

International Unionism: The Papermakers in Eastern Canada, 1930-1945

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Article abstract

This paper examines the case of the United Papermakers and Paperworkers in the province of Quebec and its conflict with the provincially centered Federation nationale des travailleurs de la pulpe et du papier Inc.

International Unionism

The Papermakers in Eastern Canada, 1930-1945

C. Brian Williams

This paper examines the case of the United Papermakers and Paperworkers in the province of Québec and its conflict with the provincially centered Fédération nationale des travailleurs de la pulpe et du papier Inc.

The international character of Canadian trade unionism remains a unique and controversial feature of Canadian Labour history. A 1966 study concluded that the phenomenon was the result of (1) the impact of coterminous Canadian-American labour, product, and capital markets on Canadian and American labour organizations; (2) preference shown to the American organization by Canadian workers because of its superior development; and (3) in cases centered in Québec, the influence of the Roman Catholic church¹. The evidence in support of these findings was published in two case studies each of which focused on different causal factors. The case of the International Molders Union centered on coterminous Canadian-American labour markets². The case of the United Mine Workers of American in Eastern Canada illustrated consequences of trade within the product market and the appeal of a superior developed organization to Canadian workers³. This paper examines the case of the United Papermakers and Paperworkers in the province of Québec and its conflict with the provincially centered *Fédération nationale des travailleurs de la pulpe et du papier inc.* It provides evidence on the impact of American control and ownership of the industry, labour migration, trade within a coterminous product market, and the influence of the Québec Roman Catholic church on the activities of both organizations. The first three factors encouraged an international structure while the latter favored local church centered Québec trade unionism.

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1 C. Brian WILLIAMS, «The Development of Canadian-American Trade Union Relations», *Relations Industrielles*, Vol. 21, July 1966, pp. 332-355.

2 C. Brian WILLIAMS, «Impact of Labor Migration — The International Molders & Allied Workers in Canada», *Relations Industrielles*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 1984, pp. 335-363.

3 C. Brian WILLIAMS, «International Trade Unionism: United Mine Workers in Eastern Canada, 1900-1920», *Relations Industrielles*, Vol. 41, No. 3, 1986, pp. 519-540.

STRUCTURE AND MARKETS

The technology⁴ of modern paper making dictates the consumption of large quantities of forest and water power resources. Nature has given both these requirements in abundance to Canada. The availability of these resources was largely responsible for the well known northward migration of pulp and paper capital from the United States to Canada. For many years, the production of pulp and paper was the leading Canadian manufacturing industry. After years of steady growth, in 1950 it ranked first in terms of net value of shipments, value of exports, total wages paid, and total capital invested. The industry had a newsprint output capacity of more than three times that of any other country and provided 45 percent of the world's newsprint demands. By 1960, Canada had twenty-six mills devoted exclusively to pulp production, twenty-six to paper making only, and seventy-six to both pulp and paper production. Nearly 92 percent of the 1960 production of newsprint was consumed by the export market. The United States received over 84 percent of these exports⁵.

Québec and Ontario are the main pulp producing provinces and accounted for over 65 percent of total Canadian pulp production in 1960. Québec accounted for almost 44 percent of all paper products produced in Canada in 1960. Ontario ranked second with 28 percent and British Columbia third with 13 percent. Prince Edward Island is the only province not having a pulp and paper industry⁶.

Paper making is an old industry in Canada, but its predominance in the Canadian economy had to await the development of a technology complementary to Canada's resource composition. The first paper mill in Canada was established at Argenteuil near Montréal in 1806. In 1826, Anthony Holland, a newspaper editor, erected a mill at Sackville, New Brunswick. During the same period, the first mill in central Canada was established near Hamilton, Ontario. These early Canadian mills relied exclusively on simple hand methods of production. In the late 1830's, the Fourdrinier paper making machine was introduced into Canada from the United States and England. The first mill using the Fourdrinier was constructed at Portneuf near Québec City in 1840. This 72 inch machine was capable of producing 1 500 pounds of writing paper daily. The raw material used was rags. Production was limited due to the high cost and short supply of this essential raw material.

4 Portions of the following are based on W.E. GREENING, *Paper Makers in Canada*, pp. 1-33, and J.W. CARROTHERS, *A History of Paper Making in Canada*.

5 *Canada Year Book*, 1962, p. 470.

6 *Ibid*, p. 473.

The development of an important Canadian paper industry had to await the development of a process using a cheap and readily available raw material. During the mid-decades of the 19th century, numerous European and American investigators undertook to discover such a material. As a result of these studies, European scientists learned that production of paper from wood pulp was practicable. The first machine capable of preparing wood pulp was constructed by Henry Voteler in 1840. In 1860, the first large scale wood pulp mill was constructed in Belgium. Later, Alexander Buntin, a Montréal paper manufacturer, succeeded in obtaining the rights to use the Voteler process in Canada. In 1867, Buntin set up one of the first ground wood mills in North America at Valleyfield near Montréal. The Voteler process revolutionized paper making in North America and thrust the various soft wood forests into a position of significant importance. The soda and sulphite processes of pulp preparation followed closely on the perfection of the Voteler process. An Englishman, Hugh Burgess, developed a process whereby wood chips were treated with caustic soda and reduced to wood pulp. Benjamin Tilghman devised a similar process using sulphuric acid. The first mill in Canada which used the soda process was erected in Windsor Mills in 1864. In 1884, the E.B. Eddy Co. constructed the first Canadian mill using the ground wood process at Hull, Québec.

