

McMASTER UNIVERSITY

TRADE UNIONISM IN CANADA (1921-36)

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TRADE UNIONISM IN CANADA (1921-36)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to trace the progress of the trade union movement in Canada from 1921 until 1936. It is an attempt to bring up to date Mr. Harold A. Logan's book, "The History of Trade Union Organization in Canada", which covered the history of the Canadian trade union movement up until the early 1920's. The chapter divisions of the present thesis follow generally those of Mr. Logan's history. For example, Chapter Two deals with the general history of the movement, as the first five chapters of Logan's history deal with the labour movement generally. Chapter Four gives special attention to the allocation of union membership by industrial divisions. Chapter Five is devoted to the story of the Catholic Unions (1921-36) continuing the history begun in Logan's Chapter Fourteen. Chapter Six traces the recent development of the C.B.U., completing Logan's Chapter Eleven on the One Big Union. Chapter Eight and Nine of the present thesis continue the story of the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress begun in Logan's Chapters Six and Seven. Chapter Ten of this work gives the history of the Canadian Federation of Labour, following Chapter Eight in Logan's book. Chapter Eleven gives the history of the All-Canadian Congress of Labour. This Chapter has no parallel in Logan's work since the new congress was only initiated in the period (1921-36). Chapter Twelve on the Communistic influence on the Canadian labour movement and Chapter Thirteen on the C.I.O. have no parallels in Logan's history since they developed more recently than 1921. Although the I.W.W. has its source before 1921, Logan did not devote a chapter to it, which the present writer chose to do.

The third chapter is devoted to a comparison of trade union movements in different countries. This has no precedent in Logan's book, but it is

included because the writer is interested in the problem of causation. Why is Canada's trade union movement weak and divided? Chapter Three attempts to give an adequate answer and to show the causes which make trade unionism in Canada weaker than the labour movements of other lands.

More attention is given to the Committee for Industrial Organization, whose history it was possible to carry up to 1937 instead of 1936, than any other central body of labour, and what might be regarded as a disproportionate number of pages are devoted to this problem. However, the Oshawa strike incident of 1937 has so filled Canadian newspapers with "C. I. O." news that it was felt that the problem, prospects and story of C. I. O. developments in America generally, and in Canada particularly, deserved special attention. Perhaps in 1950, in the light of history, the Committee for Industrial Organization may not deserve any more attention than the O. S. U. or the Catholic Unions but it was of special interest at the time when the thesis was written. The concluding chapter ties together all the scattered threads of the labour story in an exposition of the Canadian trade union philosophy, an enumeration of the factors which condition the success of Canadian trade unions, a criticism of trade unionism and an evaluation of the efficacy of trade union organization in Canada.

There were serious difficulties in writing a continuous and interesting story of the activities of Canadian labour. The main source of information were the yearly publications of the Dominion Department of Labour, which give the bare data of membership and affiliates. It was extremely difficult to weave these statistical facts into a full, and representative story of labour development. Professor Humphrey Michell, head of the Department of Political Economy of McMaster University, was instrumental in giving the thesis proper perspective and balance and valuable inform-

ation on many phases of trade unionism in Canada. Allan Latham's thesis on Catholic Unionism provided an excellent background for Chapter Five. "Labour in Canadian-American Relations" by Ware, Logan and Innis, was helpful in throwing a light on C. I. O. activities in Canada and on the American influences on Canadian labour. Mr. C. H. Millard, General Organizer of the C. I. O. at the General Motors plant during the Oshawa strike and President of the Local 222 of the United Automobile Workers of America at Oshawa, was invaluable in giving his view on C. I. O. activities in Canada as well as information. Much interesting comment on Canadian trade unionism was obtained from the Industrial Commission of the Winnipeg National Conference of Canadian University Students, December, 1937, to which the writer was a delegate. Various newspaper and magazine articles, enumerated in the bibliography, rounded out and gave colourful detail to the recent story of labour organization in Canada.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP (1921-36)

Table 1--Figures of Trade Union Membership in Canada (1921-36)

(1)

| YEAR | NO. OF BRANCHES | MEMBERSHIP | MEMBERSHIP AS PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION |
|------|-----------------|------------|--|
| | Column 1 | Column 2 | Column 3 |
| 1921 | 2,668 | 313,320 | 3.57 |
| 1922 | 2,512 | 276,621 | 3.10 |
| 1923 | 2,487 | 278,092 | 3.09 |
| 1924 | 2,429 | 260,643 | 2.85 |
| 1925 | 2,494 | 271,064 | 2.92 |
| 1926 | 2,515 | 274,604 | 2.91 |
| 1927 | 2,604 | 290,282 | 3.02 |
| 1928 | 2,653 | 300,602 | 3.06 |
| 1929 | 2,778 | 319,476 | 3.19 |
| 1930 | 2,809 | 322,449 | 3.07 |
| 1931 | 2,772 | 310,544 | 3.00 |
| 1932 | 2,725 | 283,576 | 2.70 |
| 1933 | 2,707 | 266,220 | 2.68 |
| 1934 | 2,740 | 281,774 | 2.61 |
| 1935 | 2,728 | 280,704 | 2.58 |
| 1936 | 2,886 | 322,473 | 2.92 |

If the figures of the three columns were traced on a graph, there would be observed a similarity of outline, correlating with the business cycle, nadirs in depression and peaks in prosperity. Trade union membership registration is only allowed when fees are paid. When labourers become unemployed in depressions, their fees go into arrears and they are soon dropped off the membership lists.

It may be noted in Column 2, that although the membership reached a peak in 1929, this peak was far lower than in 1919, the year of maximum trade union membership, while the nadir of the last depression was not quite as low as the nadir of the 1922-24 depression. In Column 3, when the membership is considered relative to a steady increase in pop-

(1)

Data obtained from the Dept. of Labour's Publications (1921-36) "Labour Organization in Canada".

ulation, the general trend appears to be a steady decline in trade union membership. While column 3 shows the usual business cycle outline, it also shows a general tendency toward an increased number of branches.

Trade union membership reached a peak in 1919 while in 1921 it experienced a heavy drop for two reasons. Firstly, there was a big decrease due to industrial depression and its consequent unemployment. Secondly, 1921 was a test year. All those mercenary members who during war years flocked to join the trade unions merely for benefits of collective bargaining dropped out when they found contributions onerous and benefits reduced. In 1922, there was another drop due to continued unemployment and inability to pay fees. Only a few of the international branches exempted members from payment of fees.

By 1923, the decline in Canadian trade union membership was apparently checked as conditions of unemployment improved. There was a small increase in membership. But the forces of the industrial depression were not yet checked, for 1924 showed another drop in membership. By 1925, and 1926, inability to pay fees no longer checked membership for there were slight increases in membership as the unemployed re-registered as members.

By 1927, business conditions were decidedly on the upward swing so there appeared a marked rise in trade union membership. There were substantial increases in 1928 and 1929 in accord with business conditions and even after the 1929 peak there was a slight increase in 1930, since the impact of the crash had not yet checked production in industry enough to cause serious unemployment.

In 1931, for the first time since 1924 membership showed a decline. Losses in 1931 and 1932 would have been even greater had not the trade

union per capita taxes been paid out of surplus funds of many trade union branches. In 1932, the industrial depression continued to retard the steady growth of the organized labour movement.

