiana and Jesse Gallagher, of Cleveland, Ohio, both 'living in Detroit but will operate in Windsor') entered Windsor over the week-end and set up the foundations of an association which is intended to embrace all organized automobile workers in this city, Oscar Kitching, president of the Essex County (Windsor) Trades and Labour Council, said today." A few days later the press reported the same Kitching as saying that the drive was getting "a new impetus," as the labour council had granted credentials to the Martin group.<sup>64</sup> This "association" they were "founding" was of course the same ill-starred "local 622," which, far from making any progress, slid back to the ground again each time it was propped up. General Motors, by refusing to recognize "either side," gave them as good a chance as they could expect.<sup>65</sup>

The moves by this local labour council and its president must be seen in the context of the Trades and Labour Congress affairs. In January 1939, the TLC executive had suspended the CIO unions, but still resisted AFL pressure to expel them. Notifying the auto and other CIO unions of their suspension, TLC secretary-treasurer R.J. Tallon wrote: "The situation ... is to be deeply regretted, but ... a split was inevitable, and we were faced with either taking action to suspend the CIO unions or submit [sic] to the withdrawal of the majority of our membership who belong to US unions."<sup>66</sup> Then the US union leaders really put the gun to the Canadians' heads, making it clear they would cut off all affiliation fees from international unions to the TLC if it did not obey, stop dragging its feet, and finish the job of expelling the industrial unions of the CIO as the Americans had done by 1937. The reluctance of the Toronto Labour Council to oust the CIO unions had brought blistering AFL attacks and threats.<sup>67</sup> In Windsor, labour council delegates who opposed encouragement of the splinter UAW-AFL and expressed support for

<sup>63</sup>*Windsor Daily Star*, 27 July 1939.

<sup>64</sup>*Windsor Star*, 14 and 23 August 1939.

<sup>65</sup>"I would not meet with either side ... until ... it was decided which group would represent our employees, if either one ... Mr. Cockbain of the CIO group claimed that Local 195 had an agreement with the Corporation. I explained that his was not so; the company having an agreement with employees," wrote plant manager Church to GM vice president Carmichael, 24 March 1939 (Ontario Ministry of Labour files, RG7 V-I-B, Box 2).

<sup>66</sup>Letter of 5 January 1939 quoted in CBRT, *It Was Never Easy: The Last 50 Years* (Ottawa 1961), 187.

<sup>67</sup>*Toronto Evening Telegram*, 15 December 1938, "AFL Orders Congress Here To Blast CIO. Federation Ultimatum Promises [sic!] New Organization If Wishes Not Met," and more explicitly: "The Canadian Congress must clean house of the CIO unions or the Federation will set up an AFL Congress in Canada within a year." The next day, the same newspaper carried a similar article, quoting AFL President Green as asserting he "cannot tolerate any compromise" with CIO.

the CIO were greeted with shouts of "Why don't you go with them?" from AFL supporters on council. Yet the same council meeting that voted to favour the Martin group also instructed delegates to the upcoming TLC national convention to work for the status quo, under which the CIO unions were suspended but not expelled! Finally, in Niagara Falls in September 1939, TLC did obey, expelling the UAW and other CIO unions by a majority that was achieved only by first depriving them of the right to vote. Once again, as in 1902, the mainstream Canadian labour centre was split from outside.

What are clearly confidential "spy reports" circulated by leading General Motors officials, with copies to government officials who dutifully filed them away for posterity,<sup>68</sup> speak of renewed efforts in October of that year to get Local 622 off the ground. One such report, on a Martin-group meeting in a member's home, with Labour Council president Kitching (also named an AFL organizer) present, is enlightening. The document reports that Kitching "inquired about grievances at the plant and being informed by Bullen and Miller that there were no grievances...admitted that all the grievances he had been hearing about must be propaganda of the CIO...." East is said to have told Kitching about a meeting where the CIO group made a motion calling for a strike. McCartney remarked it would be exactly the right thing, that "then Mr. Church (GM plant manager in Walkerville — Windsor), would have had an opportunity to get rid of a bunch of trouble-makers."