The enormous water power potential of the Niagara peninsula was largely responsible for the development of paper making in southern Ontario. In 1863, John Riordon founded a paper company at Merritton, near St-Catherines. The bulk of the newsprint output of the Merritton mill was used by the Toronto *Globe* and other leading Canadian newspapers. The turn of the twentieth century found the Canadian paper making industry a growing but potentially limited industry. According to Greening:

«...All this development was on a comparatively minor scale, because of the smallness of the Canadian population and the lack of foreign markets. Progress in Canada was overshadowed by the progress in the... United States where the market for paper was growing at a tremendous rate... As a result... the pulp and paper industry in the United States was undergoing a remarkable expansion.»⁷

The rapid development of the industry in the United States soon affected the industry in Canada. The gradual exhaustion of the American soft wood forests caused American producers to glance northward to the vast and largely untapped forests of Canada. Shortly after 1900, the federal and provincial governments placed a tariff and, later, an embargo on the shipment of pulpwood from Canada to the United States. Still later, in 1911, the Canadian government proposed to place newsprint, wood pulp and pulpwood on the free list. However, the Reciprocity Treaty of 1911 was

⁷ GREENING, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

subsequently turned down by the Canadian electorate. As an alternative, the Wilson administration succeeded in passing the Underwood Tariff of 1913 under which Canadian newsprint, pulpwood, and wood pulp was admitted to the United States free of any tariff restrictions. This clause in the American tariff structure has remained in force right down to the present day. It was the most important single factor in the spectacular development of the Canadian newsprint industry which took place during the next few years⁸. With the removal of import restrictions, Canadian and American financiers were quick to recognize the profit potential from harvesting Ontario and Québec forest and hydro resources.

Ontario development had started in the late 1890's when E.E. Clergue, an American, constructed a newsprint mill at Sault Ste-Marie, Ontario. In the following years, mills were erected at Espanola on the Spanish River and at Sturgeon Falls on the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway running between Sault Ste-Marie and North Bay. In 1912, the Sault Ste-Marie, Espanola, and Sturgeon Falls mills were consolidated into the Spanish River Company. This company later developed into one of the largest Ontario producers. In the same year, the American controlled Ontario Paper Company opened a mill at Thorold which utilized the water potential of Niagara Falls. The Abitibi Company erected its first mill at Iroquois Falls near Cochrane in northern Ontario. The American industrialist E.B. Bachus took a great interest in the Great Lakes region of Ontario. In 1910 the Bachus controlled Minnesota and Ontario Paper and Power Company erected mills at Fort Francis and Kenora. Bachus interests also controlled the Fort William mill of the Great Lakes Paper Company constructed in 1919.

Early developments in Québec were even more spectacular than in Ontario. Although there were several small mills in operation in 1900 in centers such as Windsor Mills and Crabtree Mills, the first major advance was the construction of the Grand-Mère mill of the Laurentide Paper Company in 1899. The Grand-Mère mill was the first Canadian mill devoted exclusively to newsprint. During the next few years, large mills were constructed at Shawinigan Falls by the Belgo Canadian Company and at Three Rivers by the St-Maurice Paper Company. Further north, the Price brothers were actively laying the foundations of what was to become one of the dominant producers in the province of Québec. In 1902, they built a mill at Jonquière and in 1910 at Kenogami.

The growth of the Canadian pulp and paper industry was so rapid during the second decade of the twentieth century that, by 1920, it was one of

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

the most important industries in Canada, both in terms of the dollar volume of output and capital invested. Between 1911 and 1921, the number of pulp and paper mills increased from seventy-two to one hundred. The dollar volume of newsprint production more than doubled between 1914 and 1920. American demand for Canadian newsprint rapidly increased. By the end of World War I, 90 percent of American newsprint imports came from Canada, and newsprint became the largest single Canadian export to the United States. The mills of Québec and Ontario became the major suppliers of American newspapers in Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. This spectacular growth in the Canadian pulp and paper industry forged a new link in the economic relations of Canada and the United States⁹.

UNIONS IN THE INDUSTRY

There were two major union groups active in the Canadian pulp and paper industry during 1910-1945. The first group contained two international organizations — the United Papermakers and Paperworkers (UPP) (a craft union) and the International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite and Paper Mill Workers (IBPS & PMW) (an industrial union). The latter international was established in 1906 as a result of conflict between the highly skilled machine tenders and the unskilled workers in the machine and pulp and paper section of the industry. Earlier, in 1902, the constitution of the UPP was:

«...widened to allow the entrance of the pulp and sulphite groups; but this fusion did not work well. The workers on the paper machines still tended to disregard the interests of the pulp and sulphite section, and to think only of their own interests in the negotiations with the company for higher wages and better working conditions. The pulp and sulphite men naturally felt that they were not getting a square deal, and the inevitable split between the groups soon occurred.»¹⁰

The second union group included what is commonly called a confessional union or French Canadian union — the *Fédération nationale des travailleurs de la pulpe et du papier Inc.* (FNTPP) (National Federation of

9 For a more detailed account of the character of the Canadian pulp and paper industry after 1914, see Gil SCHONNING, «Union Management Relations in the Pulp and Paper Industry of Ontario and Québec, 1914-1950», Ph. D. Dissertation University of Toronto, September 1954, pp. 1-33.

10 GREENING, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

Pulp and Paper Workers, Inc.)¹¹. Throughout the history of the Federation, its activities were centered almost exclusively in Québec. The Federation was adamantly opposed to international unionism and other forms of American participation in Canadian labour affairs. The pulp and paper federation was one of the twelve Québec centered federations which made up the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CNTU), one of the two national centers in Canada¹². By 1962, the FNTPP claimed a membership of 7 085 in 41 locals. The UPP claimed 9 886 members in 62 locals and the IBPS & PMW, 34 698 members in 109 locals.

UPP ACTIVITIES: 1910-1933

Canadian activities of the United Papermakers and Paperworkers began in the first decade of the twentieth century and centered in the rapidly growing eastern Canadian section of the industry. According to Greening:

«The men... in most cases, had previous experience... in the United States. There was quite a large migration from the mills in Massachusetts, Maine, and New York state as well as from other regions in the eastern states to the pulp and paper centers in northern Ontario and Québec. Many of these men had already been union members in the United States, and... they served as transmitters of the union idea to regions of Canada where previously it had been almost unknown.