In 1933, slight gains followed by small falls in 1934 and 1935 (similar to the slight rise and fall in 1923 and 1924) occurred as the unemployment situation improved and then finally spent itself in 1934 and 1935. Although 1935 membership figures appear low, unemployment was really improved and membership increased. The reports are low because the Workers' Unity League failed to make returns, since it was in the process of being reabsorbed into the international union movement. 1936 showed the first substantial increase since the late twenties, and trade union membership in Canada is again on the upswing. The outstanding increase of 1936 finds its source in the rivalry between the international unions of the C. I. O. and of the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress, competing to obtain new members and affiliates.

It is not considered of sufficient importance to trace the changing strength in Canadian unions by cities. It is sufficient to note in the general description of Canadian unionism that Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver are usually the leaders in trade union membership and branch affiliates, with Toronto as the special stronghold of international unions. It would be expected that Winnipeg, as a radical centre would be one of the city leaders but since the failure of the general strike at the time when the O. B. U. had its greatest influence, its trade union prominence is reduced.

(1)

Toronto Globe and Mail-Oct. 25, 1937 "Trade Unions in Canada"

(2)

Hamilton Herald--June 4, 1932

It is fitting to note in a general history that in spite of its numerous rivals for first place in financial power, influence in collective bargaining, in extent of membership and number of affiliates, the international craft union movement still leads in 1936. However, for the first time in its history it has had a serious challenge to its power and numbers--the C. I. O. which is spreading even more rapidly in influence than it is in numbers, which are themselves, increasing rapidly.

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CHAPTER III

COMPARISON BETWEEN TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIPS OF DIFFERENT COUNTRIES IN 1936

(1)

Table 2-- T.U. Memberships of Countries in Proportion to Population

| COUNTRY | T.U. MEMBERSHIP AS %AGE OF TOTAL POPULATION |
|---------------|---|
| Canada | 2.58 |
| United States | 2.50 |
| New Zealand | 5.37 |
| Australia | 11.70 |
| Great Britain | 9.61 |

Explanation of Differences in Membership %ages between Various Countries

There may be observed a close resemblance between both countries of the New World with regard to union membership. They both have noticeably low trade union ratios, while that of Great Britain is much higher. One of the outstanding reasons is the geographical barriers which divide Canada into at least five isolated sections. The Maritimes are completely separated from Eastern Canada by New England so that the Maritimes have closer physical connections with the United States than with the other Canadian provinces. The northern band of forest and mining land across Quebec, Ontario and part of Manitoba is differentiated from the rest of Canada by mountain ranges. The West is thousands of sparsely-inhabited miles from the industrial hub of activity in Southern Ontario, while British Columbia is completely isolated by the Rocky Mountains. The fact that the populations of both Canada and United States are scattered over vast areas, discourages group solidarity and class action. On the

(1) Population figures were obtained respectively from the Canada Year Book, 1935, the Statesmen's Year Book, 1936, the Year Book of Australia, 1936, Year Book of New Zealand, 1936, Statistical Abstract of United Kingdom, 1936. Trade union membership figures were obtained from "Labour Organization in Canada, 1936, Statistical Abstract of the British Empire, 1936, Statistical Abstract of the United Kingdom, 1936.

other hand, the close geographic associations between workers due to the density of Great Britain's population encourages class cooperation and "esprit de corps". It might be observed that the same geographic factor makes federal government suitable to the New World and highly-centralized government natural to Great Britain. However, Canada's low trade union membership is not entirely explainable on geographical grounds since in Australia the geographic barriers are just as great as in Canada yet unionism there, is exceedingly strong.

A more important reason for the difference in degree of unionism between Great Britain and the New World is historical background. Great Britain is mature in social and political history, while both Canada and United States are young. The labour movement in Great Britain was well underway while Canada was primarily a land of agriculturalists, lumbermen and miners and the few industries Canada had were mere babies. The Industrial Revolution increased the number and importance of wage-earners in Great Britain and they have had the time to develop a class-consciousness. In the New World, it has only been the last few decades that industry has gained any ascendancy, and not for long have labourers taken their place as a class beside workers on the land. Moreover, the type of the few industries Canada has is unusually scattered. There is little wonder that working-class cooperation is much greater in Great Britain (as measured by proportions of trade union membership) than in either Canada or United States.

Moreover, social stratification has been a characteristic of England since feudal times. In those times, princes lorded it over their feudal

(1)
Industrial Commission of the National Conference of University Students
at Winnipeg, December, 1937

vassals; later, capitalists dictated to their employees whose livelihoods are at their mercy. In a country, where classes have always existed, people are aware that they cannot readily rise above their social status, so they cooperate in class solidarity. But the New World has been a land of opportunity where all men have been free and equal. America has been the trial ground of democracy. Social stratification has been slowly growing and only now is the labouring class beginning to realize, "Once a labourer, always a labourer." Only since wage earners are becoming conscious of themselves as a class is there any cooperation at all and whatever cooperation there is is still in the embryonic form (as witnessed by the small proportion of trade unionists of the total population).

The spur of economic necessity is an essential basis for cooperative action. Canada and the United States have, until the 1931-34 depression, experienced none of the more horrible effects of the capitalistic system. The recent growth of monopoly, and the concentration of wealth into a few hands have resulted in the exploitation of worker, farmer and consumer to a degree which in England was sharply experienced a few generations ago, while in the New World unemployment is becoming chronic, though to a lesser degree than in Great Britain. Poverty in America has not been acute enough to inspire cooperation until the last five years or so.

The New World until a few decades ago was a pioneering country. The men who hewed a living from the uncleared forest land and the rough unbroken soil did so only by staunch and ruthless individualism. America carries over the philosophy of rugged individualism from its none-too-distant pioneer days. Canadians and Americans up until recently had little need for and little experience in cooperation.

However, although Australia and New Zealand are pioneer countries, they have strong trade unionism. There are to be found in Australia, and in New Zealand as well, more or less isolated communities which have carried from their former homes the traditions of the Old World. (1) The population of Australia, is far more homogeneous than that of Canada (99% are Britishers). The British tradition is extremely strong. The circumstances of settlement in Australia gave rise to a powerful labour element not found in North America. The unions early acquired great influence and their power has not been seriously challenged. In Canada, there is a heterogeneity of races which makes not one nation but five nations---the Maritimes, Quebec, Ontario, the West, and British Columbia, each with its special attachment to a different form of union. Not only is the racial origin by sections heterogeneous, but there is such a mixture of races within one industrial plant that unity within one industrial plant that unity within each particular union itself is difficult.

There is another circumstance which strengthens the union movements of Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. In these countries, the same people, very largely, are members both of trade unions and of cooperatives. The union and the cooperative movements gain strength from collaboration and mutual support. In Canada, unions seek their support from urban population while cooperatives are mainly found in rural areas. The lack of unity between the unions and cooperative societies in Canada is a contributory cause of the weakness of both movements.

(1)

The explanation on racial grounds of the strength of unionism in Australasia is given by Professor Michell.



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CHAPTER IV

TRADE UNIONISM BY INDUSTRIES

An explanation of the Composition of Each Industrial Division in Tables 3,4.
(1)

MINING AND QUARRYING. This division is made up chiefly of coal miners, while the metal miners are not well organized. It includes the United Mine Workers of America with members in Alberta and Nova Scotia; the Mine Workers' Union of Canada in Alberta, British Columbia and Northern Ontario; the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers.