All in vain. UAW Local 622 (AFL) disappeared into thin air; it was not that easy to interest workers for long in attempts to keep an isolated extension of a US organization alive in Canada. The federal government's report on labour organization in Canada provides the epitaph: listing the status of international unions at the end of 1939, it records for the UAW-AFL "No local unions in Canada."<sup>69</sup>

There was just one UAW left in Canada. The union had survived the internal and external strains and pressures of this period. In spite of difficulties, the auto workers began developing active, if controversial, education programs, setting up credit unions, and trying to launch a labour press in Oshawa. They had managed to beat off management and government attacks and to lay the organizational and structural groundwork for their future expansion and democratic vigour, setting up their own Canadian Council and, at GM, the first of their Canada-wide company councils. The battle inside the UAW in Canada over political ideas, influences and domination, personified by the moderate Socialists of the CCF on the one side and

<sup>68</sup>Letter and attachments, referred to as "two other reports," dated 23 October 1939, from GM vice-president and general manager for Canada, H.J. Carmichael, to Ontario chief conciliation officer, Louis Fine; see note 6, above. The author appreciates the research assistance of David Sobel in pinpointing several of the documents used in this study.

<sup>69</sup>*Labour Organizations in Canada — 1939* (Ottawa 1940), 189. It might be noted that another shortlived AFL attempt was made in 1946, when the annual report lists the UAW-CIO with 28 locals and 50,000 members in Canada and the UAW-AFL with 1 local and 50 members in Chatham, Ontario. The latter UAW branch then disappeared.

the Communists of the CPC on the other, both with their various and sometimes varying allies, had gone through an important stage. At some points the battle had been joined earlier and more bitterly than in the US; in any case it was far from over.

**APPENDIX I**  
**Work Stoppages in Canada in the Late Thirties**

Year	Strikes & lockouts	Workers involved	Person days lost/yr.	% of estimated working time
1936	156	34,812	276,997	0.05
1937	278	71,905	886,393	0.15
1938	147	20,395	148,678	0.02
1939	122	41,038	224,588	0.04
1940	168	60,619	266,318	0.04
1941	231	87,091	433,914	0.06

Source: Strikes and Lockouts in Canada, Ottawa, Labour Canada, 1977, 5-6.

**APPENDIX II**  
**Unemployment in Canada in the Late Thirties**

Year	Rate	Year	Rate
1936	12.8%	1939	11.4%
1937	9.1%	1940	9.2%
1938	11.4%	1941	4.4%

Sources: Various Labour Force Surveys of Statistics Canada and its predecessor, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. The definitions and parameters vary, as does the accuracy of the reporting, so the figures are not strictly comparable. However, the proportions are roughly realistic, which is about as much as you can honestly hope to say for any statistics dealing with human beings.

One further comment on proportions: Average working time taken out for reported strikes and lockouts for the six years in Table II was 0.06 per cent of total yearly working time. Officially published unemployment figures for those same six years in Table III averaged 9.72 per cent; a loss of 160 times as much work time as in work stoppages.

*IN THE BEGINNING...*  
**CHARLIE MILLARD,**  
*UAW'S FIRST CANADIAN DIRECTOR*

CHARLES MILLARD was a charter member, an organizer, and the first president of Oshawa UAW Local 222, "elected with a comfortable majority of supporters on the executive," wrote his successor.<sup>70</sup> In April 1937, he led the historic General Motors workers' negotiating team, with the advice and guidance of UAW international representative Hugh Thompson and of the able, temperamental Toronto labour lawyer, J.L. Cohen (whom Communist chieftain Tim Buck termed: "A very close friend of mine and a very good friend of our Party....")<sup>71</sup>

Millard went on to become the first Canadian director of the auto workers, CIO representative, and then assistant director and director of the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee, the Packinghouse Workers, the Shoe and Leather Workers, and Canadian director of the United Steel Workers of America. He retired from that post in 1956 to become organizational director of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), from which he retired (again) in 1961. After his

