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Article abstract

No persuasive account of labour in Australia and Canada can ignore the impact that immigration has wrought on the composition of the working class and preoccupations of workers, unions, and the varied political parties they have sponsored. Highlighting both similarities and differences between countries, the paper explores the paradoxical relationship that immigration has had with the labour movements of Australia and Canada. Although immigrants have been a critical source of union recruits, new ideas, and leaders (this being especially true for British skilled men), their presence was also long a source of concern, chauvinism, and division within predominantly white, Anglo-Celtic, and male-dominated union movements that adopted exclusionary policies, particularly regarding Asian and continental European workers. A more recent shift towards non-racist and inclusive policies unfortunately has not obliterated labour segmentation along racial and ethnic lines, especially job ghettos for immigrant women. Meanwhile, global restructuring and the loss of hard-earned union protections have increased immigrant workers' historic vulnerability. In explaining differences in the two countries — for example, Australia's greater 'success' at restricting non-white immigration before 1945 and Canada's earlier experience with a racially diverse work force — the paper cautions against easy generalizations, pointing instead to a series of historically contingent factors (such as 'accidents' of geography and differing political developments) that on some occasions led to rather different outcomes.

Immigration and Labour: Australia and Canada Compared

Franca Iacovetta, Michael Quinlan, and Ian Radforth

AUSTRALIA AND CANADA — both countries built on successive waves of immigrants — offer a useful point of comparison for exploring critical themes regarding the complex interplay among immigration, male and female immigrant workers, and the labour movements of receiving societies. Despite the huge distances separating the two countries, there are plenty of similarities. As nations with vast territories, impressive natural resources, and small populations, national development in each country has been critically affected by successive migration streams. Immigration has profoundly affected the workforces and labour movements of each nation. Historically, both countries have had similar economies.[1] They have inherited British political and legal institutions, although the French fact in Canada, particularly Québec, has made for some important differences. They share, too, a history of paradox — receiving societies with strong anti-immigration traditions, especially regarding non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants. In both countries, the labour movement historically has been a major contributor to such traditions, although, once again, in both contexts, the recent past has witnessed a shift from long-standing exclusionary policies regarding "foreign" workers towards a policy of greater incorporation. In neither case, however, has this shift obliterated the persistence of ethnic/gender segmentation in labour markets, especially regarding job ghettos of immigrant women. In the post-World War II era, both Canada (1962) and Australia (1973) largely dismantled their racist immigration policies, and since the 1970s, each has adopted multiculturalism as official policy.[2]

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[1]See, Kealey and Patmore, "Introduction," in this volume.
[2]Freda Hawkins, *Critical Years in Immigration: Canada and Australia Compared* (Montréal 1989).

There are also differences of degree and kind. Substantial migration to Canada dates further back than immigration to Australia. Particularly in the 1660s and 1670s, the colonizing French state sent to Canada demobilized soldiers, indentured male labourers, and single women sponsored by the crown. Prior to the British conquest in 1760, about 9,000 European migrants settled in the St. Lawrence Valley, and migration from France was never again significant. Increases in the French-Canadian population have been due almost entirely to natural growth.[3] After 1815, migration to Canada and Australia was for more than a century dominated by immigrants from the British Isles. Not until the 1980s did British nationals cease to be the numerically largest group among immigrant arrivals. British immigrants have also affected trade union developments and labour politics in both countries: their presence has been felt in the 19th-century craft unions, the rise of pro-worker parties, and post-1945 union campaigns. Some important distinctions emerge, however. British immigrants overwhelmingly dominated Australia's immigrant intake until the post-1945 era, when a mass migration of non-Anglophone workers occurred. A shift away from an overwhelming dependence on British immigrants occurred 50 years earlier in Canada, during the first 3 decades of the 20th century, when significant numbers of non-British immigrants, especially Americans (who included ethnic Americans) and continental Europeans, began to arrive.

Canada's proximity to the United States has also produced some significant differences *vis à vis* Australia. The US has been both an important source of immigrants for Canada and a magnet drawing successive waves of French- and English-Canadian emigrants to its borders. During the two decades before 1900, for example, more people left Canada than came (1,600,000 emigrants went to the US; 1,225,000 arrived in Canada from overseas). The emigrants included Québec farm families on marginal lands who developed extensive migration chains to the New England textile mills, where there were jobs for women and children. This trend was reversed by the early 1900s, but concerns about out-migration to the US, including the "brain drain" of well-educated and professional Canadians, has been a continuing theme.[4] Canada's proximity to the US and traditions of cross-border migration have also profoundly influenced Canada's labour movement. Until recently, most unions in Canada have been international unions with headquarters and the bulk of their membership in the United States. Rivalry between international and national unions is also a part of this history.[5] The Canadian situation is

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[3] R. Cole Harris, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 1: From the Beginning to 1800* (Toronto 1987); Peter Moogk, "Reluctant Exiles: Emigrants from France in Canada before 1760," in Gerald Tulchinsky, *Immigration in Canada: Historical Perspectives* (Toronto 1994), 8-47.
[4] R. Louis Gentilcore, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. 2: The Land Transformed, 1800-1891* (Toronto 1993), plate 31; Bruno Ramirez, *On the Move: French-Canadian and Italian Migrants in the North Atlantic Economy, 1860-1914* (Toronto 1991).
[5] See Bray and Rouillard, in this collection.

made still more complex by regional fragmentation within the country, including the Catholic-nationalist model of unionism that developed in Québec.

Finally, Australia's industrial relations system emerged much sooner than Canada's, has been far more extensive, and affected a greater percentage of workers. This pattern, in turn, is linked to the historic success of the union movement's political offspring, the Australian Labor Party (ALP).

Nineteenth-Century Patterns

Anglo-Celtic immigrants — primarily men — played an important role in the founding during the first half of the 19th century of trade unionism in Australia and Canada. Beginning in the mid-1820s, immigrants from the British Isles established the first Australian trade unions, modelled on those of their homeland. Male immigrants who had experience with British trade unions helped set up similar institutions in Canada during the decades following 1815. In the Canadian case, however, Canadian-born workers, including French Canadians and descendants of Anglo-Celtic immigrants, also built these early unions, drawing not only on British models, but also on experience with, and knowledge of, unions in the United States. In an era when the Canada-US border was no barrier to tramping artisans, they carried union cards from American locals into Canada, expanding the reach of the emerging movement as they travelled. By the 1860s, Canada found itself with two types of international unions — branches of two British-based unions (the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners) and locals of several US-based international craft unions (most notably the moulders, printers, carpenters, cigar makers, coopers, and organizations of workers associated with the railway shop crafts and running trades).[6]

Throughout the 19th century, successive waves of Anglo-Celtic immigrants were for the most part absorbed unproblematically into the labour movements of both Australia and Canada. English-Canadian craft unionists, for instance, had a cultural affinity with countless newly arrived skilled immigrants from England and Scotland, although, to say the least, Irish Catholic newcomers were not everywhere made to feel welcome.

The Irish played a prominent role in the making of the Canadian working class. Considerable recent research, to be sure, has stressed the diversity of background and experience among Irish immigrants and their descendants, as well as the large numbers of Irish Catholic immigrants who succeeded in establishing their own farms and gaining at least a measure of independence.[7] In the public discourse of

[6]Craig Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movement: A Short History* (Toronto 1989); Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1991* (Toronto 1992); Eugene Forsey, *Trade Unions in Canada, 1812-1902* (Toronto 1981).
[7]Donald Harmon Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History* (Montréal 1984); A. Gordon Darroch and Michael Ornstein, "Ethnicity and Class, Transitions Over a Decade: Ontario, 1861-1871," Canadian Historical Association *Historical Papers* (1984), 114-37; Bruce S. Elliott, *Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach* (Montréal 1988).

the mid-19th century, however, Irish immigrants, and especially Irish Catholics, were associated with urban poverty, crime, and violence. Scholarly research has shown that the Catholic Irish tended to be over-represented among the urban poor, the women finding a niche mainly in domestic service and the men in labouring jobs such as carting, dock work, and heavy construction. Because of widespread anti-Catholic nativism in many Canadian centres, the Irish Catholics also tended to be over-represented in jail registers and as combatants in riots. Orange-Green differences fuelled many of these riots, as Irish Catholics fought to assert their rights and establish a place in urban communities where the Orange Order predominated. Irish Catholic men gained the greatest notoriety for their collective violence when massed as navvies on large-scale construction projects, particularly during the great canal-building era of the 1840s in central Canada. Driven by wretched working conditions, acute economic hardship, and unscrupulous contractors, the Irish navvies drew on their cultural resources — secret societies and fierce, if temporary, ethnic cohesion — to mount the biggest strikes of the decade. This rowdy industrial proletariat was sharply repressed by the state, which created mounted police forces for the purpose. The ethnic identities of the Irish could cut both ways, at times fuelling bitter internecine battles among workers, while at other times forging class solidarities and a broadly based labour movement.[8]