BUILDING TRADES . The membership of this division is engaged chiefly in building and construction with the exception of electric workers on electric railways, railway shops and electric light and power plants. To this division belong city building councils. Carpenters, bricklayers, masons, electric workers and plumbers together made up 84% of the total membership of this group in 1933, and 71% in 1936.

METAL. Members of this division are employed chiefly in metal-working establishments and in railway shops. The automobile workers and the machinists comprise over half of the membership of the group.

PRINTING AND PAPER-MAKING TRADES. This group includes workmen in printing and publishing, in pulp and paper mills. The carpenters and electricians, engineers and firemen of these same mills belong to the building and metal trades division. The pulp, sulphite and paper mill workers and the typographical union and the paper-makers and the printing pressmen are chief unions in this division.

CLOTHING, BOOT AND SHOE TRADES. The chief unions are the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, (the largest in the clothing industry), the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, the United Garment Workers,

(1) Data obtained from "Labour Organization in Canada" 1933, 1936

Boot and Shoe Workers' Union, International Fur Workers' Union, and the United Hatters, and Cap, Millinery Workers' Union. It used to include the Industrial Union of Needle Trade Workers, but this union was dispersed when the Workers' Unity League of Canada was dissolved by the Communists.

RAILWAY EMPLOYEES. This division, the largest and most important industrial group, includes a wide variety of unions, independent units, international unions and purely Canadian unions. The steam railway employees include four important independent unions, namely the Locomotive Engineers, Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, Railway Trainmen and Railway Conductors. This division embraces affiliates of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada such as the Brotherhood of Maintenance-of-Way Employees, with, in 1935, the largest and, in 1936, the second largest union membership in Canada; the brotherhood of Railway Carmen and several smaller unions. The Order of Railway Telegraphers and the Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks also have large memberships. Among the wholly Canadian unions is the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees, with the third largest membership of any Canadian union in 1936, which is chiefly composed of the employees of the Canadian National Railways and the Canadian National Express Company. This union was instrumental in the formation of the All-Canadian Congress of Labour and is one of its foremost affiliates. This division contains a large number of metal trades workers who are not employed in railway shop work. They should really be placed in the metal trades group but it has been impossible to obtain separate figures.

OTHER TRANSPORTATION AND NAVIGATION TRADES. The Amalgamated Association of Street, Electrical Railway and Motor Coach Employees with a

large Canadian membership, is made up of a miscellaneous collection of motormen, conductors, electrical railway employees and bus drivers and some electrical workers and machinists that ordinarily would belong to their respective crafts. The O. B. U. has a large following among the employees of the Winnipeg Street Railway. The Longshoremen have the International Longshoremen's Association with branches in Halifax, Saint John, Vancouver, Victoria and the National Association of Marine Engineers, affiliated with the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada.

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT, PERSONAL SERVICE AND AMUSEMENT. This group includes a wide variety of unions--those of postal clerks, letter carriers, railway mail clerks, the Amalgamated Civil Servants of Canada, the International Association of Fire Eaters, Hotel and Restaurant employees, the Musicians' Union, and a stage employees' organization.

ALL OTHER TRADES AND GENERAL LABOUR. The largest organization in the group is the Industrial Workers of the World. Into this division, there falls the Commercial Telegraphers, the Operating Engineers, Firemen, and Oilers and Brewery Workers and a few unions of fishermen in British Columbia. The division includes the membership of the O. B. U. and the National Catholic Unions (including workers in various classes of employment, chiefly in factories). The reports of such central bodies as the O. B. U. and the I. W. W. and the National Catholic Unions do not differentiate their membership on industrial lines. So for the lack of an alternative method, their membership is lumped under the heading of general labour. Thus, due to this inefficiency in reporting, the division of general labour is deceptively large. For instance, when in 1922, the O. B. U. was dropped from this grouping the %age of general labour among all industrial groups dropped from 24.45% to 19.38%. When some of

the large central groups were again included in 1932 the %age rose from 7.87 to 24.25.

Comments on the Industrial Division of Canadian Trade Unionism

Throughout, the history of Canadian labour organization, trade union membership among railway employees has always led, as it has, very definitely in the period(1921-36) under consideration. In the railway field not only has British capital predominated but at the beginning of railway expansion labour leaders in whom was planted the strong British tradition of trade unionism, organized the railway employees. Moreover, travelling is a part of the business of railway men. It makes possible contacts of employees from different geographic areas which are impossible in any but the transportation industries. The resultant fraternal feeling between railway employees from all parts of Canada makes for cooperative action in trade unions. So strong is trade unionism in the railway industry, in spite of the fact that the railway business has perhaps more crafts than any other single industry, that labour can usually obtain its concessions from capital by peaceful conciliation without using pressure of a strike.

The building trades in Canada are fairly well organized. In respect to numbers the building trades division was second among the industrial divisions in 1921-24, 1929-31, and 1936, while in 1925 it dropped to fourth place and in 1926-28, 1932, '33, '35 it held third place and in 1934 even dropped to fifth place.

The public employees, personal service and amusement trades group has been consistently high throughout. It held third place in 1921-25, moved up to second place in 1926-28, back down to third place in 1929-

31, second in 1931-35 and rested at third place in 1936.

Mining and quarrying, though it has its occasional ups (up to second place in 1925) and downs is practically always fourth among the industrial divisions, in respect to numbers. Since 1934, the clothing, boot and shoe division and the printing and papermaking division have risen in rank. The Catholic Unions in Quebec have been instrumental in bringing about vast improvements in the labour conditions of Quebec
(1)
textile workers, thus attracting new members. Since the Ladies' Garment Workers' Union joined the C.I.O., its membership in Canada
(2)
as well as in the U.S.A. has leaped to new heights.

(1)

Winnipeg Conference of University Students, December, 1937

(2)

Hamilton Herald Feb.22/36 "Craft Unions in U.S.A. Face Grave Tests."

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CHAPTER V

THE NATIONAL AND CATHOLIC UNIONS OF QUEBEC

Introduction.

The Federation of Catholic Workers was formed in 1921 at Hull at the fourth conference of National and Catholic Unions, with two hundred delegates representing eighty-nine unions. Catholic unions had existed separately ever since 1901 when a labour strike and lock-out necessitated the intervention of the Roman Catholic clergy to bring about a settlement. Church propaganda had spread this doctrine of clerical guidance in labour affairs so that such Catholic unions sprang up all over Quebec. To-day its chief strongholds are Quebec, Chicoutimi, Hull, Three Rivers and Montreal, which, though it has the largest population is the weakest. These unions rose out of a nationalistic feeling against the International unions which the French Canadians felt were swallowing the less important Canadian affiliates. At first, they included both Protestants and Catholics, but later they ruled out of membership the Protestants, making for greater unity against the International unions. Still later, Protestants were tolerated as members but were not eligible for office.

Why were unions so easily organized on a confessional basis? The Quebec working population except in Montreal is homogeneous as to race and religion. Then too, Quebec workers are influenced tremendously by the Church. Yet, the Church could not have stepped into control so easily had the labour leaders not welcomed its help. They tolerated clerical domination because they feared that some other

(1)

Canadian Forum, March, 1933, "Catholic Unionism in Quebec"--Allan Latham.

type of union might tend toward assimilation of the French-speaking population with the English-speaking workers and even with Americans.