...the formation of locals in the new Canadian mills was... purely spontaneous... without any aid from organizers or from headquarters in the United States. Almost before a new mill had been completed... the papermakers would set up... a local and... apply to union head office for a charter and try to gain recognition from the

11 Under the definition of terms used in the study, the Québec federations were Canadian unions. Consequently, it is important to note that opposition to internationalism came from three types of Canadian unions: confessional unions (sometimes called Christian unions) such as the FNTPP, which drew much of its leadership, inspiration, and program from Europe and the Roman Catholic Church, and non-confessional unions or neutral unions, such as the OBU and PWA of Nova Scotia. Basically, the position of all three models of Canadian unions against internationalism was the same but for quite different reasons. French Canadian unions were discussed in the study only to the extent that conflict developed between the UPP and FNTPP during the former's organization of the Québec mills, and to the extent that the analytical interpretation of the rise of international unionism must account for the existence of both types of Canadian unions-confessional and neutral. The reader interested in a brief history of the development and program of French Canadian unionism should consult H.A. LOGAN, «Federation of Catholic Workers of Canada», *Journal of Political Economics*, Vol. 35, No. 5, October 1927, pp. 684-702 and Vol. 35, No. 6, December 1927, pp. 805-835; F.H. BARNES, «The Evolution of Christian Trade Unionism in Québec», *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, Vol. 12, No. 4, July 1959, pp. 568-581; and A.B. LATHAM, *The Catholic and National Labour Unions of Canada*.

12 In 1959 there were signs of (a) greater co-operation with the two international organizations, and (b) greater co-operation, and possibly merger, of the CNTU and the CLC.

company as a bargaining agent of the workers... It was not until the middle of the 1920's that the first full-time organizers were appointed for exclusive work in the Canadian field.»¹³

In 1912, the Anglo Canadian company constructed a mill in Grand Falls, Newfoundland and obtained the entire staff for the machines from the United States.

Papermakers, like stove molders, identified themselves not so much with a particular firm or locale, but with centers of activity within the industry. The papermaker was a skilled mechanic. With a standard technology rapidly adopted throughout the industry, he offered skills demanded by nearly all mills in the industry. As noted above, many papermakers migrated north from the United States. When the papermaker became restless (many mills were located in remote areas), or when working conditions became unsatisfactory, or the wage scale too low, he simply moved to another mill. Again, citing Greening:

«Men in search of better jobs would travel from New England north to Québec and Ontario, or perhaps westward into Wisconsin in the middle west, or even all the way to the Pacific Coast where new mills were being built in Washington and Oregon... This (migration) resulted in an extraordinary and detailed knowledge by the papermakers of conditions in the industry in other parts of Canada and the United States.»¹⁴

By 1910, the international had established Ontario locals at Sault-Ste-Marie, Espanola, and Sturgeon Falls and at Shawinigan Falls, Grand-Mère, Windsor Mills, and Hull in Québec. By and large, the growth of the international paralleled the growth of the pulp and paper industry in Canada.

One of the major problems faced by the international in Canada was the difficulty encountered in attempting to standardize rates of pay and working conditions in the provinces of Ontario and Québec. In Québec, union progress was slow relative to Ontario. By 1934, numerous agreements were signed with Ontario operators, but not a single agreement had been signed in Québec¹⁵. Greening offered the following explanation for the differences in opposition faced by the union in Ontario and Québec:

«For one thing, general industrial conditions in Ontario much more closely paralleled conditions in the United States... then... those in the French speaking provinces. In Ontario there were none of those problems of the existence of a separate language, religion and customs among the workers which were to make organizing so slow and difficult in Québec... Hours of work were shorter in many industries in

¹³ GREENING, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁵ An agreement was signed in 1918 with the Ste-Marie Paper Company at Three Rivers. It was abrogated during the 1920's.

Ontario and general working conditions better. The workers in Ontario were much more familiar with the idea of banding together... than were the French speaking workers east of the Ottawa River. The general outlook of the Ontario workers was a good deal wider than that of those in Québec. They were more conversant with the labor movements and conditions in the United States and other parts of the world outside Canada. There was no large and influential group in Québec, which was definitely opposed to the idea or the organization of Canadian workers into unions with affiliations and ties in the United States... the Ontario paper companies became reconciled to the idea of union organization... at a comparatively early state of the game and adopted a conciliatory attitude towards the international unions...»¹⁶

Finally, in 1933 the United Papermakers and Paperworkers undertook to organize and obtain agreements in the Québec plants. According to one observer:

«This lack of unionism was a menace both to the companies and the union members in other parts of Canada and the United States... Whenever the locals in Ontario would ask a company for higher rates the company representatives would point to Québec mills and claim that they had to keep their general production costs down to compete with the Québec companies in the American market.»¹⁷

J. Arthur D'Aoust, who for some time was the chief executive officer of the international in Canada, was placed in charge of the union's campaign. However, the organization of Québec, in face of opposition by the Catholic federation, would be no easy matter.

UPP ACTIVITIES IN QUÉBEC: 1933-1940

The UPP first encountered the FNTPP in the early 1920's. The CNTU, the Catholic national center in Canada, was established in 1921. Shortly thereafter, a union (FNTPP) was established to encompass all pulp and paper workers in the province. At the time of its formation, the union claimed to have locals at Port Alfred, Hull, Bromptonville, Chicoutimi, and Three Rivers. The two internationals also held members in these mills. Open conflict over the allegiance of Québec workers was largely avoided during the 1920's. However, the 1933 decision of the international to press the organization of Québec mills by means of strategic strike action signalled the beginning of an ongoing conflict with the FNTPP which reached a climax in 1943. One of the first incidents related to this conflict developed following a May 1934 strike of the UPP's local at the Lake St-John Paper Co. at Dolbeau, Québec. As far as is known, the FNTPP was not a partici-

¹⁶ GREENING, *op. cit.*, p. 14. Ontario and Québec wage differentials in 1914, 1920, and 1930 were substantial.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 33-34.

pant in the Dolbeau dispute¹⁸. However, the dispute is significant in that it partially revealed the nature of the environment in which the international operated in rural areas of Québec, even though no French-Canadian union was directly involved. The incident is also significant because of the international's suggestion that the recently adopted *National Industrial Recovery Act* pulp and paper industry code (November 27, 1933) should apply to Canadian producers as a price for continued marketing rights in the United States.