If anything Irish and Anglo-Irish immigrants made an even more critical contribution to the formation of the Australian working class. The Irish constituted a significant proportion of transported convicts and also made up a large proportion of assisted free immigrants from the 1830s onwards.[9] Unlike the Canadian case, those Irish reaching the Australian colonies had no ready access to another immigration destination like the US. Both Irish convicts and free immigrants played a prominent role in industrial struggle and political dissent from the very earliest period.[10] Further, such was the large size and wide distribution of the Irish

[8]Michael S. Cross, "The Shiners' War: Social Violence in the Ottawa Valley in the 1830s," *Canadian Historical Review*, 54 (1973), 1-26; Ruth Bleasdale, "Class Conflict on the Canals of Upper Canada in the 1840s," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 7 (1981), 9-40; Peter Way, *Common Labor: Workers and the Digging of the North American Canals, 1780-1860* (Cambridge 1993); Scott W. See, *Riots in New Brunswick: Orange Nativism and Social Violence in the 1840s* (Toronto 1993); Gregory S. Kealey, "The Orange Order in Toronto: Religious Riot and the Working Class," in Michael J. Piva, ed., *A History of Ontario: Selected Readings* (Mississauga 1988), 71-94; Michael Cottrell, "St. Patrick's Day Parades in Nineteenth-Century Toronto," *Histoire sociale/Social History*, 25 (1992).
[9]Stephen Nicholas, ed., *Convict Workers: Reinterpreting Australia's Past* (Cambridge 1988).
[10]For example, Irish convicts were prominent in the Castle Hill revolt of 1804. Further, one of the earliest groups of assisted Irish immigrants, 150 mechanics who arrived in Tasmania in 1833 on the "Strathfieldsay," took part in a combination of building workers in Hobart. This industrial activity drew the attention of the colony's Immigration Committee and Governor Arthur. The latter sent a despatch to London arguing that while the colony needed

contribution to the workforce of the Australian colonies that, despite secular tensions (and some anti-Catholic discrimination amongst the English/Anglophile ruling colonial elite), there is little or no evidence of the anti-Irish job exclusion ("No Irish Need Apply") sometimes encountered in Canada. Although the Irish dominated many unskilled occupations, they could also be found in skilled trades.[11] Ghettoizing Irish immigrants into a narrow band of jobs was never an option, and the same applied to the union movement. The Irish assumed leadership positions within many unions in the 19th century, especially those of construction workers, shearers, and various categories of labourers. This pattern flowed into the ALP.[12]

However ironic it may seem given the immigrant presence in the early unions, one of the most frequent activities of 19th-century unionists in both Australia and Canada was to campaign against further immigration. Especially at times of local unemployment, the labour movements expressed general hostility to immigration. In the colonies of Tasmania (or Van Diemen's Land) and New South Wales, the earliest independent political organizations of workers (1827 and 1833 respectively) were formed by emigrant mechanics to fight immigration, both enforced (convict transportation) and government-assisted free immigrants.[13] Several decades later, when Canadian national labour centrals were first formed in the 1870s and 1880s, immigration figured prominently in discussions at annual conventions, in the political lobbying efforts of the centrals, and in their relations with the labour movement abroad. Independent political action was not yet fully developed in Canada at this time, and so, on the immigration question, political activists within the Canadian labour movement were Liberal or Lib-Lab supporters of the opposition to the Conservative government at Ottawa. It was condemned for promoting free immigration (and thus increasing competition in an unprotected labour market), while providing tariff protection for manufacturers (which resulted in higher consumer prices) — or as Lib-Lab critics put it, free trade for labour but protection

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immigration of industrious mechanics, more caution was needed in selection to avoid "political effects." See Michael Quinlan, *Hope Amidst Hard Times: Working Class Organization in Tasmania, 1830-1850* (Sydney 1986), 28-9.

[11]This can be illustrated anecdotally. The great grandfather of the Australian co-author of this paper arrived in Australia from Ireland as an engineer. After working at this trade for some time he became a brewery cart driver — with predictable consequences!

[12]The Irish contribution manifested itself in developing republican sentiment within the Australian Labor Party (ALP). On the other hand, the Irish Catholic connection which helped to build a church/labour movement alliance against conscription in 1916 was also a critical factor splitting the ALP during the cold war 1950s. Throughout the 20th century and up to the present many ALP leaders and prime ministers (such as James Scullin, John Curlin, and Paul Keating) were of Irish descent.

[13]C. Lever-Tracy and M. Quinlan, *A Divided Working Class? Ethnic Segmentation and Industrial Conflict in Australia* (London 1988); M. Quinlan and C. Lever-Tracy, "From labour market exclusion to industrial solidarity: Australian trade union responses to Asian workers, 1830-1988," *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 14 (1990) 159-81.

for capital. In these same years, Canadian labour centrals busied themselves corresponding with their counterparts in the British Isles, warning them to be wary of Dominion immigration agents who painted too glowing a picture of Canada by exaggerating wage rates and job prospects and underestimating living costs. Obviously the Canadians were protecting themselves from potential immigrant competitors for jobs, but they were also showing concern for union brothers in the old country who might regret a move to Canada.[14]

In both Australia and Canada unionists repeatedly expressed sharp hostility toward the importation of contract labour and to the assisted immigration of paupers. Local unions objected to contract labour because too often contracts specified lower wage rates than those prevailing locally, with the result that contract immigrant workers drove down local rates. Opposition to assisted passage for paupers and for indentured child immigrants at least in part grew out of a sense of outrage at the hardships and plight of desperate British toilers in labour markets that were in fact quite separate from those of skilled workers.[15] In the Australian case, prior to the cessation of convict transportation (1840 in New South Wales, 1852 in Tasmania, and 1868 in Western Australia), convict immigration from the British Isles was also sharply opposed.

Unionists in both countries expressed their ethnocentrism by railing against continental Europeans, or "foreigners," who were imported on contract. In fact, the numbers of such immigrants entering both countries in the 19th century were small. In Canada, foreign-speaking men were sometimes brought in as strikebreakers from the United States, where continental European immigration had already reached mass proportions during the closing decades of the 19th century. Partly as a sop to its supporters in the Canadian labour movement, the newly elected Liberal government in 1897 passed the Alien Labour Act, which prohibited the importation of contract labour from the US. (To please employers, the Liberal government never effectively enforced the Act.)[16] In Australia small numbers of indentured continental European immigrants (almost all of them men) included German stonemasons employed in building Victorian railways and Italian and Maltese migrants introduced into the sugar industry. In both countries the racism and ethnocentric attitudes of Anglo-Celtic unionists led to attacks on such immigrants, but their numbers were too small to cause more than sporadic concern. More rarely still, continental European immigrants sought to organize and close ranks with mainstream unionists. In Sydney, for example, Italian workers established a mutual

[14]Gregory S. Kealey, *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1867-1892* (Toronto 1980), 228, 250-1; Forsey, *Trade Unions in Canada*; Robert H. Babcock, *Gompers in Canada: a study in American Continentalism before the First World War* (Toronto 1974), 114-15.

[15]Joy Parr, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924* (Toronto 1994).