Since the ruling of the Berlin Conference of the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress to refuse to admit delegates of Canadian unions when there was a corresponding international union, the Catholic unions dropped out and began forming their own federations. City central councils and national trade federations began having conferences and in 1921 formed a constitution embodying the doctrines of the Papal Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, entitled, "Rerum Novarum of France."

The Federation's object is "to promote and safeguard the general (1) interest of Catholic workers in Canada; to create and maintain a concerted movement of Catholic syndicalism, which while allowing the various groups their autonomy, would bind them by federal bonds, at the same time defending and developing in common the professional, economic, and patriotic, and religious interests of Catholic workers in Canada." It is based on certain fundamental doctrines. It supports nationalism to defeat internationalism. From its resolutions and press articles, it may be observed that it tends to give preference in employment to Canadian workers over foreign, and hence it naturally disapproves of immigration into Canada. Its beliefs are anti-semitic and tinged with (2) nationalism of the Bourasra type. It believes in the unity of interests of employer and employee and spurns the doctrine of class war. There is clerical intervention to see that no tactics of labour violate this unity between employer and employee. Labour behaviour must conform with the Church's ideas of morality and justice. Accordingly, the unions are

(1) part of the constitution of the Catholic Federation as given in any of the pamphlets entitled, "Labour Organization in Canada."

(2) Canadian Forum, March, 1933, "Catholic Unionism in Quebec", Latham.

urged to use methods of conciliation and arbitration, and strikes only as a last resort. It is probable that one of the reasons for the peaceful behaviour of the unions is that women and girls (supposedly⁽¹⁾ peace-loving) have a large place in Quebec industries. There have been violations of the policy of peaceful conciliation for there have been serious strikes in the boot and shoe industry of Quebec and Montreal. Bishops could do nothing else but openly support the cause of the strikers and even made church collections to support their families.

(1) Catholic unions, in addition to their economic functions, fulfill a social purpose. The workers are bound together by more than a common desire for economic justice. Since they are one in language, religion, and race, their association with each other in a social way is natural. Pionics and banquets are part of every union's program of activities, while the Montreal Tramways' picnics are famous affairs. The social function of unionism is peculiar to Catholic unions and is practically unheard of in provinces other than Quebec.

The membership of the Federation of Catholic Unions is made up of trade federations, industrial federations, regional unions of syndicates, including company as well as shop unions, and the Federation of Workingmen's Research Clubs. Single unions can not join unless there is no equivalent federation. The central body functions through its annual congresses, its federal bureau, its executive officers. Its aim is the formation of trade federations and city and district councils of the branches under its jurisdiction. It is a loose federation rather than a highly-centralized body.

(1)

Idea taken from "Catholic Unionism in Quebec", Canadian Forum, March/33

Table 5--Membership Figures for National and Catholic Unions (1921-36)

| (1) YEAR | FEDERATION ESTIMATE OF MEMBERSHIP | ACTUAL M ³ SHIP REPORTED BY UNIONS | NO. OF BRANCHES REPORTING | TOTAL NO. BRANCHES | MEMBERSHIP ON THE BASIS OF ACTUAL RE- PORTS (2) |
|-------------|---|---|---------------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 1921 | 45,000 | 8,003 | | 120 | |
| 1922 | 38,335 | 10,631 | | 106 | |
| 1923 | 30,000 | 12,102 | | 106 | |
| 1924 | 25,000 | 9,718 | | 94 | |
| 1925 | 25,000 | 7,816 | 50 | 99 | 15,000 |
| 1926 | 25,000 | 10,942 | 74 | 103 | 15,210 |
| 1927 | 25,000 | 11,983 | 82 | 104 | 15,200 |
| 1928 | 25,000 | 13,034 | 72 | 106 | 19,000 |
| 1929 | 25,000 | 12,522 | 71 | 106 | 18,700 |
| 1930 | 25,000 | 13,922 | 76 | 108 | 19,780 |
| 1931 | 25,151 | 12,110 | 94 | 121 | 15,600 |
| 1932 | 25,000 | 6,755 | 61 | 109 | 12,200 |
| 1933 | 26,894 | 6,160 | 55 | 110 | 12,320 |
| 1934 | 20,346 | | | 122 | |
| 1935 | 35,000 | | | 140 | |
| 1936 | 45,000 | | | 190 | |

Description of Membership

The Federation membership estimates do not show the same deviations from year to year, as those of other trade unions. Membership dropped steadily until 1924, and remained stationary until 1933 when it rose rapidly until 1936. The fall of 1922 was due partly to the depression and partly to the fact that the reporting facilities were not thoroughly organized in 1921, and hence the 1921 figures are probably too high, for the same reason. The decrease from 1921 to 1924 is avowedly due to the extreme post-war depression, and inability to pay union fees. These were test years, eliminating those who joined for mercenary reasons during the

(1)

Figures were obtained from "Labour Organization in Canada" 1921-36. Blank spaces occur because reports were not consistently made to the Dept. of Lab.

(2) The numbers in this column are derived thus:- e.g. in 1925, 50 out of 99 branches reported. If 50, reported 7,816 membership, then 99 would report $(7,816 \times \frac{99}{50})$ which is approximately 15,000. This method is not strictly correct because the non-reporting branches may have membership in different proportion than that of the reporting ones. But this method does give an approximate idea of the probable, actual membership.

war boom. The stationary membership of 1924-33 is partly accounted for by the fact that while the members pay some fees to the unions, the Church helps with the finances, when called upon. Hence the fluctuating ability to pay fees is not so great a determinant of their membership, as in non-sectarian unions. In addition, the appeal for membership is not only economic but religious, and since the Roman Catholic Church has a strong hold on the adherents to its faith, its steady appeal is not likely to be affected strongly by the vicissitudes of economic conditions. The rise in 1933-36, while partly accounted for by the fact of returning prosperity was due more to the increased efforts of Church and central Federation in spreading propaganda and in renewed attempts at organization.

Membership reports from actual returns give a different story from the rough estimates of the Federation. The figures of actual reports made by separate Catholic unions are only available from 1924 to 1933. Estimating from this probable membership, we find that the Canadian Federation of Catholic Unions has exaggerated its membership. These actual figures like the Federation estimates show that membership, on the whole, changes little from financial and religious causes previously mentioned.

General Description of Catholic Union Development

There has been great activity in the Federation which the relatively stable membership does not indicate. Notice must be taken of the progress made in developing federations and councils in its own ranks, and its clashes with the international unions, who regard Catholic unions as a menace to the unity of the workers, and who resent the fact that they are losing valuable fee-paying members because of the Catholic unions.

In 1922, the Church started a vigorous campaign of education and

propaganda to arouse Catholics from their apathy to join the unions. In the same year, the Church permanently stopped the St. John Baptist Societies from inviting international unionists to their festivals. In 1923, the first trade federation was formed with six affiliates under the name of the Federation of Pulp and Paper Factory Employees of Canada. There were also seven central councils and three district councils. 1924 finds them with a victory in parliament. In spite of the opposition of non-sectarian unions, the National and Catholic group was granted rights of incorporation. In the same year, a Catholic Federation of Building Trades' Employees was established and one additional district council. 1925 was marked by the dissolution of Catholic unions and council at Granby, because the Federation did not meet there as it had promised.