THE DOLBEAU STRIKE

The Lake St-John area of Québec is a remote, sparsely populated region located in the east central part of the province. At the time of the following incidents, the Lake St-John paper industry was centered in five communities: Dolbeau and Riverbend, on the northwest shore of Lake St-John, and Kenogami, Port Alfred and Jonquière on the St-John River. The Lake St-John Paper Co. operated mills at Dolbeau, Riverbend, and Port Arthur. Price Brothers operated mills at Kenogami, Jonquière, and Riverbend. By early 1934, Canadian organizer D'Aoust succeeded in reorganizing the local of the Lake St-John Paper Co. at Dolbeau. On May 23, 1934, the international authorized strike action on the part of the forty member Dolbeau local. The Union demanded the restoration of wage cuts and recognition by the company¹⁹.

Prior to the May strike call at Dolbeau, Canadian organizer D'Aoust (a Canadian), and special organizer Ernest Lampton (an American, but a resident of Canada) were in the Lake St-John Region assisting UPP locals in negotiations with the Lake St-John Paper Co. On the evening of May 28, while Lampton was travelling from Jonquière to Riverbend, the bus in which he was riding was stopped by a road block. Five men in an automobile ordered Lampton to get in the car and subsequently drove him into the surrounding hills. After deliberating whether to «throw him into the river flowing below in a canyon» or to take him for another ride, the men decided to take him to Québec City, some 240 miles from the site of the abduction «where he was dumped out on a sidewalk... (told) not to show his face in the Lake St-John region again»²⁰. On the following night, three men broke into organizer D'Aoust's room in Dolbeau, beat him up, and unsuccessfully attempted to drag him from his room to a waiting automobile²¹.

18 According to Greening, a *syndicat* had some support in the Dolbeau mill. However, the FNTPP did not seek recognition until 1936. GREENING, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

19 LG, Vol. 34, No. 6, June 1934, p. 505.

20 GREENING, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

21 *Papermakers Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 6, June 1934, pp. 16-19 and 21-22.

The kidnapping of Lampton and the attempted abduction of D'Aoust brought forth violent comment from the international and charges that the acts were a company inspired plot. The union also suggested that the kidnapping might lead to an estrangement in Canadian-American relations. Following the incident, the Montréal Trades and Labour Council sent a strong letter of protest to Prime Minister R.B. Bennett²².

Shortly after the kidnapping, Québec Premier Taschereau conducted an on-the-spot investigation of the Dolbeau dispute. In subsequent pronouncements the Premier charged certain groups in the United States, in order to hasten economic recovery in their own country, were deliberately doing all possible to delay recovery in Québec. He demanded that the federal government adopt measures to prevent labor agitators organizing in Canada and particularly in the province of Québec. In a public address Premier Taschereau stated:

«...I do think that at the very moment when everybody is doing his best to assure the return of prosperity in Québec, the time is ill chosen for foreign agitators to come here and foment labor trouble. I believe that these agitators should be prevented from coming to Canada. ...there are such agitators in Montréal, aiming to cause strikes among workers of the clothing industry. What is wanted is action on the part of the proper authorities...»²³

The union countered Premier Taschereau's charges with an argument that, while quite revealing of union motives, was probably unique in the history of Canadian-American trade union relations. In correspondence sent to the officers of local unions in May 1934, international president Burns commented on the state of the Canadian industry and the UPP's activities in Canada. Although lengthy, it is highly relevant.

«We are now moving to concentrate our attention upon the Canadian newsprint situation, ...newsprint paper enters these United States free of duty... and in recent years we have, because of advantages, unfair or otherwise... watched the gradual declining of the newsprint industry in the United States...»

Since the advent of the National Industrial Recovery Act and the adoption of a code of fair competition for the paper industry in the United States and the restoration of some of our former wage and work standards in the U.S. mills, we have prevailed upon the Canadian and Newfoundland companies to embrace the spirit of the NRA and do likewise, so long as they were selling their product free of duty on the U.S. market. (The Canadian and Newfoundland International Paper Company immediately following the enactment of the National Industrial Recovery Act began restoring the wage standard of all its mills).

We have succeeded by negotiations with most of the Canadian newsprint manufacturers in re-establishing our 1932 printed standard schedule, which was put into ef-

²² *Ibid*, Vol. 33, No. 7, July 1934, pp. 15-17.

²³ As reported in *Ibid*, p. 6.

fect in the United States mills following the adoption of the code of fair competition November 27, 1933. When the next step forward is taken here the Canadian mills must follow.

There now remains but the following Canadian newsprint companies, which are below the paper makers standard schedule:

The Lake St. John Co., 1 mill, 2 machines, The Consolidated Co., 4 mills, 24 machines; Brompton Paper Co., 1 mill, 1 machine; Donna Cona Paper Co., 1 mill, 3 machines; Price Bros., 2 mills, 11 machines...

I am now sending French speaking citizens to Canada into these French speaking paper mill communities to close down the mills of the remaining unfair companies and put the pressures and influences of this international union behind this fight to protect fair Canadian companies and also what is left of our American newsprint industry...

The Canadian papermill workers adopted the following resolution at a conference in Montréal, on March 16th:

'Whereas, the government of the United States has seen fit to place into operation an act known as the National Recovery Act; Whereas, this Act was set in motion for the purpose of protecting American industry and workers in said industry, and Whereas, certain articles in the Recovery Act refer to foreign competition of any imported article going in to the United States on an unfair basis;

Therefore, be it resolved that it is the opinion of this convention that newsprint paper which is manufactured in mills where wages and conditions prevail that constitute unfair competition to manufacturers operating under the Recovery Act should be prevented from being imported into the United States and in the event that manufacturers of such newsprint paper refuse within a reasonable length of time to bring the wages and conditions of labor in their mills in line with the NRA requirements, then political or other lawful activities be instituted to prevent the importation of their production.'