<sup>70</sup>Some of this material is based on the author's personal knowledge and discussions with Millard and some of his associates, particularly his assistant and friend, Murray Cotterill, and his secretarial assistant, Margaret Sedgwick Lazarus. Some has been checked with writers or their accounts, including Morden Lazarus' unpublished transcript of a 1975 interview with Millard, and George Burt's, Art Shultz's and Paul Malles' unpublished manuscripts (available thanks to Margaret Sedgwick Lazarus and Mary Millard), as well as short notes by Lazarus, in his *Up from the Ranks* (Toronto 1977), and *The Long Winding Road* (Vancouver 1977). Reference was also made to David Lewis, *The Good Fight* (Toronto 1987), and to Pendergest, "Labor and Politics," and to J.L. Cohen's files in the National Archives of Canada. Also consulted were somewhat critical references in Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour* (Toronto 1973), and more sharply critical ones in J.S. Napier, *Memories of Building the UAW* (Toronto 1975) and Charlotte Yates, "From Plant to Politics: The Canadian UAW, 1936-1984," PhD Dissertation, Carleton University, 1988. Some more benevolent accounts are: Laurel Sefton MacDowell, "The Career of a Canadian Trade Union Leader: C.H. Millard, 1937-19346," *Relations industrielles/Industrial Relations*, 3 (1988); Eleanor O'Connor, "Charles Millard: A Socialist in the Trade Union Movement," a 1981 term paper for Pro. Abella at York University, and James Wilson, "Charles Millard as Architect of Industrial Unionism in Canada," MA Thesis, Wilfrid Laurier University, n.d.

<sup>71</sup>Tim Buck, *Yours in the Struggle: Reminiscences of Tim Buck* (Toronto 1977), 166. Undoubted legal ability, and friendship with Tim Buck, however, didn't stop Cohen from walking out on cases defending Buck and other Communist leaders when they didn't follow his advice to the letter, from insisting on advance payments at difficult moments, from writing (and leaving behind copies of) letters to right-wing UAW president Homer Martin speaking ill of Communist activists in the Canadian UAW (such as Napier and Emery), or from refusing an invitation to UAW regional conferences when he felt the Canadians should "have nothing more to do with" the International Union, even when that ran counter to the Party line of the time.

return from Europe, he did "odd jobs" for the unions, the most controversial of which was dealing with the ugly heritage of imported gangster Hal Banks.

Millard was born in St. Thomas, Ontario in 1896 and died in Toronto in 1978. Throughout his long and active life, he was moved by a combination of commitments. Soon after his return from World War I service in France, he tried his hand, unsuccessfully, at running a small business, after which he and his family went through the agony of so many Canadians during the Great Depression: the endless frustration of job hunting, finding and losing work — in his case at General Motors — and depending on welfare payments. The experience transformed him from an active member of the Chamber of Commerce into one of the leaders of the Unemployed Association. He was convinced that the local Relief Administrator, "to get me out of his hair,"<sup>72</sup> helped convince General Motors to rehire him in the body shop. Charlie also found a belief in a God and in a Son of God committed to humanity and social justice. He became a Sunday School teacher and supervisor, and an occasional lay preacher, in the Methodist — later United — Church, although the church Elders quickly turned their backs on Millard the union man. And he reached the conviction that the world needed changing and saw the democratic Socialist movement, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation and its successor, the New Democratic Party, as the prime vehicle of that change.

Millard's commitment to the trade union movement at all levels was one expression of that combination of religious and Socialist principles. Despite or because of his mixed feelings about his church experiences, he went on to make frequent efforts to bring churchpeople and unionists together in the fight for social justice. Another expression of his principles was his activity in the CCF and NDP, in the Oshawa local association from 1933 on, soon on the Ontario Provincial Executive, then as its president, twice as a member of the Ontario legislature (1943-45; 1948-51), always as a harsh opponent of the Communist Party and its trade union operations.