[16]Paul Craven, *'An Impartial Umpire': Industrial Relations and the Canadian State, 1900-1911* (Toronto 1980).

benefit association that sought close links with both the Sydney and Melbourne Trades and Labour Councils.[17]

Unionists in Australia and Canada alike reserved their most virulent hostility for Asian workers. In British Columbia, Chinese men began arriving from California in 1858, along with others in the gold rush. Their numbers increased sharply during the early 1880s, when contractors for the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) imported construction labourers on contract from China to perform the most dangerous building projects through the Rocky Mountains. Already by the 1870s Anglo-Celtic unionists in the coal mines of Vancouver Island were clashing with Chinese workers whom the white unionists first excluded from their ranks and then treated as scab labour. By the late 1880s organized labour on the west coast, supported by unionists across North America, were playing a leading part in the fight to exclude Chinese immigrants from Canada. In 1885, the year construction of the CPR was completed, the white labour movement of British Columbia proudly shared credit for the Canadian government's discriminatory $50 head tax on Chinese entering Canada, the first in an escalating series of anti-Chinese measures adopted by the dominion and provincial governments. During the first quarter of the 20th century, Canada adopted a series of public policies and surreptitious practices that amounted to a White Canada policy. Diverse groups lent support to the policy, but it was given a decided push forward by the Canadian labour movement.[18]

In Australia, fear of Asians — including Chinese, Indians, and to a lesser extent Pacific Island immigrants — began earlier. Local worker opposition to Asian immigrants helped curtail government assistance to such immigrants from as early as the 1830s. From the mid-1860s, however, 60,000 Pacific Island male labourers were cajoled and even kidnapped to work as indentured sugar plantation workers in Queensland. The labour movement opposed the introduction of "Kanaka" labour and backed up state measures that restricted employment and enshrined the inferior employment status of these workers. During the gold rush of the 1850s, 40,000 Chinese men entered the colony of Victoria where they met with extreme and violent hostility from white miners, and this set a pattern for later union responses. Unlike Pacific Islanders, the employment of Chinese was not limited by law, and they spread from mining and pastoral work into market gardening, construction, trading/hawking, laundering, and furniture making. As in Canada, their numbers

[17]M. Quinlan, "Immigrant Workers, Trade Union Organization and Industrial Strategy," PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 1982.

[18]Anthony Chan, *Gold Mountain: The Chinese in the New World* (Vancouver 1983); Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montréal 1978); Kay Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montréal 1991); Patricia Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1848-1914* (Vancouver 1989).

were insignificant in most industries, but union responses were based on an exaggerated fear of the potential for Chinese to flood the labour market and they drew on prevailing racist hierarchies of supposedly superior and inferior races.[19]

In the last quarter of the 19th century, the exclusion of immigrants of colour became a key plank of the Australian labour movement. Australian unions and their political offspring, the ALP, played a significant role in excluding non-European immigrants under the popular public policy known as "White Australia." The policy, adopted with pride by the new Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, was historically contingent upon the push for federation and the depression of the 1890s which undermined any argument about pressing labour shortages. In addition to the support from labour, there was a wide consensus in favour of building a free but exclusively European society that emerged within the urban middle class and among small farmers.[20]

Early Twentieth-Century Patterns: 1900-1945

For both Canada and Australia, World War II marks an important dividing line between two important phases of 20th-century immigration. The first phase of large-scale immigration began at the turn of the century, continued until World War I, and resumed in the 1920s. (During the Great Depression and World War II, immigration reduced to a trickle.) In these years, immigration to Australia came almost entirely from Britain, whereas immigration to Canada came from Britain, the US, and Europe. Significant differences also emerged in the labour movements of the two countries and the institutional protections accorded workers. In both cases, developments of these years influenced the responses of local trade-union movements to later arriving immigrants.

The success of the White Australia policy resulted in a highly homogenous Australian workforce and labour movement dominated by British immigrants and their offspring. During the early decades of the 20th century, immigration was even more firmly dominated by Anglo-Celtics than previously, and non-Europeans were almost entirely excluded. Small numbers of Italians, Greeks, and other Europeans did arrive, mostly in the 1920s and 1930s and largely in response to the admissions restrictions introduced in the US in the early 1920s. Some were also escaping fascism at home. But their numbers were too small to prevent a further homogenization of the Australian population. (For example, the proportion of the Australian population from non-Anglophone and Asian countries respectively fell from 3.7 per cent and 1.2 per cent in 1901 to only 1.9 per cent and 0.3 per cent in 1947.[21]) The labour movement continued to oppose immigration in general, and assisted and contract migration as well as "foreign" immigrants in particular. Some challenges to the racist orthodoxy of White Australia emerged in the 1920s from

[19]Quinlan and Lever-Tracy, "From labour market exclusion to industrial solidarity."
[20]Quinlan and Lever-Tracey, "From labour market exclusion to industrial solidarity."
[21]Quinlan and Lever-Tracey, "From labour market exclusion to industrial solidarity," 169.

left-wing circles. It provoked bitter battles between progressive internationalist and conservative nationalist elements within the labour movement, but remained a minority position. In 1930 the Australian Council of Trade Unions declared its continuing allegiance to White Australia.[22]

It was thus in the context of a homogenous labour movement, a geographic isolation that encouraged local solutions, and the growing political importance of the ALP, that the early 20th century witnessed critical developments in terms of labour market regulation and workers' protections. The great maritime, pastoral, and mining strikes of the 1890s and the rising power of the ALP were catalysts for the introduction of compulsory arbitration in the various Australian states. At the federal level, a deal struck between the ALP and protectionists led to the simultaneous introduction of laws providing for immigration restriction, tariff protection, and compulsory arbitration. The arbitration system helped to bolster union membership, although this effect has frequently been exaggerated.[23] By 1920 union density in Australia was amongst the highest in the world and remained comparatively high until the mid-1980s.[24]

These institutional changes placed important restrictions on employers' ability to exploit immigrants via indentures/contracts or establish low-wage ghettoes, and Australia's restrictionist immigration policy made the immigrant issue a less than salient one. Once Anglo-Celtic immigrants were living in Australia, they were seen as unproblematic by the unions, as in earlier periods. Trade unions opposed European immigration, especially southern Europeans. Those who came faced racist hostility, though the response was limited by their small numbers, restricted employment in sugar-cane cutting, mining, market gardens, and fruit shops, and rapid tendency towards self-employment and employment by compatriots. But overt clashes did break out, for example, between local unionists and Italian, Slav, and others in the metalliferous mines of Broken Hill and Kalgoorie. In the Queensland sugar industry local unions reacted bitterly to the recruitment of indentured/contract Italian sugar cane cutters, whom they saw as an extension of cheap indentured Pacific island and Asian workers. Unlike Asians, Europeans were not excluded from union membership. But given their contract labour status, local worker hostility, and the failure of unions to seek their allegiance, few joined unions. Some were used as strikebreakers, for example, in the sugar strike of 1911 and at South Johnstone in 1927. Far from passive pawns of management, however, Italian immigrants did occasionally engage in militant action, as, for example, in 1934-35, when they played a leading role in a rank-and-file revolt against the Australian Workers' Union and a successful campaign to eliminate Weil's Disease

[22]Quinlan and Lever-Tracey, "From labour market exclusion to industrial solidarity," 170.
[23]Michael Quinlan and Margaret Gardner, "Researching Industrial Relations History: The Developent of a Database on Australian Trade Unions, 1825-1900," *Labour History*, 66, (1994) 90-113; also see Bray and Rouillard in this volume.
[24]*Ibid.*

by firing cane prior to harvesting. In Sydney and Melbourne, Italian anti-fascist groups forged links with the left wing of the labour movement. Still, despite the links (and the ready acceptance of Chinese refugees into unions during World War II), the number of non-Anglophone immigrants within was too small to bring about any shift in racist attitudes of Australian unions and their political allies until after the war.[25]

In Canada, the early 20th century brought mass immigration and marked the start of the ethnic diversification of the population and workforce. Some 2.5 million immigrants entered Canada between 1900 and 1914; of these, close to 1 million were from Britain, more than 750,000 from the US, and more than 500,000 were continental Europeans.[26] Immigration to western Canada was a major feature of these years and helped make the prairies one of the most ethnically diverse and economically dynamic regions of the country. The majority of these immigrants were English-speaking, but considerable numbers of Germans, Scandinavians, and eastern Europeans also settled. The latter included ethnic Ukrainians, Hungarians, Poles, and ethno-religious sects like the Doukhobors and Mennonites, from the Russian and Austria-Hungarian empires. Mostly midwestern farmers, the Americans included "ethnic Americans," that is, US-born descendants of earlier European immigrants, including Scandinavians and Germans. Official restrictions on Asian admissions and the deceitful, stalling techniques of immigration bureaucrats loathe to admit African-American farmers kept these and other racial minorities to a minimum.[27]

The timing and ethnic character of this migration was due to global factors well beyond Canadian influence — for example, spreading industrial capitalism and persistent unfavourable land tenure systems pushing out Europe's rural artisans and peasants, the closing of the American frontier, and favourable world wheat prices. But also important was the Canadian government's efforts to attract peasant families from central and eastern Europe. Ethnic tolerance went hand-in-hand with economic self-interest: these normally "undesirable" ethnic minorities could be put to good national use by homesteading the west and enlarging the domestic con-

[25]S. Macintyre and R. Mitchell, eds., *The Foundations of Arbitration* (Melbourne 1989); M. Quinlan, "Immigrant Workers"; J. Armstrong, "The Sugar Strike, 1911," in D.J. Murphy, ed., *The Big Strikes* (St Lucia 1983); K.H. Kennedy, "The South Johnstone Strike, 1927," in *The Big Strikes*; D. Menghetti, "The Weil's Disease Strike, 1935," in *The Big Strikes*; C. Lever-Tracy and G. Kitay, "Working owners and employees in Chinese restaurants in Australia," *International Contributions to Labour Studies*, 1 (1991), 87-111.