If these unfair companies are calling our hand to find out how much power may reside in the trade union movement of both the United States and Canada, we will give an exhibition of that power as may be necessary to establish justice.»²⁴

The union backed up its arguments by threatening to obtain an embargo, tariff, or boycott on Canadian paper if the Québec producers refused to recognize the NRA pulp and paper code. Through other unions affiliated with the AFL, the union attempted to bring pressure upon American publishers to stop buying Québec paper. However, this boycott met with little success.

During the month of June, representatives of the Québec government were sent to mediate the Dolbeau dispute. The union refused an offer of a 10 percent wage increase and held out for recognition and the union scale. At the end of June, the company arranged to reopen the mill with newly ac-

²⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 6-9.

quired papermakers. However, the union declared the strike still in effect²⁵. By the end of August, the plant was reported to have fully recovered operation²⁶. The dispute ended in a clear victory for the employer²⁷.

ORGANIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL PAPERWORKERS

In the years immediately following the international's failure at the Dolbeau mill, attention shifted to the mills of the International Paper Co. at Gatineau Point, Three Rivers, and Dalhousie in New Brunswick. These mills were among the largest in eastern Canada and their organization would add impetus to the international's drive in Québec. Ever since the collapse of a strike in 1926, the International Paper Co. had operated an open shop policy in both Canada and the United States. Union attempts to organize locals at Gatineau Point, Three Rivers, and Dalhousie were met by a management directed program of «plant councils» which, according to Greening, were actually «company unions». In the face of firm management opposition and strong rank and file support for the plant councils, the union developed a plan to infiltrate and take over the plant councils. By 1937, most of the executive positions in the councils were filled by union members. In 1938, the company signed agreements with the two international organizations covering locals at Gatineau Point, Three Rivers, and Dalhousie. Shortly after, the company signed agreements covering its mills in the United States. The recognition of the union by the International Paper Co. led to the acceptance of the union by other newsprint companies in the province. Following the signing of the International Paper Co. agreement, agreements were signed with the Anglo-Canadian Co. at Québec City, the St-Lawrence Paper Co. at Three Rivers, the Abitibi Corp. at Ste-Anne de Beaupré, and the E.B. Eddy Co. at Hull and Ottawa²⁸.

During the years 1934-1937, the number of direct confrontations with the FNTTP increased. In 1937, the Federation was reorganized and announced the start of an intensive province-wide drive for recognition. The center of this campaign was to be the Lake St-John region.

25 *LG*, Vol. 34, No. 7, July 1934, p. 623.

26 *LG*, Vol. 34, No. 9, September 1934, p. 810.

27 D'Aoust's assailants were apprehended and received fines of \$10 and \$15 each. Lamp-ton's abductors were apprehended and charges were laid. A long period of litigation followed. The matter was finally settled by mutual agreement when the company and the union finally signed an agreement in 1939.

28 GREENING, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

DIRECT CONFLICT BETWEEN THE UPP AND THE FNTPP, 1940-1945

As noted earlier, in 1933 and 1937, the UPP and the FNTPP respectively had undertaken intensive campaigns to drive their opposition out of the province of Québec. However, up to 1943, most efforts were limited to levying charges, allegations, and accusations in the public and private press and other avenues of communication. The FNTPP attempted to pressure international members to renounce their membership. Local curates attacked the UPP as a godless, communistic, and evil foreign organization. Workers were told that it was their duty as Catholics and French-Canadians to sever all connections with the international. Pamphlets attacking the international were anonymously placed in employees' lockers at Price Brothers' Kenogami, Jonquière, and Riverbend mills. By and large, throughout this period, the international adopted an offensive strategy — the obtaining of recognition and agreements. The FNTPP's efforts were largely directed at blocking the execution of such agreements and increasing membership in mills which they had representation — largely a defensive strategy.

The controversy surrounding union representation at the Lake St-John Paper Co. and Price Brothers mills reached a climax in the fall and winter of 1942 and the spring of 1943 when the Federation launched an all-out campaign to oust the international from the Lake St-John region. In 1943, the international's contracts with the Lake St-John Paper Co. at Dolbeau and Price Brothers at Kenogami, Jonquière, and Riverbend were up for renewal. Before the year was out, strikes were called at all four mills, numerous government mediators attempted to settle the disputes, the Québec government passed legislation concerning the disputes, and a royal commission investigated and issued recommendations for settling the disputes.

THE PRICE BROTHERS' CONFLICT

Price Brothers²⁹ operated mills at Kenogami, Jonquière, and Riverbend. In the autumn of 1939 and the spring of 1940, the two international unions had enrolled members at all three mills and established locals. Shortly after, they advised Price Brothers that they represented 70 percent of the workmen in the mills and requested that the company enter into a collective

²⁹ The circumstances surrounding the Price Brothers dispute were taken from *Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into Certain Disputes in the Mills of Price Brothers and Company, Limited, and Lake St-John Power and Paper Company, Limited*, (Typewritten) August 25, 1943, pp. 1-3. Hereafter referred to as *Prévost Report*.

agreement. On May 15, 1940, the two internationals and the company concluded their first agreements at each of the three mills. The agreements were for a one-year period and upon expiration the agreements were renewed. In each agreement, the company granted the unions preferential hiring and union shop clauses. It was these clauses which subsequently precipitated the conflict with the FNTPP. The contract provided that:

- «3. When hiring new employees the Management will give preference to union members when available and capable of doing the work efficiently. Applications for employment shall not become effective unless and until approved by the General Superintendent.
4. A new employee who is not a member of one of the signatory unions shall join such union within thirty days, unless temporarily employed. However, as soon as a temporary employee is classed as a permanent employee, he will become and remain a member in good standing of such union.»³⁰

Prior to the actual signing of the Kenogami agreement, the *syndicat*, backed by the local clergy, mounted a campaign to block the signing of the agreement. According to one report:

«They held a series of meetings in the towns of the district at which considerable local opinion was stirred up against the International unions. In October 1939, at one of these meetings at Kenogami, the local town council promised its full backing to the syndicate in its efforts to stop the International unions from getting agreements in the Price Brothers mills and said that it would endeavor to get the Québec government to compel Price Brothers to recognize the Catholic Federation of Pulp and Paperworkers. The mayors of Kenogami, Jonquière and Riverbend sent petitions both to the provincial governments and to Price Brothers, asking for these things.»³¹