1926 was a year of exceptional activity. The former Montreal branch of the Dominion Postal Clerks' Association which had left the parent body joined the Montreal Central Catholic Council. An independent union of letter carriers, who could not pay their insurance to their association was incorporated and then affiliated with the Montreal Catholic Council. It was a year of clash with International unions. In Montreal, the Catholic unions obtained a "closed shop" agreement with a printing firm which the International unions to their bitter chagrin were unable to break. The Catholic unions tried to get all the printing work of the Catholic School Commission, but was successfully opposed by the International unions. In July, Catholic bricklayers got preference in building a Beauport hospital in spite of International union protests. On the other hand, in Quebec city the International unions got a building contract excluding Catholic unions. In 1926, for the

first time study circles were entitled to representation in the Federation.

(1) 1927 was notable for the unsolicited approval by the Brantford Trades and Labour Council, an international union, of Catholic Unions in companies' "closed cities" like Quebec. There were rumours of dissolution of the Catholic Union of Plumbers but this was averted by applying strict rules of secession. The greatest activity in the formation of new unions occurred in Chicoutimi. In 1928, there were four trade federations, eight central councils and four local federations. A building trades council in Chicoutimi was formed. In 1929, Catholic unionists got non-Catholic union employees ejected from a street railway company in Montreal, arousing the International unions to fresh opposition. In the same year, there was a growth of building trade councils in Montreal.

At the 1930 convention, there was a motion to affiliate with the International Federation of Christian Unions, but up until 1937 it had not been acted upon. The same year, a Building Trades Council was organized in Sherbrooke, but a trade federation was dissolved there. The following year, a building trades council in Jonquiers and a boot and shoe workers' federation were formed, while a building trades council of Hull was dissolved. In 1932, there was dissolution in Lachine but a new Building Trades council in St. Hyacinthe. The years 1933-35 showed a steady growth in membership and organization. In 1935, there was added a new federation that of barbers and hairdressers. In 1936, a peak was reached in membership, general activity and progress in organization work. This year culminated in a record of 182 syndicates, 8 study circles, 22 trade federations, and 9 central councils.

(1) All information for this general description is obtained in the files of "Labour Organization in Canada."

Conclusion

Because its strong nationalistic and religious appeals make for solidarity against international unionism, the National and Catholic Unions will remain a thorn in the side of international unions for they prevent the latter's control over wages in certain key industries (1) of Quebec. From the point of view of membership, International unions in Quebec are in the majority, yet the Catholic unions have an influence through Church and government more than proportionate to their comparatively small membership. (2) While Catholic unions are exceptionally homogeneous within their own ranks, they are an obstacle to Canadian labour unity. Because of ecclesiastical control they refuse to cooperate with any other national union body as witnessed by their adamant resistance to affiliation with the All-Canadian Congress. Therefore they must be regarded as just one more cause of sectionalism in Canadian labour organization.

(1)
Can. Forum, March, 1933 "Catholic Unionism in Quebec."

(2)
In Chapter IV of "Labour in Canadian-American Relations" by Ware, Logan and Innis, it is stated that Quebec is unique among the provinces in showing by legislative action a definite antagonism to International unions.

TRADE UNIONISM IN CANADA (1921-36)

Chapter VI

THE ONE BIG UNION

Introduction.

The One Big Union was a regional movement of the four Western provinces and Western Ontario springing out of Western discontent with Eastern domination in the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress and in the Dominion government. Its main objective was to force the government to release political prisoners (taken during the war to insure safety against agitators at home), to demand the withdrawal from Russia of the Canadian troops fighting against the Soviets, and have anti-radical orders-in-council repealed. Its original aim was to establish industrial opposition to craft unionism and to destroy the system of production for profit. It has not strictly adhered to the principle of organization by industry. For instance, its secondary units are geographical so that local unions can act jointly in one locality against an employer. Its method is purely economic organization for it regards political lobbying as futile. In 1919, a large part of Alberta broke away from the O.B.U. because its request for political action was overruled. This new approach was born out of disgust for the methods of the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress which failed to gain wage increases during the war. Its main program was freedom of speech, assembly and press; release of political prisoners; removal of restrictions on working-class to organize; and a referendum for a general strike to enforce these demands; a crusade for the six-hour day and the five-day week. The O.B.U. succeeded in getting a grip because of influential leadership, and foreign influences (Communist propaganda)

and unrest among the workers due to war industrial dislocation.

(1)(2) Ch.4 "Labour in Canadian-American Relations"

The peak of its power was reached in the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. Although the Convention of the O. B. U. theoretically approved of the sympathetic strike weapon, it refused to call a general strike in support of the city-wide strike in Winnipeg which was not begun by the O. B. U. but by the Metal Trades Workers. The O. B. U. refused to join the Workers' Party in 1922 because the Communists at that time opposed dual unionism. When it joined the All-Canadian Congress in 1927, it gave up any lingering ideas it may still have had of general strike and to-day it is quite conservative.

Membership Figures of the O. B. U. (1921-36) - Table 6 (1)

| YEAR | MEMBERSHIP | UNITS |
|------|------------|-------|
| 1921 | 5,300 | 34 |
| 1922 | | |
| 1923 | | |
| 1924 | | |
| 1925 | 17,856 | 56 |
| 1926 | 18,665 | 61 |
| 1927 | 19,245 | 50 |
| 1928 | 20,029 | 46 |
| 1929 | 22,890 | 43 |
| 1930 | 23,724 | 45 |
| 1931 | 24,260 | 46 |
| 1932 | 23,340 | 47 |
| 1933 | 23,300 | 46 |
| 1934 | 23,580 | 48 |
| 1935 | 24,055 | 53 |
| 1936 | 23,745 | 44 |

(1)

These figures are obtained from the files of "Labour Organization in Canada" 1921-36. In 1921, membership was an estimate made by the Department of Labour, a total of individual branch reports. No returns were made by the General Secretary of the O. B. U. from 1920-24 because the One Big Union accused the Department of Labour of intentionally underestimating their membership. In 1925, they resumed reports to the Department. We have reason to believe that these estimates are exaggerated. In 1931, the first time that the separate branches of the O. B. U. reported membership to the Dominion Department of Labour, the fifteen branches which reported had 3,316. In proportion, 46 branches should have 9,106. The wide difference in the two figures, 9,106 and 24,260, the general estimate, suggests that the Secretary gives a grossly exaggerated estimate of membership.

Causes for General Decline in Membership

In 1919, the supposed support of the Winnipeg General Strike, brought the O. B. U. a host of new members. But when the strike failed because of government intervention, the fact that the O. B. U. was commonly, though mistakenly, identified with it, brought it serious governmental opposition, which partly accounts for its general decline, weakened membership and lack of funds since 1919. Legislation was passed strictly limiting the legality of the strike weapon. The law has consistently regarded the O. B. U. as illegal in its court decisions and legislation. Furthermore, the government increased the penalty for sedition from two to four years and added provisions to the Immigration Act whereby any person, other than a Canadian citizen, who advocates (1) violence in Canada is classed as an undesirable immigrant, subject to deportation while citizenship may be removed from anyone disloyal to the Crown. This tightening up of legislation made another general strike impossible, cramped the radical activities of some O. B. U. leaders and caused the deportation of others. The International unions put up an adamant front of opposition allied with employers who considered the International unions as the lesser of the two evils. The O. B. U. has declined because it has lost many of its effective leaders who deserted the new body for their old affiliations, the International unions.