[26]Donald Kerr, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada, vol. III: Addressing the Twentieth Century, 1891-1961* (Toronto 1990), plate 17.

[27]Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto 1984); Harold Martin Troper, *Only Farmers Need Apply: Official Canadian Government Encouragement of Immigrants from the United States, 1896-1911* (Toronto 1972).

sumer markets. By the inter-war years, however, efforts were made to reduce the volume of less desirable immigrants, including southern and eastern Europeans.[28]

Not all the immigrants went west, however. Many newcomers, including Italians and eastern Europeans, found jobs in the labour-intensive resource industries like mining and logging, in railway construction and track maintenance, and in the factories and on public works projects of cities. Eastern-European Jews provided skilled and semi-skilled labour in the needle trades. Canada's railway magnates and major industrialists were powerful advocates of immigration. Indeed, their desire for a cheap and docile labour force and fierce commitment to union-busting prompted them to ignore legal prohibitions on the importation of "foreign" contract labour and to recruit low-waged immigrant labour, especially non-English speaking immigrants, to replenish their workforces and, on occasion, act as strikebreakers. Particularly among European male workers, sojourning was a common pattern in these years; tens of thousands of Italian, Slav, and other male migrants filled seasonal resource and frontier jobs in an effort to augment dwindling farm and family incomes back home. Labour agents hired by the railways, industrialists, and shipping companies helped orchestrate the movement. For some, sojourning translated into the permanent settlement of families and the rise of early ethnic settlements.[29] This choice was denied Chinese men, however, many of whom became de facto "bachelor" workers because of the official prohibitions imposed of the entry of wives and children. (The head taxes first introduced in 1886 were followed by the highly restrictive Chinese Immigration Act of 1923.) Concentrated largely in British Columbia, Chinese men worked in the resource industries and the service sector of cities and towns. Admission of Japanese and South Asians, particularly East Indians, was also seriously restricted, but by bureaucratic means and international diplomacy. A seemingly insatiable demand for domestic servants meant that throughout the 20th century, even during virtual closed-door periods like the Great Depression, government and company-sponsored or subsidized migration of immigrant female domestic workers continued. Lone (though not necessarily unmarried) women from Britain dominated the early 20th-century streams, as they had in the 19th century. But by the inter-war years, growing numbers of Europeans, especially Finns, took jobs as immigrant maids in private homes (rural or urban) or as cleaning staff in offices and public institutions.[30]

By the time that Canada was accepting a substantial influx of non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants, the local labour movement had already gone through its critical,

[28]Donald Avery, *Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrant Workers, 1896-1994* (Toronto 1995).
[29]Avery, *Reluctant Host*; Nicholas De Maria Harney, ed., *From the shores of hardship: Italians in Canada, Essays by Robert F. Harney* (Welland, ON 1993).
[30]Reg Whitaker, *Canadian Immigration Policy Since Confederation* (Ottawa 1991); Marilyn Barber, *Immigrant Domestic Servants in Canada* (Ottawa 1991); Varpu Lindstrom, *Defiant Sisters: A Social History of Finnish Immigrant Women in Canada* (Toronto 1988).

formative stages. It was made up largely of exclusive craft unions and dominated by an Anglo-Celtic leadership and membership deeply resentful of "foreign" labour. Racial-ethnic cleavages, patterns of sojourning, and racism fragmented the early 20th-century Canadian labour movement. Although ostracized by the labour movement and in some cases disinterested in protracted union campaigns because of their sojourner status, non-Anglophone immigrant workers were not necessarily docile. Their activism took several forms. In steel-making factories, mines, logging camps, and on railway sites, Italian, Ukrainian, Polish, and other European workers engaged in extra-union forms of resistance, downing tools or orchestrating other work slow-downs and stoppages in protest over unpaid wages, brutal foremen, and other grievances. Though the strikers were men, they often had active support from wives and kin within the emerging immigrant enclaves. These "flashes of rebellion" were short-lived and usually did not translate into permanent links with the established labour movement. Nor did another type of response to class exploitation — taking flight or contract jumping.[31]

From 1905 to 1920, foreign labourers in Canada's resource industries, harvesting, and track-laying, were drawn to the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies), a militant industrial union founded in Chicago which sought to organize unskilled, itinerant, and immigrant workers across the continent. The IWW aimed ultimately at revolution, but also fought for immediate improvements in working and living conditions, as well as wage gains. The Wobblies' following in Canada was overwhelmingly male and concentrated in the West, where they staged impressive free speech demonstrations, marches of the unemployed, and organized a wide range of workers, including loggers, cooks/waiters, railway construction crews, street excavators, and teamsters. Sensitive to language differences and the immediate concerns of sojourners, the IWW recruited foreign-speaking workers, organized ethnic locals, and led some major strikes. In spring and summer 1912, almost 9,000 railway construction navvies employed by the Canadian Northern and Grand Truck Pacific in British Columbia's interior took part in impressive but ultimately unsuccessful IWW-organized strikes for higher wages and better working conditions. Ultimately, the impact of the IWW was limited and its vision faltered in the face of severe state repression, which reached a fever pitch during the "red scare" of the World War I era.[32]

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[31]Avery, *Reluctant Hosts*; Ian Radforth, *Bushworkers and Bosses: Logging in Northern Ontario, 1900-1980* (Toronto 1987); Craig Heron, *Working in Steel: The Early Years in Canada, 1883-1935* (Toronto 1988); Orest Martynowych, *Ukrainians in Canada: The Formative Years, 1891-1924* (Edmonton 1991).
[32]A.R. McCormack, "The Industrial Workers of the World in Western Canada, 1905-1914," Canadian Historical Association, *Historical Papers* (1975), 167-91; Mark Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows: The Industrial Workers of the World in British Columbia* (Vancouver 1990).

A minority of immigrants to Canada brought with them left-wing radical ideologies developed in their homeland. Ukrainians, Jews, and Finns, for example, provided an important source of radical leadership to disgruntled compatriots within particular industries and communities, led union campaigns, occasionally joined forces with Canadian and British immigrant workers in class action, and helped forge links with the established Canadian labour movement. Displaying a dual commitment to both class and ethnic loyalties, Finns in northern Ontario's logging industry, Jews in the needle trades of Montréal, Toronto, and Winnipeg, and Ukrainian, Italian, and other European workers in western Canadian mining districts earned a reputation as "dangerous foreigners." This period witnessed real instances of cross-ethnic solidarity among Canadian, British, and European work- ers. The ranks of Canada's socialist parties were peopled by a mixture of immigrant radicals, though the parties tended to be headed by British socialists. The women of the ethnic left, especially Jews and Finns, contributed to these leftist movements, most notably by organizing women workers and consumer boycotts. Efforts at mounting a feminist challenge, however, received at best modest support from comrades, male and female alike.[33]

During the early 20th century, bonds of solidarity were even temporarily forged between the Canadian labour movement and Asian workers. The white-dominated Canadian labour movement continued to pursue a strategy of excluding Asian workers and in BC, where Asians were concentrated, white unions commonly adopted racist positions — for example, support for campaigns to boycott Chinese laundries and other businesses, and to replace Asian labour with white labour. However, during two periods of heightened labour radicalism — the World War I era and the Depression — Chinese, Japanese, and East Indian workers, usually in combination with white workers, participated in strikes, mostly in the lumber industry and fisheries, and some of the Asian workers' issues (equal pay, eliminat- ing the "Oriental" contract labour system) were placed on the labour movement's agenda. Instances of cross-racial class solidarities were nevertheless exceptions to the general patterns outlined above.[34]