On January 14, 1943, the FNTPP sponsored a mass meeting at Chicoutimi. The chief speaker was Father Omer Genest of the *École sociale populaire* of Montréal. Representatives of local Catholic organizations and «national» minded organizations charged that the TLC was a «hotbed of radicalism» and had supported Loyalist forces in Spain. The right of internationals and the AFL to interfere in the labor affairs of Québec was challenged. In a February 4, 1943 issue of *Le Progrès du Saguenay*, Canon Joseph Tremblay charged that the international unions «were spending \$40 000 in an effort to destroy the Catholic union movement in the Lake St-John district». Residents of the region—farmers, businessmen, storekeepers, and workers—were urged to buy an honorary membership in the Catholic Federation of Labor. Canon Tremblay stated that it was the sacred duty of the Québec population to aid the FNTPP in its «crusade against the evil AFL»³².

³⁰ Ibid, p. 2.

³¹ GREENING, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

³² Ibid, p. 50.

At the end of March 1943, a group of *syndicat* supporters, claiming to represent the majority at Price Brothers' mills at Jonquière and Riverbend, petitioned the company to terminate its existing labor agreements. They insisted that the employees did not intend to renew the agreement and that the internationals no longer had a mandate to represent their interests. In addition, the group dispatched a letter to the company president requesting negotiations with a view to concluding a new agreement. The company made no reply to either the petition or the letter. Subsequently, the three *syndicats* petitioned the federal department of labor, requesting the appointment of a Board of Conciliation and Investigation under the *Industrial Dispute Investigation Act of 1907*. Shortly after, fourteen employees, seven from each mill, were suspended by the company because they had not complied with the union security provisions of the contracts. As a result of the company's action, the Riverbend *syndicat* called a strike for April 6. On the following day the strike spread to the other two mills.

On April 14, after a violent debate on the floor of the House, Order-in-Council No. 1012 was passed by the Québec legislative assembly and directed persons, or corporations, who were manufacturers of pulp and paper, or both products, supplied with timber from crown lands, «to recognize any provincial syndicate or union and to sign a collective labor agreement with such a syndicate or union, negotiating simultaneously with the representative of the said syndicate or unions». The penalty for refusal to abide by terms of the Order-in-Council rested with the Québec government. Penalties ranged from a fine of up to six dollars per cord stumpage to actual seizure of the company's operations.

On April 16, as a result of the intervention by the provincial government, the company and the *syndicats* agreed to re-open the mills pending the report of the Board of Conciliation and Investigation. However, one of the conditions stipulated that the agreements with the internationals, which were due to expire on May 15, would not be renewed until the Board had rendered its decision. The internationals interpreted this stipulation as a threat to their agreements and urged their members not to return to work. Since the papermakers were indispensable to mill operation, and since nearly all papermakers were UPP members and followed international advice, the chances of re-opening the mills were small. However, in spite of the UPP's refusal to permit members to work, the company agreed to resume operations on the strength of *syndicat* claims that it had a sufficient membership to start up and operate the mills. The company believed that the FNTPP should be given an opportunity to prove its claim. Three representatives of the Québec fair wage board were dispatched from Québec city to act as impartial judges — one at each mill. At the Riverbend mill, one paper machine

operated for slightly less two shifts. At the Jonquière and Kenogami mills, not a wheel turned. As a result of continued negotiations, the company, internationals and *syndicats* reached a temporary agreement for the resumption of operations. This agreement provided for (1) the appointment of an Inquiry Commission, composed of three judges of the Court of King's Bench or of the Superior Court; and (2) the continuance of the existing collective agreements until the Inquiry Commission had reported, except that clause 4 of the agreement (union shop) was suspended effective May 15. Subsequently, the mills resumed normal operations.

Earlier, on May 4, the bishop of Chicoutimi published a pastoral letter in most local newspapers exhorting Catholic workers to refrain from «joining the international unions, or from belonging to such organizations». He laid down three conditions under which good Catholics might belong to neutral organizations.

1. On the condition that such non-Catholic associations respect justice and equality, and that full liberty be allowed to the faithful to obey their conscience and the Church.
2. On the condition that the bishop, who has the right to judge whether such neutral unions are necessary under the circumstances, approves of Catholics giving their support to such unions.
3. On the condition that there are no existing Catholic associations wherein proper moral and religious problems would be given serious consideration.

This letter was interpreted as a directive by the lesser clergy throughout the district. Sermons were preached extolling the virtues of the FNTPP and damning the UPP. Children were asked to offer special prayers for the FNTPP and fathers who were members of the UPP. Town councils, fraternal societies, including chapters of the Knights of Columbus, ladies' societies, such as the Daughters of Isabel, and members of the Québec legislative assembly, took an active part in the war against the brotherhood. Numerous resolutions were forwarded to the companies concerned and to the provincial and federal governments, asking the companies to terminate their labor agreements with the international union.

THE LAKE ST-JOHN POWER AND PAPER COMPANY CONFLICT

Since 1926, the Lake St-John Power and Paper Co.³³ had operated a mill at Dolbeau. On July 7, 1941, the company entered into a collective con-

³³ The circumstances surrounding the Lake St-John Power and Paper Co. dispute were taken from *Prévost Report, op. cit.*, pp. 4-7.

tract with both international unions on terms similar to those granted by Price Brothers. The union security provisions were practically identical. The agreement was for a one-year period and each year, upon expiration, the agreement was renewed. The internationals claimed 150 members of the 250 workmen at the mill. Again, as at Price Brothers, the *syndicat* attempted to block the signing of the agreement. According to one report, as the July 1941 date of signing drew near:

«...the Catholic Syndicate sent a letter to the Lake St. John Company in which they accused the manager... of discriminating against their members... in favor of the international union. The syndicate claimed to have 150 members at the mill. This accusation that the International Union and the Paper Company were in league to destroy the Catholic unions was a favorite charge of the Catholic Federation of Pulp and Paper Workers at this time. ...Federation...took steps to get the Federal Department of Labor to intervene in the affair. It asked the Dominion Government for the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry under the wartime labor regulations... Judge Constantineau was sent...to Dolbeau to make a thorough investigation...He came to the conclusion that the agreement...was perfectly legal and that these two unions had the support of the majority of the workers in the Dolbeau mills.»³⁴

The events leading to the 1943 conflict at the Lake St-John Power and Paper Co.'s plant at Dolbeau followed the Price Brothers pattern. On March 16, 1943, the lawyer for the Dolbeau *syndicat* advised the company that he had received a petition signed by ninety-five employees advising that they had terminated the collective agreement, they would not renew the agreement, and they no longer authorized officers of the international locals to represent their interests. At the same time the *syndicat* requested recognition and the negotiation of a new agreement. The company disregarded these representations and on May 15 renewed its agreement with the internationals. Subsequently, the *syndicat* applied to the federal department of labor for the appointment of a Board of Conciliation and Investigation. In early June, the company required a papermaker to fill a vacancy and hired a man from Hull, Québec. Immediately, the president of the *syndicat* protested the hiring on the grounds that there were employees in the mill who were capable of filling the vacancy and who should have been promoted. The mill manager rejected the protest and subsequently, on June 9, the *syndicat* supporters went on strike.

At about the same time, eighteen employees were suspended by the company because they had not complied with the union security provisions of the contract. Shortly after, the provincial department of labor intervened in the dispute and, after lengthy negotiations, succeeded in arranging a resumption of operations after promising to extend the jurisdiction of the Inquiry Commission at Price Brothers to the Dolbeau dispute. However,

³⁴ GREENING, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

the internationals protested the agreement and insisted that the eighteen suspended workmen comply with the union security provisions by July 30. The *syndicat* replied that it would not order a return to work unless the suspended members were allowed to return also. However, the mill was reopened and the *syndicat* members remained on strike. By the following day, the company had succeeded in restoring the mill to operation with the assistance of workmen brought in from other areas. In the evening of the same day, a compromise settlement was reached with the *syndicat*. Under the agreement, the funds the eighteen workmen owed the internationals were deposited with the clerk of the Inquiry Commission, pending the outcome of the investigation. Subsequently, the *syndicat* called off the strike and the mill resumed normal operation.

REPORT OF THE INQUIRY COMMISSION

During July 1943, the Inquiry Commission (Prévost Commission) held hearings at Dolbeau and Chicoutimi and all parties to the disputes were given an opportunity to state their position. On August 25, the Commission issued its report and recommendations. During the hearings, the companies involved had presented arguments why the collective agreements with the internationals should be continued. Although the Commission did not agree with the companies' position, the arguments were illustrative of the attitude of many Canadian employers towards international and French-Canadian trade unionism, particularly those employers who serviced the American consumer market. In its report the Inquiry Commission commented:

«We were told that nearly all the paper made in the Riverbend, Kenogami, Jonquière and Dolbeau mills is shipped to the United States; that it is handled throughout, in transit from the mill to its various destinations, as well as in the shop where it is used, by workmen who are members of unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor; and that there is reason to fear that a breach of existing contracts between the companies and the International Unions might provoke reprisals which would affect, not only the mills of Price Brothers & Company, Limited, but possibly the whole paper-making industry of the Province as well. In other words, the companies are afraid that, if they made a collective agreement with a union not affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, the latter would call a strike of the railway employees who transport the paper, or the typographers who use it, or possibly of the employees in other paper mills, for the sole purpose of ostracizing Price Brothers & Company, Limited, and Lake St-John Power & Paper Company, Limited. It should be noted, however, that there has been no proof of threats of such reprisals against the companies...»³⁵

³⁵ *Prévost Report, op. cit.*, p. 8. The reader will recall that the UPP used a similar argument in 1933 in its campaign to obtain recognition in Québec mills.

«Another argument offered us for not making a collective agreement with the National Syndicates was based on their sectarian character. The Lake St-John Power & Paper Company, Limited, claims that it ought not to be obliged to recognize a denominational union as the sole representative of its employees with the result that, in order to benefit by the collective agreement, workmen would be forced to belong to a Catholic Syndicate committed in advance to follow the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.»³⁶

In order to settle the immediate question of recognition in the mills, the Commission recommended that:

«the necessary steps be taken to give the workmen in each mill an opportunity to declare freely, and by secret ballot, whether they wish to be represented by the international unions or by the national syndicates [and] when the voting has revealed which union is favored by the majority in each case, the employer should make a collective agreement with that union.»³⁷

In September 1943, as a result of the Commission's recommendation, and over the strong objections of the internationals, the Québec government conducted representation votes at each of the four mills. At each of the three Price Brothers mills, the majority of employees in the pulp and sulphite sections voted for the *syndicats*. The majority in the paper making sections voted for the UPP. At Dolbeau, the internationals received majority support in both sections. In the spring of 1944, and after lengthy negotiations between the parties concerned, the newly formed Québec Labour Relations Board issued certification orders granting jurisdiction in the papermaking sections of Price Brothers mills to the UPP and jurisdiction in the pulp and sulphite sections to *syndicats* of the FNTPP³⁸. Unexpectedly, in the light of the earlier vote, jurisdiction on both sections of the Dolbeau mill was granted to the Dolbeau *syndicat* of the FNTPP. Both internationals protested the Dolbeau order and filed an appeal with the Québec Labour Relations Board. Judge Boivin, head of the Board, visited Dolbeau and after lengthy discussions ordered the company to suspend negotiations with the *syndicat* until the Board had reconsidered the matter. In the spring of 1945, the Board withdrew its earlier certification order and granted jurisdiction in both sections of the mill to the internationals.

The final orders of the Québec Labour Relations Board did not resolve the conflict between the FNTPP and the internationals. In subsequent years bargaining rights in several mills changed hands. In February 1948, the FNTPP launched an aggressive and sometimes violent campaign to oust the internationals from Dolbeau. Again, as in earlier drives, the clergy actively

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 9.

³⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 16 and 17.

³⁸ The Québec Labour Relations Board and the principle of majority rule, were established as a result of a recommendation of the *Prévost Commission*.

participated. In early April, the FNTPP applied to the Québec Labour Relations Board for representation votes at Kenogami, Jonquière, Riverbend, and Dolbeau. After long negotiations and a number of votes, the Board granted jurisdiction of the papermaking section of the Jonquière mill to the FNTPP. However, the internationals retained control of both sections of the Dolbeau mill and the papermaking sections at the Kenogami and Riverbend mills.

In 1952, the 75,000 union members in Québec pulp and paper industry were almost equally divided between the FNTPP and the internationals. By and large, the internationals held bargaining rights in the larger mills, such as International Paper Corp., St-Lawrence Corp., E.B. Eddy Co., and the Anglo-Canadian Paper Co. On the other hand, except for Donnaconna Co. and some mills of the Consolidated Paper Corp., the bargaining rights of the FNTPP were located in the smaller mills of the province.

CONCLUSIONS

Unionization in the Québec pulp and paper industry offers a number of interesting features. It is an industry heavily impacted by American capital, ownership, and control as well as increasing dependency on the U.S. product market. It exhibited mobility in the skilled portions of coterminous labour markets and the international presence was aggressively challenged by an indigent confessional French Canadian organization.

The evidence supports a conclusion that UPP entry to the province paralleled American participation in the industry by way of capital penetration and the availability of United States markets. The UPP sought protection for the remaining American portion of the industry as well as elimination of an Ontario/Québec differential. It is a classic case of trade union behaviour dictated by the presence of union/non-union product competition.

By and large, and when given an opportunity to chose, Québec industry employers preferred the international organization given its role, standing, and influence in North American trade unionism. The vulnerability of an association with the FNTPP was very real to most employers.

Despite nearly two decades of direct head to head competition for support of industry workers, neither the UPP nor the FNTPP was able to gain a commanding position. Even with the introduction of employee choice, support remained divided. Given the rural setting and the social values of language and religion in the lives of industry employees, the confessional nature of the FNTPP was very appealing to many Québec workers. Despite the superior development of the UPP, it was not sufficiently strong to overcome the attachment to the confessional organization.

***Le syndicalisme international.
Les papetiers dans l'Est du Canada (1930-1945)***

Le caractère international du syndicalisme canadien demeure une particularité controversée de l'histoire du syndicalisme. Une étude de 1966 concluait que ce phénomène était le résultat, 1) de l'influence de la contiguïté des marchés du travail, des biens et des capitaux canadiens et américains sur les organisations syndicales de l'un et de l'autre pays, 2) de la préférence des travailleurs canadiens pour le syndicalisme américain à cause de son développement supérieur et 3) en ce qui concerne le Québec, de l'influence de l'Église catholique romaine. Les constatations qui en découlent furent publiées dans deux études de cas qui mettaient l'accent sur différents facteurs. Le cas de l'Union internationale des mouleurs retenait principalement comme facteur causal la proximité des marchés du travail au Canada et aux États-Unis. Le cas des mineurs unis d'Amérique dans l'Est du Canada notait des influences d'ordre commercial à l'intérieur des marchés des produits ainsi que l'attrance d'une organisation syndicale plus développée pour les travailleurs canadiens. Le présent article traite du cas de l'*United Papermakers and Paperworkers*, (UPP) dans la province de Québec et de ses conflits avec la Fédération nationale des travailleurs de la pulpe et du papier (FNTPP) qui n'était active que dans cette partie du pays. Il apporte des indications intéressantes sur l'influence qu'ont pu avoir le contrôle et la propriété de l'industrie par les américains, les migrations ouvrières et les échanges commerciaux à l'intérieur de marchés limithrophes ainsi que le rôle de l'Église catholique romaine sur l'activité professionnelle de l'une et de l'autre organisations. Les trois premiers facteurs favorisaient l'implantation d'une structure internationale alors que le dernier avantagait le syndicalisme confessionnel établi au Québec.

La syndicalisation dans l'industrie de la pulpe et du papier au Québec présente plusieurs caractéristiques intéressantes. Il s'agit d'une industrie fortement dépendante de capitaux appartenant à des propriétaires américains et dont la plus grande part des marchés se trouve aux États-Unis. Elle était aussi marquée par la mobilité de la main-d'oeuvre dans ses secteurs les plus spécialisés à l'intérieur de marchés voisins ainsi que par la présence d'une organisation catholique et française moins puissante qui combattait farouchement le syndicalisme international. Les documents confirment que l'arrivée de l'UPP au Québec s'est effectuée en synchronisme avec la participation des américains, la pénétration de leurs capitaux et l'ouverture de leurs marchés aux produits du papier canadien. Par là, l'UPP cherchait à protéger ses acquis dans les secteurs américains de cette industrie de même qu'à éliminer les disparités de salaires entre l'Ontario et le Québec. C'est là le cas classique d'un comportement dicté par la présence de la concurrence entre des biens fabriqués dans des établissements syndiqués et des entreprises qui ne le sont pas.

De toute façon, quand l'occasion leur en fut donnée, les employeurs du Québec préférèrent l'organisation internationale compte tenu de son rôle, de sa situation

privilégiée et de son influence au sein du syndicalisme nord-américain. Pour la plupart d'entre eux, la vulnérabilité des syndicats affiliés à la FNTPP apparaissait très réelle.

Malgré deux décennies de lutte nez à nez pour obtenir l'adhésion des travailleurs de l'industrie ni l'UPP ni la FNTPP ne furent capables de s'imposer. Même avec l'introduction du libre choix d'une association, les adhérents restèrent partagés entre les deux groupements. Étant donné le type rural de civilisation et les valeurs sociales de la langue et de la religion dans la vie des travailleurs, la nature confessionnelle de la FNTPP retint la sympathie de la plupart des travailleurs québécois. Le développement supérieur de l'UPP ne fut pas suffisant pour l'emporter sur leur attachement au syndicalisme confessionnel.

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