The strength of the O. B. U. was in the West and its centre after 1920 was Winnipeg. It never firmly took root east of Fort William, Ontario. The O. B. U. was not strongly enough established to bear the industrial

(1)

Chapter 4 of "Labour in Canadian-American Relations."

depressions of the West which from the nature of Western industries is more severe than in Eastern Canada. When the depression of 1921 came, there was no money to pay funds, so membership dropped drastically, even though some members were allowed temporary exemption. Although membership figures are not given until 1925, the general history of the O. B. U. for that period suggests that there was a marked decline in membership. In 1925, when the general secretary resumed reporting again, the O. B. U.'s estimates of membership were 17,856--a loss of 23,294--more than one half the original membership. General estimates show slight increases in membership as prosperity returned. Since 1930, the membership has been fairly constant. None of the efforts to stem disorganization or stimulate membership have really been of any use because the forces aligned against it have been too great.

General History of the O. B. U.

The history of the O. B. U. from 1921 to 1936 is the story of a failing cause with occasional spurts of frantic effort to reestablish it. In 1921, Prichard, Russel and Johns, leaders just out of prison, made a tour to stem the tide of disintegration but it was of no avail. In the coal fields the employers used the check-off system, whereby, to keep his job, every miner had to belong to the United Mine Workers' Association, an International union which was a bitter enemy of the O. B. U. The charter of Section 18, of the International Miners was returned, having been previously confiscated, and those who had deserted to the O. B. U. again entered the International Union. In the coal areas, the O. B. U. was suppressed except for slight stirrings of dissatisfaction which were expressed in 1924, when in Alberta and

Nova Scotia, it gained ground among the miners.

The Lumber Workers' Industrial Union had seceded from the O. B. U. because it opposed geographical units of organization, desiring a strictly industrial one. In 1921, efforts were made to reaffiliate it, but although the Lumber Workers received negotiations favourably, they postponed reaffiliation and finally joined the I. W. W. instead. The Ontario Loggers, however, remained loyal to the O. B. U. In 1921, the O. B. U. leaders, Johns, Midgley, Knight and Christophers, resigned from active participation in the Union, dealing it another blow, while in 1922 still more leaders deserted. In 1923, in spite of the O. B. U.'s alleged aversion to political tactics, it had introduced into the Manitoba parliament a bill designed to protect the legality and employability of all union members, registered or unregistered. This was intended to prevent the abuses of the check-off system but it was defeated. In 1924, the O. B. U. took advantage of unsettled labour conditions in Nova Scotia, sent organizers into the coal and iron territory and succeeded in forming one branch at Sydney and three branches and a central labour council at Pictou. In 1925, the O. B. U. established seven units---four in Nova Scotia, one in New Brunswick, one in Quebec, one in Manitoba. In 1925, there were three central labour councils while in 1921 there had been four.

In 1926 the Royal Commission in Nova Scotia, a government agent to negotiate between employers and employees, refused to work with the O. B. U. In addition, the U. M. W., by refusing to work with the O. B. U. members in Stallarton, Nova Scotia, obtained a closed shop agreement with the mines. There were similar successes for the U. M. W. in Waterford, Glace Bay, Sydney Mines, Cape Breton district, but a few active

branches of O. B. U. remained in Springhill, Westville, Stellarton, (1) Thorburn, Inverness and Sydney in Nova Scotia. The number of adherents in Nova Scotia on the whole steadily declined since its sporadic activity in 1924 until 1937. In 1926, the O. B. U.'s publication "The Bulletin" was prohibited by law from conducting betting contests on baseball scores and federal election results. The very fact that the Bulletin was resorting to such low methods as running gambling contests, indicates that it was losing hold of the sympathy and interest of the workers. In 1926, an especially active year, the O. B. U. sought to have an All-Canadian radical labour body conference outside of the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress. When such a conference did take place, the O. B. U. was not represented. Later it was admitted, but expelled from the All-Canadian Congress for non-payment of per capita taxes. In 1929 it was readmitted because of payment of part of overdue fees. In 1930, it dropped out once more but in 1932 it was again admitted. When there was a split in the All-Canadian Congress in 1936, the O. B. U. again withdrew and affiliated with the Canadian Federation of Labour.

In 1927, in spite of the total loss in units, there was organization among the C. N. R. employees and pack-house workers as well as gas workers in Montreal; among building labourers of Regina, and the metal miners of British Columbia. In 1928, the O. B. U. gained ground among the metal miners of Northern Ontario. In the same year, only two central councils of the former four reported, i. e. those of Fort William and Winnipeg. In 1929, organizers were especially active in the mining camps of British Columbia, with meagre results. In 1930 and 1936 and intervening years, there was a steady decline until in 1936 the membership fell to 23,745 and only one central council remained. In spite of the energetic attempts

(1) All information for the general history is in "LAB. Organ. in Can."

of organizers to stem the tide of degeneration, if predictions be made on the basis of the past record of the O.B.U., its future is doomed to decadence and dissolution.

TRADE UNIONISM IN CANADA (1921-36)

CHAPTER VII

THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD IN CANADA

Introduction.

The I.W.W. in Canada is the Canadian representative of North American revolutionary industrial unionism. It is built upon the deeply-rooted belief that the working class, and the employing class have nothing in common under any circumstances. It is the historical mission of the working class to abolish capitalism. The most direct method to upset the capitalistic system is by revolutionary violence of the workers. Any peaceful method of cooperation between employers and employees such as is fostered by craft unions is a cowardly compromise, deceiving labourers into believing there is a harmony of interests, which, in reality does not exist. For the time when the old capitalism will crumble, the Industrial Workers of the World are preparing an industrial structure. It is building a vertical Trade Union organization by entire industries, in contrast to the geographical organization of the C.B.U., similar to the I.W.W. in its emphasis on class war. Its tactics are entirely industrial for it frowns on political action, used by the Russian Communists. This difference in tactics keeps the I.W.W. from joining the Communistic party.

Since the I.W.W. of Canada is only an off-shoot of a North American movement, it can be best understood by a general historical outline. It emerged the beginning of the century and at first constituted a threat to American capitalism because of its revolutionary program. But this threat lost its force due to internal splits. As early as 1906 the first split occurred, when a section, which

approved of political action, broke away and formed the Workers' International Industrial Union.

The second blow was the Canadian and American government bans, making I. W. W. membership illegal with imprisonment as the punishment if membership is continued. This measure was taken because certain necessary war emergency actions could not afford to be impeded by the I. W. W. Numerous government raids and prosecutions caused a general decline in membership and outlawed or imprisoned its "intellectual" leaders.

The second split occurred when the government ban was lifted. In 1923, the members of the union who had been imprisoned for participating in the so-called class war were released on conditioned pardons which were approved by the I. W. W. But a faction, led by Rowan and Bowerman who believed that accepting anything less than unconditioned pardons was a compromise with the law and also disliked the centralized control of the union, withdrew and set up a new organization. Such internal dissension prevented strong centralization of control, shattering the I. W. W.'s only hope for power.