In sharp contrast to the extensive industrial relations system extant in Australia by 1920, only a minority of Canada's workers were protected by unions and

[33] Avery, *Reluctant Host*; Radforth, *Bushworkers and Bosses*; Martynowych, *Ukrainians in Canada*; Lindstrom, *Defiant Sisters*; Ruth A. Frager, *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish labour Movement of Toronto, 1900-1939* (Toronto 1992); Carmella Patrias, *Patriots and Proletarians: the Politicization of Hungarian Immigrants in Canada* (Kingston 1994); Allen Seager, "Class, Ethnicity and Politics in the Alberta Coal Fields, 1905-1945," in Dirk Hoerder, ed., *"Struggle a hard battle": Essays on Working-Class Immigrants* (Dekalb, IL 1984); Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950* (Toronto 1989); Janice Newton, *The Feminist Challenge to the Canadian Left, 1900-1918* (Kingston 1995).
[34] Gillian Creese, "Exclusion or solidarity? Vancouver Workers Confront the 'Oriental Problem,'" *BC Studies*, 80 (1988), 24-51.

collective agreements during the early decades of the 20th century. During the 1930s and especially the 1940s, a far greater proportion of Canada's workforce became organized as a result of a major change in the labour movement — the rise and spread of industrial unionism. As in the US, the success of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) was due largely to the militancy of rank-and-file workers in steel, auto, rubber, and other mass production industries determined to fight for first contracts. In some industries, notably the electrical goods and pockets of the automobile production, women members were numerous. The CIO planted roots during a period when immigration was minimal or non-existent, and so immigration was not particularly an issue in these campaigns. Still, the organization of large numbers of factory operatives would have included many foreign-born workers, though not recent newcomers.[35]

Post-1945 Patterns

During the 30 years following World War II both Australia and Canada witnessed prolonged economic growth, industrial expansion, high employment, and mass migration. Post-war governments supported platforms that linked full employment, economic growth, and population-building through migration. Immigration to both countries increasingly came from a wider range of source countries than previously (including, eventually, so-called non-white countries). But given Australia's more firmly entrenched pro-British policy, the impact of the post-1945 migration of non-Anglophone immigrants on the country's population and workforce was more immediate and dramatic. The labour movements in both countries grappled with the issue of incorporating rather than excluding immigrants. Once again, the Australian situation was more dramatic, largely because its more extensive industrial relations system made it easier to incorporate immigrants into trade unions.

Australia became committed to a policy of mass immigration somewhat sooner than Canada. Population building for economic purposes was initially a development of wartime reconstruction planning conducted by Australia's Labor government, concerned as it was with the vulnerability the war had exposed. It was clear to immigration planners that reliance on British sources would be inadequate and that Australia would have to draw from a wider range of source countries than had hitherto been the case.[36] In Canada, the post-war Liberal government crafted a policy of mass migration in the late 1940s, moving hesitantly both because of doubts about the country's ability to sustain the war-induced economic expansion and because of widespread concerns about the greater ethnic diversity that a policy of mass migration would almost inevitably entail. But once the post-war economic boom was clearly evident, the Liberal government became increasingly committed to expanding Canada's population by means of immigration from both traditional

[35]Irving Martin Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist Party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour, 1935-1956* (Toronto 1973).
[36]Quinlan and Lever-Tracy, "From labour market exclusion," 172.

and new sources.[37] Long-standing policy commitments to mass migration are evident from immigration statistics; during the 40 years after 1950, average annual immigration to Australia was about 113,000 and to Canada 139,000.[38]

The ethnic diversity of the new arrivals to both countries was striking. In the late 1940s, Baltic and eastern Europeans, many of them Displaced Persons (that is, refugees from war-torn areas and from Communist regimes), began to alter the ethnic mix of the two nations. During the 1950s Canadian and Australian recruiters turned increasingly to southern Europe, and family and village-based chain migration from Italy and Greece continued strong for many years. In the 1960s and 1970s, Australia's recruiting was extended to Yugoslavia, Spain, and other southern European countries, and the borders of "Europe" were slowly widened to include immigrants from Turkey and the Middle East. With the elimination of explicitly racial criteria from Canada's selection processes in the 1960s, immigrants of colour were drawn from the Caribbean, India, and Africa. From the late 1970s, many newcomers from Asia settled in Australia and Canada, further adding to this diversity. A few Canadian cities, namely Toronto, Vancouver, and Montréal, were profoundly affected by the changes. The transformation in Australia was even more marked by the 1980s. In global terms, the relative size and ethnic diversity of Australia's immigrant population was probably only matched by Israel and Switzerland.[39]

The Australian labour movement proved much more supportive of post-war mass immigration than its Canadian counterpart. Critical to the Australian union movement's accepting mass migration were commitments on the part of successive federal governments to maintain full employment, to ensure immigrant workers received award wages and conditions, to provide a system of tripartite regulation of skill recognition, and to include leading union officials on immigration policy boards. Having committed itself to an accord on mass immigration, the Australian union movement could not exclude immigrant workers from its ranks. By contrast, union officials had little influence on the making of Canadian immigration policy, and they remained critical of its fundamentals. In occasional appearances before policy-making bodies, the central labour organizations always cautioned that immigrant admissions be tied more closely to increased job opportunities in Canada, that immigrant labour not be permitted to undercut Canadian labour, and that employers train more Canadians for skilled positions, rather than allocating

[37]Whitaker, *Canadian Immigration Policy*; Harold Troper, "Canada's Immigration Policy since 1945," *International Journal*, 48 (1993), 255-81.

[38]William L. Marr, "Post-war Canadian Immigration Patterns," in Steven Globerman, ed., *The Immigration Dilemma* (Vancouver 1992), 17.

[39]Anthony H. Richmond and Jerzy Zubrzycki, *Immigrants in Canada and Australia*, 2 vols. (Toronto 1984); Freda Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration: Public Policy and Public Concern* (Kingston 1972); Alan G. Green, *Immigration and the Postwar Canadian Economy* (Toronto 1976); Jane Badets and W.L. Chiu, *Canada's Changing Immigrant Population* (Ottawa 1994).

the best jobs to foreign-trained newcomers. The Québec nationalist labour central, the Confédération des Syndicats Nationaux, tended to express similar reservations about mass immigration, as well as doubts about whether the immigrants would assimilate to the Francophone culture of Québec.[40]

Post-war immigrants to both countries entered a wide range of occupations and industries, but those from southern Europe and those of non-European background became concentrated in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs in manufacturing, construction, and certain transport and service positions. There emerged a dynamic and complex pattern of ethnic- and ethnic/gender-based segmentation in labour markets. By the late 1950s, male non-Anglophone immigrant workers constituted the bulk of the workforce in Australia's steelworks and in many workplaces manufacturing motor vehicles, glass, rubber, and metal products.[41] Italian and later Portuguese male immigrants came to dominate sectors of the construction industry in several large Canadian cities, while Greek men in the same centres found a place in the restaurant industry and some factories. Immigrant men from the Caribbean who came to Canada as landed immigrants worked in the service industry and in product fabricating and processing plants. In both countries, immigrant women got work in light manufacturing (clothing, textiles, footwear, etc.) and in the service industry (notably in cleaning and catering).[42] In general, these men and women held the dirtiest, most dangerous, most physically demanding, least-skilled, least-secure, and least-paid jobs. This happened not as a result of the establishment of formal, ethnically-based entry barriers, but rather through a complex set of largely informal processes — the native-born deserting these jobs for the expanding white-collar/service sector, the use of language skill as a basis for promotion, and the relegation of the worst high-turnover jobs to successive waves of recently arrived immigrants who possessed the least knowledge, choice, and bargaining power.

[40]Avery, *Reluctant Host*, 150, 180, 192; Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration*, 350. See "Submission by the Canadian Labour Congress to the Special Joint Committee on Immigration Policy and the 'Green Paper' on Immigration," June 1975, on file at the Industrial Relations Centre Library, University of Toronto; and Confédération des syndicats nationaux, "Memoire sur le politique d'immigration au Canada — Comite special mixte du Sénat et de la Chambre des Communes en vue d'etudier le Libre Blanc sur l'immigration," (n.d. 1966?).
[41]J. Collins, *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land: Australia's Post-war Immigration* (Sydney 1985); Lever-Tracy and Quinlan, *Divided Working Class?*; I. Campbell, R. Fincher, and M. Webber, "Labour Market Segments and Segmentation Processes in Australia," paper present to TASA Conference, Murdoch University, December 1991; C. Alcorso, *Non-English Speaking Background Immigrant Women in the Workforce* (Wollongong 1991); C. Alcorso and G. Harrison, *Blue Collar and Beyond: the Experiences of Non-English Speaking Background Women in the Australian Labour Force* (Canberra 1993).
[42]Avery, *Reluctant Host*, ch. 9; Jeffrey Reitz, Liviana Calzavara, Donna Dasko, *Ethnic Inequality and Segmentation in Jobs* (Toronto 1981); Richmond and Zubrzycki, *Immigrants in Canada and Australia*.