Millard's anti-Communism was a factor in his support for UAW president Homer Martin even after the Reuthers, their Socialist supporters, and their Communist rivals, had all decided Martin had to go. It was one of the reasons Millard lost out in UAW in Canada, even after he opposed Martin. But the aversion was mutual. The Communists did their best to get rid of Millard and his drive for union support for the CCF, while he did his best to fight the CP line and to replace CPers in union posts in auto, steel, wood, and wherever else he could with people he felt he could trust — that is, CCF adherents. Yet he also said, according to the minutes of the January 1939, UAW Canadian regional conference: "I have nothing against a Communist so long as he is a good union man." Less surprisingly, he was one of those non-Communist union leaders who encouraged former Communists or sympathizers to be active in the "mainstream" — some, such as Mike Fenwick and James "Shaky" Robertson, eventually being quite anti-Communist. Many years

<sup>72</sup>Morden Lazarus interview, 3.

later, when Millard was an ICFTU official, he was to express strong opposition to those who subordinated workers' day-to-day striving for better conditions to a singleminded "crusade" against Communism.<sup>73</sup>

Millard was not without his contradictions. He took on far too many assignments. While he could be scathing in his comments on those, including union colleagues, who drank or pursued extramarital sexual involvements, he himself was a gambling menace who didn't hesitate to empty his staff members' wallets at the card table. He very much wanted to appear respectable, but didn't shrink from getting himself arrested at the start of World War II for publicly denouncing the inequality of the war-time burdens borne by the rich and the poor.<sup>74</sup> And Millard was a Mason. Like his fellow-Mason, the late Chilean president Salvador Allende, who paid with his life when he hoped the army would not revolt because some of the generals were Masons, Millard thought that he was able to get concessions from employers who were also members of that order once so feared by the Catholic Church. He spoke strongly against employers and governments, but some of them thought him an "easy mark." His disappointment with misleading assurances from Prime Minister Mackenzie King during the steel negotiations in 1943 — and probably with himself for gullibly accepting those assurances — may well have contributed to his growing mistrust of governments and of labour reliance on government support. Indeed, one feature that stood out in Millard's ICFTU work was his insistence on rejecting all such reliance — a position that did not make him popular in Washington. He deeply believed in international solidarity work, but could not overcome the psychological barrier, common to many Anglo-Canadians of his generation, to learning even five words of any other language, though he lived for five years in Brussels.

Millard led the Canadian steelworkers for about 17 years. But there was no love lost between him and the Steelworkers' very conservative president, David J. MacDonald, who (as Millard told this author) referred to UAW president Walter Reuther in Steel meetings as "that red-headed socialistic son-of-a-bitch." This only helped bring Millard and Reuther closer together, as did their mutual friendship with the CCF's David Lewis. Millard's longstanding rivalry with George Burt, who succeeded him as UAW regional director in 1939, did not prevent but rather encouraged the warm relationship that developed between Charlie and Walter. During Millard's years of activity on the world scene, he often worked in alliance with Victor Reuther and his CIO associates.

<sup>73</sup>Lazarus interview, 50 and this author's own conversation with Millard at the time.

<sup>74</sup>*Toronto Star*, 7 December 1939. Among things Millard was accused of saying was: "there was not a great deal of sense in going to Europe to fight Hitlerism, while there was Hitlerism right here in Canada." Indignant at that accusation, the RCMP responded by raiding and ransacking his office along with those of other unions in the same building. Abella, *Nationalism*, 46.

In the Canadian labour movement, Millard certainly was an early and sincere spokesperson for close ties between the trade unions and the CCF-NDP to advance their shared aspirations. Even the sharpness with which he took on those he felt opposed those goals was meant to support the movement which he saw as being "on the side of the angels."



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**PUBLISHED AT:** Department of History, University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon, Canada S7N 0W0

*Please address correspondence to the Editor.*