The field is now cleared to tell the Canadian story. The I. W. W. which had entered Canada in 1906 took root chiefly in the West, appealing mostly to metal miners and unskilled workers. After the war ban the remnants of membership were isolated individuals and radical groups but no branch unions. The Workers' International Industrial Union, shaken by the war ban, formed two Canadian branches in Kitchener and Toronto. By 1922 both were dissolved and the Union became identified with the Socialist Labour party in Canada. Reestab-

lishment of the I.W.W. itself occurred in Canada in 1922.(1)

Table 7--Estimates of I.W.W. Membership (1921-36) (2)

| YEAR | NORTH-AMERICAN MEMBERSHIP | CANADIAN MEMBERSHIP |
|------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 1921 | 12,000 | |
| 1922 | 44,000 | |
| 1923 | | |
| 1924 | 58,000 | 11,500 |
| 1925 | 38,000 | 10,000 |
| 1926 | 34,450 | 4,600 |
| 1927 | 36,500 | 4,400 |
| 1928 | 36,500 | 4,400 |
| 1929 | 26,325 | 4,400 |
| 1930 | 23,990 | 3,975 |
| 1931 | 21,596 | 3,466 |
| 1932 | 21,596 | 3,618 |
| 1933 | 31,691 | 3,618 |
| 1934 | 37,715 | 4,155 |
| 1935 | 37,715 | 4,200 |
| 1936 | 37,715 | 4,200 |

Description of Membership of I.W.W.

The Canadian membership figures show a progressive loss until 1931 and from 1931 until 1936 a progressive increase. The increase in membership since 1931 corresponds with the general improvement in business conditions but the decrease in membership in the 1925-29 boom is contrary to the usual rise in trade union membership. This

(1)

The material for the "Introduction" was obtained solely from the files of "Labour Organization in Canada" 1921, 1922.

(2)

Membership figures are obtained from "Labour Organization in Canada", 1921-36. Not until 1924 did the Canadian movement develop enough to warrant separate membership reports at Chicago headquarters. Whenever membership estimates are the same two years in succession, it is not because membership actually was identical but because there was a failure to report for the second year under consideration.

decrease may be attributed to the internal dissension which disintegrated organization and discouraged membership. It may be observed in examining either the Canadian or the general membership figures that extreme fluctuations are frequent e.g. the fall in Canadian membership from 10,000 to 4,600 in 1926 and the fall in general membership from 36,500 to 26,325 in 1929. Fluctuations are so extreme because the membership is composed of radicals whose sentiments and thus their trade union affiliations change more readily than the steadier membership of more conservative trade unions than the I.W.W.

In comparing the general with Canadian membership, it may be observed that while the general rise and fall is the same, extreme fluctuations do not occur in the same places. In 1925, it is interesting to note that U.S.A. membership increased while Canadian membership decreased along with the general decrease.

General Description of I.W.W. Activity in Canada.

I.W.W.'s reestablishment in 1922 was due to the collapse of the Lumber Workers' Union as an independent unit. Due to the opposition of many of its members to affiliation with the Red International of Trade Unions, the Lumber Union conference at Cranbrook, B.C. was a failure. In disgust, they threw in their lot with the American organization, the I.W.W. Early in 1923, the Lumber Workers' Union no. 120 of the I.W.W. was formed at Cranbrook, and subsequently the Vancouver branch of the Lumber Workers of the same district. In 1923, another branch was formed, the Marine Transport Workers of Vancouver. There was sporadic activity

in the prairies and an agitation to get I.W.W. members to raise harvest wages.

In 1924, branches were established in Calgary and Port Arthur. Among the Ontario lumbermen, two thousand men deserted the O.B.U. for the I.W.W. because the O.B.U. failed to take quick steps to join the two unions as the workers requested. I.W.W. workers invaded the harvest fields to enforce an 8-hour day. There were some arrests but convictions were quashed. I.W.W. members were active in metal mining districts of Northern Ontario, organizing. In Cranbrook, the I.W.W. conducted a successful strike.

In 1925, the first Canadian I.W.W. convention was held, that of the agricultural union of Calgary to demand a ten-hour day maximum and a minimum wage of \$6.00 per day to insure decent conditions of labour. In the same year another branch was formed among the coal miners of Wayne, Alberta, but this union was short-lived. In 1926, there were still six unions as in the previous year, but the Winnipeg agricultural union had died while a new recruiting union in Port Arthur was formed. In 1927, there were seven unions, the addition of a new recruiting station in Calgary swelling the record.

1928 was a year of conferences. The ninth Ontario district conference of the Lumber Workers' Industrial Union was held in Port Arthur. Chief among the resolutions was one to approach the O.B.U. with a view to bringing O.B.U. and I.W.W. under one head, and a resolution to have a Chicago conference of left-wing unionists of European countries. The Sudbury branch of the same district union refused to confer with the O.B.U. or to have a conference of left-wingers. The Port Arthur conference made a proposal to Chicago of

TRADE UNIONISM IN CANADA (1921-36)

CHAPTER VIII

INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES ON THE CANADIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. (1)

Canadian labour organization has been predominantly influenced during its whole history by American trade unionism. Distinct but lesser influences have been the British example, which stimulated legislative action such as the nine-hour movement (legislative action has been more successful in Canada than in the United States); the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec, felt through the Catholic Unions; and German, French, Russian movements reaching Canada directly from Europe, and indirectly through the U. S. A.. Of these latter foreign influences, the Russian has been most marked in Canada.

The reason that the American influence has been so pronounced in the Canadian movement is Canadian sectionalism rooted in geographical conditions. Natural barriers have accentuated racial barriers in the development of five nations within one i.e. the Maritimes, Quebec, Ontario, the West and British Columbia. Hence, cultural diffusion is greater North and South between, for example, British Columbia and Washington State, both an integral part of the Pacific coast, than between rich industrial Ontario and poor agricultural Western Canada.

Another reason for American domination of Canadian trade unionism is Canada's lag in the industrial revolution. Large-scale production spread in U. S. A. about forty years before it characterized the Canadian economy. Consequently, the American labour movement was a thriving adult, of thirty years, well-suited to assist and rule the Canadian movement which was only really born in 1870. The thirty year lag

(1) Material for Ch. VIII is taken largely from Ch. 1 and Ch. 2 of Pt. I in "labour in Canadian-American Relations"--Logan, Innis, Ware

between the two labour movements was gradually caught up, yet the American movement always was "the boss".

There are still differences between the two movements. Canada is weaker than the United States in industrial unity except in the extractive and railroad fields. Canada has closer international connections than the U.S.A. because of its membership in the British Empire. The most glaring difference is the greater diversity of the Canadian movement because of the stronger influence of the Roman Catholic Church, sectionalism, British influence, the inability of the A.F. of L. to maintain conformity in Canada as it does in the United States. In U.S.A., before the recent clash between C.I.O. and A.F. of L. there was strong labour unity. In Canada there are four competing labour organisations. Why this lack of unity in Canada? Because of the instability and immaturity of the wage-earning groups, the aggressive policy of the Roman Catholic Church in the province of Quebec, and the slight concentration of industry in a predominantly-agricultural community, and the clash between workers trained in British unions before coming to Canada and the international unionists.