Upon arrival in Canada the great majority of immigrants have acquired landed status which allows for the possibility of permanent settlement, future citizenship status, and various rights, but some people have come to Canada on work visas and their rights have been strictly limited. In 1973 the Canadian government began to admit some immigrant women from the Caribbean on temporary work visas that tied them to specific jobs in domestic service. The women's ability to insist on decent working conditions and fair treatment were severely constrained by fears of deportation, and the domestic servant's usual means of protest — moving to another job — was formally blocked. Mobilization by the women themselves and by left women's groups eventually won some modifications to this particular form of exploitation, although many immigrant women from the Caribbean continue to be locked in low-wage cleaning jobs because of informal racial barriers. Beginning in the 1960s, farmers in Canada have hired on a seasonal basis male workers from the Caribbean and Mexico, some of whom were illegals tolerated by Immigration officials, while others entered on short-term work visas. Pay and conditions in this sector, where stoop labour is prevalent, have been bad enough to put off Canadian job seekers even in times of high unemployment, but the jobs continue to draw migrant workers, many of whom return to particular farms year after year.[43]

The integration of immigrant workers into the labour movements of Australia and Canada has proceeded along contrasting lines. Despite some initial fears on the part of Australian trade unions, non-Anglophone immigrant workers did not demonstrate any abnormal level of hostility to unionism. The strength of the Australian union movement, the pervasive award system, and a recognition by federal governments in the 1940s and 1950s that anti-union behaviour or exploitation of immigrant workers would threaten the whole immigration programme, helped to accomplish the ready acceptance of immigrants into union ranks. The centralization of the award system was advantageous in the sense that the linking of movements in wages and conditions at national, industry, and occupational levels restricted the capacity of employers to use immigrants to develop low-wage pockets. Further, unlike minimum standards legislation used in Canada, awards were subject to regular review and unions took a direct role in enforcement. Many industries in which post-war immigrants were concentrated, such as manufacturing and construction, were by and large, strongholds of unionism. As a result, union

[43]Patricia Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege: Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940s-1990s* (Toronto 1993); Makeda Silvera, *Silenced: Makeda Silvera talks to working class West Indian women about their lives and struggle as domestic workers in Canada* (Toronto 1983); Barber, *Immigrant Domestic Servants*, 24-5; Vic Satchewich, *Racism and the Incorporation of Foreign Labour: Farm Labour Migration to Canada since 1945* (London 1991).

membership density amongst foreign-speaking workers consistently exceeded that of both the Australian-born and immigrants from English-speaking backgrounds.[44]

The largely unproblematic nature of immigrant absorption into the fabric of Australian unions also represented the result of a positive set of choices on the part of immigrants themselves. While there is evidence of immigrant workers either joining or being involved in spontaneous industrial action — sometimes in direct defiance of union leaders — from the early 1950s, immigrant workers did not show any real inclination to establish their own unions. The few known efforts such as the New Citizens Council and Industrial Workers' Union of Australia, were conspicuous failures. While such bodies drew a strong backlash from unions, they also failed because they were unable to draw meaningful support from their target group.[45]

In Canada, by contrast, countless immigrants — especially foreign-speaking immigrants and people of colour — have not readily found a place in the labour movement. To be sure, immigrant experiences have varied greatly across regions and industries and even within industries. A decentralized labour relations system emphasizing plant-level bargaining has been a contributing factor. Upon arrival a large proportion of foreign-speaking immigrants and people of colour were compelled to take low-paying jobs in non-union sectors, such as in restaurants and many light manufacturing plants. Unions in Canada generally had little success organizing such workplaces; the failure of some unionization drives fostered an even wider pattern of neglect. Thus, contacts between many immigrant workers and the Canadian labour movement simply never developed.

Where craft unions had closed-shop provisions in their collective agreements with Canadian employers, the tendency had been for unionists to guard jealously the job opportunities for their own people. In the Toronto construction industry, for example, the trades unions excluded Italian immigrants during the early 1950s, with the result that the newcomers congregated in the rapidly expanding, but unorganized, residential construction sector. From that base many southern Europeans eventually gained access to unionized jobs in the building trades, and it is charged that they in turn excluded recent immigrants of different backgrounds, especially immigrants of colour.[46]

By contrast, in many workplaces in Canada's mass-production industries and in the public sector, union security provisions permitted employers to hire at large,

[44]Lever-Tracy and Quinlan, *Divided Working Class?*; L. Foster, A. Marshall, and L.S. Williams, "Discrimination and the Labor Market: Attainments of Immigrants in Australia," *American Journal of Sociology*, 97 (1991), 721-59.

[45]Lever-Tracy and Quinlan, *Divided Working Class?*, 128, 137.

[46]Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montréal 1992), 166-7; Bromley Armstrong, "Remarks," in Harish Jain, Barbara M. Pitts, Gloria DeSantis, eds., *Equality For All: National Conference on Racial Equality in the Workplace, Retrospect and Prospect* (Hamilton 1991), 489-92.

but employees were required by law to pay union dues; most workers joined unions as a matter of course. There is little evidence that immigrant workers objected to these arrangements, and thus their entry into industrial and public sector unions in Canada was largely unproblematic.

In post-war Canada, as in Australia, immigrant workers who joined unions opted to belong to the mainstream unions; seldom have immigrants founded their own organizations. To be sure, some workers who were shunned by exclusive craft unionists formed competing unions among their own ranks. In the mid-1950s Italian immigrants in the Toronto construction trades built their own organizations, but these unions soon declined or were absorbed into mainstream ones. Nevertheless, they had succeeded in cajoling building-trades unions into broadening their memberships at least locally. In British Columbia, East Indian farm workers formed the Canadian Farmworkers' Union in 1979. By drawing on class and cultural solidarity they launched several strikes and won collective agreements providing for improved wages and conditions. Their efforts to extend their organization to Ontario, by organizing seasonal Mexican and Caribbean sojourners, proved a failure, however.[47]

Unlike Canadian scholars, Australian researchers have attempted to assess the extent to which the behaviour of immigrant unionists has corresponded to or differed from that of other workers. Historical case study analysis indicates that it was the direct employment experiences of immigrant workers in Australia (including the strategies pursued by employers and unions), not some generalized notion of pre-migration culture, that largely explains the industrial behaviour of immigrants.[48] Thus, in situations where unions and employers favoured centralized dealings, leaving few avenues for rank-and-file involvement, this was reflected in immigrant worker behaviour. And where unions pursued decentralized relations, immigrant workers proved militant like their non-immigrant union brothers and sisters. In one large glass factory, for instance, Greek immigrants belonging to the union of production workers (which favoured highly centralized dealings) were industrially inactive, while those belonging to the more militant craft unions were fully involved in the activities of these unions. Australian studies relying on a survey methodology confirm the pattern; with the exception of language classes on the job, the industrial issues that most concern immigrant workers are identical to those of interest to their Australian-born counterparts.[49] These and other studies

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[47]Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People*, ch.7; Avery, *Reluctant Host*, 208.

[48]Quinlan, "Immigrant Workers"; Lever-Tracy and Quinlan, *Divided Working Class?*; Quinlan and Lever-Tracy, "Immigrant Workers, Trade Unions and Industrial Struggle: an Overview of the Australian Experience, 1945-85," *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 9 (1988) 7-41.

[49]L. Nicolaou, *Australian Unions and Immigrant Workers* (Sydney 1991); S. Bertone and G. Griffin, *Immigrant Workers and Trade Unions* (Canberra 1992); G. Hillali, *Non-English Speaking Background Immigrant Women Workers in the Industrial Relations System in Queensland*, M.Admin thesis, Griffith University, 1993.

have revealed that although immigrant workers tended to hold positive attitudes to unionism in general they were often critical of the particular union to which they belonged — a response related to the lack of effort that that union had made on their behalf.[50] Such observations make it difficult to argue that culture — or rather, culture divorced from class experience — has much relevance to industrial behaviour.

Unions in both Canada and Australia have at times shown interest in issues relating to immigrants within union ranks, and that attention has heightened in recent years as immigrants themselves have forced the matter. Amid labour's Cold War during the late 1940s and early 1950s, unionists in both countries engaged in confrontations over the arrival of Displaced Persons.[51] Left-wingers objected to the flooding of their ranks with refugees whose European experiences had made them staunch anti-Communists. Right-wingers rallied to win the support of allies who would help to marginalize the Communist activists within the labour movements. In Australia unions representing semi-skilled iron, rail, and building workers provided multilingual information to their immigrant membership and a few appointed immigrant organizers. However, these practices often lapsed, both as a result of less concern with anti-union sentiment amongst immigrant workers, and as the Cold War conflict within the Australian labour movement waned.

As the workforces of both countries diversified greatly in the 1970s, issues of concern to immigrants were increasingly forced onto union agendas. In Australia immigrant workers were involved in a series of industrial struggles during that decade. The award system may have delivered basic protections but it did little to curb the overbearing behaviour of supervisors in many workplaces or the remoteness of some union leaders. In the early 1970s this growing sense of anger combined with labour shortages arising from a cut to the immigration intake to produce a general wave of rank-and-file militancy. A 1973 strike at the Ford Broadmeadows plant in Melbourne, for instance, demonstrated the need for both management and unions to revise their positions. The outcome of these struggles was significant change in a number of industries in management practices (such as increased pay, more rest-breaks, designated relief teams, etc. in the vehicle building industry). The message was reinforced by a series of immigrant worker conferences and by a number of foreign-speaking immigrants winning senior office in unions. Many unions sought to build firmer bridges with their foreign-born membership by providing multilingual information and services, appointing immigrant organizers, encouraging immigrants to take on official positions, or establishing special committees. This was especially the case with those unions that recognized that

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[50]See Callus, Quinlan, and Rimmer cited in Lever-Tracy and Quinlan, *Divided Working Class?*; Alcorso, *Non-English Speaking Background Immigrant Women.*
[51]Avery, *Reluctant Host*, ch. 7; Milda Danys, *DP: Lithuanian Immigration to Canada after the Second World War* (Toronto 1986); Reginald Whitaker, *Double Standard.*

their own organizational survival was tied to winning the loyalty of a substantial immigrant membership.

Similar institutional innovations with regard to the immigrant presence and particularly racial minorities were evident in unions in Canada, and the pace of change increased in the 1980s and early 1990s. In Canada's largest cities especially, people of colour (the overwhelming majority of whom were immigrants) immersed in anti-racist politics did much to raise awareness of immigrant and racial issues within the labour movement. The fact that some governments at the national, provincial, and local levels wanted to be seen to be promoting multiculturalism and employment equity has helped to provide a context where minority issues can sometimes be effectively raised (though resolution is another matter). A case study of a 1987 struggle by public-sector workers in Toronto illustrates the ways in which minority-group activism could pay off for workers.[52] Unionized, full-time nursing assistants, the majority of whom were black and Asian immigrant women, took action when the government of Metropolitan Toronto attempted to replace full-time vacant positions with part-time casual help in homes for the aged. Union activists drew on support from seniors and from immigrant communities, and they presented the employer initiative as a set-back for employment equity on the grounds that many black and Asian women would be adversely affected. Metropolitan Toronto authorities, committed to a policy of equity, were sufficiently embarrassed to back down with the result that full-time jobs were preserved.

The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) provides an example of the ways in which a Canadian labour organization has dealt with issues relating to immigrants and race. With much fanfare and a large financial contribution from the provincial government, the OFL in 1981 hosted a convention and launched a media campaign under the slogan "Racism Hurts Everyone." Within the OFL in the 1980s there developed the Ontario Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, which was open to all non-whites and raised issues relating to discrimination generated not only by employers at the workplace, but also among workers and unionists themselves. In 1985 the OFL produced a guide for unionists *Steps to Resolving Racial Conflict in the Workplace* and it promoted the formation of local human rights committees. The following year it held another conference, "Building the Participation of Workers of Colour in Our Unions." Soon a full-time staff position was created to handle human rights issues, and the OFL Executive Board was increased by two seats, one of which had to be filled by a person of colour. It was the first affirmative action seat for people of colour within the Canadian labour movement. Beginning in 1988 the OFL, assisted financially by the provincial government, developed and began administering the largest union literacy program in North America. To be sure the OFL has been highly active in responding to the challenges relating to immigration and race, but several large unions and several of the other central

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[52]Ronnie Leah, "Linking the Struggles: Racism, Feminism and the Union Movement," in Jesse Vorst, *et al.*, eds., *Race, Class, Gender: Bonds and Barriers* (Toronto 1991), 169-200.

organizations within the Canadian labour movements have taken similar kinds of initiatives.[53]

Institutional safeguards and growing union sensitivity to the language and other difficulties of immigrant workers have afforded only a limited if nonetheless essential level of protection. In both countries many recently arrived immigrants continued to find jobs such as those in the fast-food industry, domestic service, outwork in the needle trades, and fruit and vegetable picking, where conditions and pay have been poor and exploitation pervasive. In Australia, even where awards applied, as in the case of restaurant workers and fruit-pickers, widespread evasion was often common in the absence of effective enforcement by unions and government inspectorates. Because so many immigrants to Canada and Australia work at dangerous jobs, they have suffered enormously from accidents. Of course, notwithstanding frequent spurious charges, immigrant workers do not have a propensity to make disproportionate claims on the compensation system — quite the reverse.[54]

The economic downturn and restructuring of the past fifteen or twenty years have had especially adverse effects on countless immigrants in both countries. Manufacturing plant closings resulting from global competition and tariff reductions in the textile and clothing industries have wiped out the jobs of thousands of immigrant workers. Even those employed within the public sector were located in construction, maintenance, hospital laundries, catering, and cleaning jobs which bore the brunt of direct staff cuts, privatization, and contracting out/outsourcing. Efforts to enhance productivity through technological innovation and changes to work organization also affected recent immigrants, not only through reduced labour demand but also by placing increased skill and literacy demands on those workers who retained their jobs. The Canadian evidence is perfectly clear. The ability of immigrants to work for some years and thus narrow the wage gap between themselves and the Canadian-born has decreased steadily and substantially during

[53]Julie White, *Sisters and Solidarity: Women and Unions in Canada* (Toronto 1993), 218-24; Brenda Wall and Winnie Ng, "Linking Language and Labour," *Our Times* (February 1988), 23-6.

[54]M. Oppen, "Structural Discrimination against Foreigners and Work-Related Health Risks," *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 9 (1988), 43-64; C.R. Williams and M. Quinlan, "Social Science Research and Occupational Health and Safety," *Labour and Industry*, 1 (1988), 588-94; M. Quinlan and P. Bohle, *Managing Occupational Health and Safety in Australia: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (Melbourne 1991); J. Blackett-Smith and A. Rubinstein, *Unlucky Dip: A Study of Discrimination in the Victoria Workers' Compensation System* (Brunswick 1985); C. Alcorso, "Migrants and the workers' compensation system: the basis of an ideology," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, 25 (1988), 46-65; Charles E. Reasons, Lois R. Ross, and Craig Patterson, *Assault on the Worker: Occupational Health and Safety in Canada* (Toronto 1981).

the past two decades. Many foreign-speaking and black immigrant workers are in danger of becoming a permanent underclass.[55]

The direction of change on the labour policy scene is generally to the detriment of many immigrants, too. In Canada the election of conservative-minded governments has led to a weakening of labour regulations and union protections in several jurisdictions. The "union-free" example of various southern US states has been an inspiration to regimes in Alberta and British Columbia, dimming the prospects of a secure future for many recent immigrants. In Australia, government restructuring of the awards system and the promotion of enterprise bargaining have had significant implications for immigrant workers from non-English-speaking backgrounds. Award restructuring was promoted as entailing the development of a more skilled and flexible workforce. Genuine multiskilling proved to be the exception rather than the rule. Even where it did occur the need to learn complex and variable tasks presented difficulties for immigrants with little command of written English and in many cases a limited education base in their own language. While some unions and employers addressed the issue in their agreements, positive outcomes have been patchy at best.[56] Changes to the award system and more recently the introduction of enterprise bargaining, including avenues for individual employment contracts (in some state systems) and non-union enterprise agreements (at both state and federal levels), have led to widespread instances of cost-cutting and work intensification by employers (through changes to work practices, payment systems, hours of work, and outsourcing/subcontracting).[57]

[55]A. Jamrozik, C. Boland, D. Stewart, *Immigrants and Occupational Welfare: Industry Restructuring and Its Effects on the Occupational Welfare of Immigrants from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds* (Canberra 1991); Quinlan and Lever-Tracy, "From labour market exclusion"; Hillali, *Non-English Speaking Background*; Leo Panitch and Donald Swartz, *The Assault on Trade Union Freedoms: From Wage Controls to Social Contract* (Toronto 1993); Michael Baker and Dwayne Benjamin, "The Performance of Immigrants in the Canadian Labour Market," *Journal of Labor Economics*, 12 (1994), 369-405; David E. Bloom, Gilles Grenier, Morley Gunderson, *The Changing Labor Market Position of Canadian Immigrants* (Cambridge, MA 1994).

[56]Anna Yeadman with C. Bradley, *NESB Migrant Women and Award Restructuring* (Canberra 1992); A. Jomrozik, C. Boland and D. Stewart, *Immigrants and Occupational Welfare: Industry Restructuring and Its Effects on the Occupational Welfare of Immigrants from Non English Speaking Backgrounds* (Canberra 1991); S. Bestone and G. Griffin, *Immigrant Workers and Trade Unions* (Canberra 1992); M. Morrissey, M. Uibden and C. Mitchell, *Immigration and Restructuring in the Illawarra* (Canberra 1992); R. Callus and M. Knox, *The Industrial Relations of Immigrant Employment* (Canberra 1993); Michael O'Donnell, "Lean Production: Best Practice for Non English Speaking Migrant Women Workers," in R. Callus and M. Schumacher, eds., *Current Research in Industrial Relations: Proceedings of the 8th AIRAANZ Conference* (Sydney 1994).

[57]L. Bennett, "Bargaining Away the Rights of the Weak: Non Union Agreements in the Federal Jurisdiction," in Paul Ronfeldt and Ron McCallum, eds., *Enterprise Bargaining, Trade Unions, and the Law* (Sydney 1995).

In the clothing trades — an area dominated by immigrant women workers, including recent arrivals — the combination of tariff reductions and changes to labour market regulation have led to a major shift towards outwork and small operators (and away from large factories). In turn, these changes have been associated with sweatshop conditions (with payments as low as $.50 a garment or $2 an hour — less than a quarter of the minimum award rate) and widespread breaches of industrial and occupational health and safety laws.[58]

Overall the trend toward enterprise bargaining has led to a diminution of working conditions amongst those workers, including many non-Anglophone immigrants, with little bargaining power. Particularly vulnerable are recently arrived and female non-English-speaking immigrants. Whatever faults they may have had, centralized awards reduced opportunities for ghettoizing immigrant workers into low wage pockets. It remains to be seen what overall impact Australia's recently elected conservative government will have on these and related developments, but early signs are not encouraging.

Conclusion

Canada and Australia are societies that have been fundamentally shaped by European invasion and successive waves of immigration. No persuasive account of the labour movement in either country can ignore the impact that immigration has wrought on the composition of the working class and preoccupations of workers, unions, and the varied political organizations they have sponsored. This paper has pointed both to complex experiences specific to each country and to the many similarities they shared. In explaining some key differences we have referred to institutional differences that parties — including unions themselves — helped shape and to "accidents" of geography and borders which, while beyond such shaping, nonetheless affected certain institutional differences. Most notably, it is clear that the greater isolation in the 19th and early 20th centuries of Australia from Europe and other centres of development such as the US enabled it to evolve a more independent set of institutions regulating the labour market. Even here, however, recent changes in, for example, transport technology and communications make geographical factors less relevant today.

Placing the experience of both countries in a broader context, it is apparent that immigration has had a paradoxical relationship with the labour movement. Although immigrants have been a source of union recruits, new ideas, and leaders, at the same time they on occasion constituted sources of concern, chauvinism, and division within the union movements and in the wider societies. The experiences of both Canada and Australia highlight these paradoxes. In both countries immigrants made a critical contribution to the union movement. In the 19th century, during the crucial formative period of unionism, Anglo-Celtic immigrants made

[58]Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia, *The Hidden Costs of Fashion: Report on the National Outwork Information Campaign* (Sydney 1995).

up a significant proportion of overall membership and occupied many positions of leadership. These same unions were generally hostile to the risk of levels of immigration that would depress wages and working conditions in small but privileged labour markets. They were also hostile to ethnically distinct groups of immigrants, especially those from outside Europe, such as the Chinese. In both countries the industrial and emerging political arms of the labour movement sought to restrict immigration, notably by excluding non-European immigrants. The Australian labour movement was more successful at achieving labour market exclusion. Being somewhat better organized industrially and politically, it was able to use both federation and racism to forge some strategic political alliances. And the very remoteness of Australia from Europe made government immigration assistance more critical and selective.

What we want to stress here is that the impulses or goals of the labour movement *viz à viz* immigration were similar in both countries, but that a series of historically contingent factors have, on some occasions, led to rather different outcomes. This finding serves as a warning to those who would seek to overgeneralize or oversimplify the relationship of immigration to the labour movement, advancing some overarching thesis of capital serving racism, for instance. The evolution of the relationship between immigration and labour briefly summarized below reinforces our point.

Returning to our comparison of the two countries, it was argued that after 1900 immigration restriction, tariff protection, and the introduction of compulsory arbitration enabled the Australian union movement to cement its position within the labour market and society in general. These institutional structures essentially precluded the establishment of widespread low-wage ghettoes amongst those non-Anglophone immigrants who did arrive. Ethnically diverse immigrants were simply not an issue until after World War II. For its part, the Canadian union movement was splintered by regional differences, including the French-English divide in its settler population, union rivalry along craft and industrial lines, as well as between national and international organizations, and the fragmentation that flowed from a rather looser federal political structure than that in Australia. It also had to deal with a more fluid and ethnically diverse immigrant workforce at an earlier period in the 20th century than its Australian counterpart. Both countries experienced some inter-ethnic tensions amongst workers, but these appear to have been rather more divisive in the case of Canada.

Ironically, the institutional safeguards built by the generally chauvinistic Australian union movement in the first decades of the 20th century provided a foundation, when combined with government commitments to full employment and not undercutting wages, for a wave of immigration in the 20 years after 1945. The result was an ethnic diversification of Australia's workforce almost unparalleled by any other country. To remain strong, the union movement was obliged to accept immigrants into its ranks. Thus began a slow and contested accommodation

process, but one which ultimately led to the labour movement publicly eschewing ethnocentrism and to certain unions seeking to provide multilingual supports for their members. In Canada a similar process of ethnic diversification and union accommodation occurred with immigrants helping to broaden union agendas and thereby strengthen the Canadian union movement.

Massive economic restructuring since 1975 and the weakening or abolition of protective elements of labour laws since 1985 — the latter an even more profound shift for Australia — have had significant adverse effects in both countries on the working lives of immigrants, especially recent arrivals and women. As yet these changes have not led to a splintering of organized labour along ethnic lines. However, unions are having increasing trouble reaching, let alone protecting, some of those groups in highly marginalized employment — a development posing a major challenge for unions both now and into the foreseeable future.

Finally, it is worth nothing that the institutional differences referred to above have helped to shape labour and ethnic historiography in both countries. The very strength of institutional factors in the Australian context has made the study of the relationship of immigrants per se with unions seem more appropriate than the study of individual national or ethnic groups. It might be argued that a key finding of much of this research — that immigrant workers' industrial attitudes and behaviour are essentially identical to that of locally born workers and their behaviour is indeed largely shaped by direct workplace experiences rather than pre-migration cultures — is an artefact of this approach. There is an element of truth in this, although it should be noted that these findings have come about by researchers using a variety of different research methods and include some quite committed to the importance of "culture" or "ethnic distinctiveness." In Canada, on the other hand, weaker institutional impetuses towards uniformity, and the growth of job enclaves dominated by particular ethnic groups, help explain why specific regions or ethnic groups have been the focus of research attention. Another factor here may be the respective strength of different academic disciplines (history vs. industrial relations) — itself a reflection of institutional factors. In the future, critical evaluation of dominant approaches to historical research on immigration in different countries may prove as instructive as an evaluation of the findings of this research.