There were three major American penetrations in Canadian trade unionism--the International unions, the Knights of Labour, and the Industrial Workers of the World. As a defence against International unions, the Canadian Federation of Labour was formed and in 1927, the All-Canadian Trades and Labour Congress. In spite of the opposition of these bodies, the C.S.U., the Catholic unions, and the purely Canadian unions, and independent unions, the International unions are to this day the most powerful factor in the Canadian labour movement, with the exception perhaps of the C.I.O.

The Knights of Labour gained great sway, reaching a peak of predominance in the 1880's. The K. of L. lasted longer in Canada than in U.S.A., because they did not become revolutionary in Canada as they did in the United States and because the A. F. of L. did not have such a stronghold in Canada as in U.S.A. In 1895, A. F. of L. won the struggle in the States, and in Canada the K. of L. were ejected from the Canadian Trades and Labour in 1902, and disappeared from the All-Canadian Congress in 1906.

The third major American penetration is the I. W. W. whose purpose was revolutionary and policy direct or political action. It had its rise and fall in Canada and at present it has only five Canadian unions. However, it laid a basis for radicalism in Western Canada and British Columbia.

There has been a fourth American penetration i.e. the Committee for Industrial Organization but this penetration will be studied intensively later, in Chapter XIII. More powerful than American or British penetration has been the Russian influence in the last decade. This factor will also be given more attention later, in Chapter XII.

TRADE UNIONISM IN CANADA (1921-36)

CHAPTER IX

THE TRADES AND LABOUR CONGRESS OF CANADA.

Introduction

The major Canadian labour organ, corresponding to the American Federation of Labour is the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada. Formed as early as 1873, it is the oldest and most representative body of internationally-organized workers in the Dominion. It originally included international unions, independent unions, and Knights of Labour assemblies, and city labour councils. When in 1902, its amended constitution excluded Knights of Labour assemblies and national unions where there were Internationals of the same craft, its membership became predominantly international.

Its present functions became defined as the outcome of clash between the A. F. of L. and the Canadian Congress. The American Federation wanted to have the Canadian Congress under its jurisdiction on the standing of any other American state. But the Canadian Congress insisted on having charge of its provinces on a sovereign basis. A compromise was made. The Canadian Congress relinquished to the A. F. of L. authority on jurisdictional and trade disputes between international unions. The Congress conceded to the various international organizations the right to organize their respective crafts in Canada. It maintained the right to issue charters to purely Canadian central bodies, provincial federations and trade and labour councils and to individual unions not eligible for membership in any of the existing recognized International or National unions e.g. public service

employees. It agreed to tolerate no dual unionism i.e. it excludes as members separate Canadian organizations where parallel International unions exist. But the Canadian membership of International unions recognize the Congress' authority in Canada by paying a per capita tax.

The Congress is recognized by the A. F. of L. and the Dominion government as the legislative mouthpiece of organized labour in the Dominion. Its major task is lobbying at Ottawa, in cities through municipal centrals and in provincial legislatures. Although its chief function is legislative, financial and other assistance has been given to organized workers identified with the International trade union movement. It is the official representative of Canadian labour at world-wide labour federations and various advisory councils operating throughout the Dominion. Its objectives and principles were codified at the unusually large and active convention of 1921. The Congress exists to bargain collectively, to further the spirit of International unionism, but chiefly to gain legislative reforms favourable to labour.

Its legislative procedure is as follows:- in the provinces, where no federation of labour is working under charter from the Congress (in 1921 only one province had a charter), an executive committee is appointed to look after the legislative interests of the members in the various provinces. The conventions of the Congress are held annually and at these meetings, resolutions for direct legislation are introduced. If the proposals are adopted, the executive council handles the matters coming under Dominion control, the provincial federations or provincial executive council handles the matters coming under Dominion control, the provincial federations or provincial executive committees dealing with purely provincial legislation.

Congress Membership (1921-36)

To follow the yearly additions and subtractions in the membership and number of International unions, National bodies, trades and labour councils, provincial federations and local branch unions is unnecessary and that the result of such a study would be too confusing to be clearly understood. The number of delegates at each annual convention fluctuates so widely from year to year and has so little connection with the total membership of the Congress and the degree of activity of the conventions that an account of the delegates from year to year is abandoned as futile.

The history of decrease and increase in total membership is the most representative statistical method of tracing the Congress' development. Before this study is undertaken, it may be noted that while the Congress' membership is mainly international, not all International union membership is affiliated with the Congress. The data for 1921 and 1936 will serve to illustrate:-

Table 8.(1)

| | TOT. INTERN. UNION MEMBERSHIP | INTERN. U. MEMBERSHIP AT CONGRESS |
|------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1921 | 222,896 | 160,000 (app.) |
| 1936 | 174,769 | 149,398 |

Many unaffiliated International organizations maintain resident Canadian officials who keep in touch with the executive council of the Congress on matters pertaining to welfare of Canadian workers.

(1)

Figures for Table are obtained from "Labour Organization in Canada" '21, '36

Table 9--Total Membership in Congress (1921-36) (1)

| YEAR | MEMBERSHIP | YEAR | MEMBERSHIP |
|------|------------|------|------------|
| 1921 | 173,778 | 1929 | 126,638 |
| 1922 | 152,071 | 1930 | 138,638 |
| 1923 | 121,842 | 1931 | 141,131 |
| 1924 | 117,110 | 1932 | 122,129 |
| 1925 | 105,912 | 1933 | 105,546 |
| 1926 | 103,037 | 1934 | 103,424 |
| 1927 | 114,362 | 1935 | 105,998 |
| 1928 | 119,243 | 1936 | 112,972 |

Explanation of Changes in Total Membership.

The rise and fall in membership show a high positive correlation with the business cycle with a lag of about two years. Membership falls with depression, 1921-24, and consequent unemployment and strikes, causing inability to pay per capita tax. It rises with returned prosperity in 1925-29 because dues can now be paid again with increased purchasing power and drops in the 1931-33 depression and rises with prosperity. It may be noted that, although business activity picked up in 1925, membership did not increase until 1927; business activity dropped off in 1929 but membership kept rising until 1931; business picked up in 1933 but membership kept dropping till 1934. This lag may be partially explained by the fact that changes in business activity

(1)

These total membership figures are obtained in the files of "Labour Organization of Canada" 1921-36. Every year the estimate is very conservative, tending to be an underestimate rather than an overestimate. These estimates include the paying members only, and only those members reported at the time of the convention, not at the end of the calendar year. There really are many trade unionists still listed as members, yet they are not included because they do not pay their per capita tax, being on strike or unemployed. There are usually a large number of new members between the time of the convention and the end of the year but these are excluded. The Sec.-Treas. of the Congress usually estimates the extra members among the non-payers and new affiliates to be 25% of total membership in normal times and much more in depression. This conservative reckoning of members (over)

do not seriously affect employment for a year or more because of the immobility of capital. In addition, when prosperity begins to return, increased purchasing power is used to pay off bad debts before trade unions' dues are paid and in depression dues are paid out of personal savings before curtailed purchasing power is really felt. However, none of these explanations are sufficient to account for this two-year lag. The writer has not been able to find a satisfactory and complete cause, or a combination of causes.

In 1922, the reduced membership was due to a special reason. Many International unions, compelled to reduce their staffs of organizers and general officers, found it necessary to withdraw their special Canadian representation. In 1923, an International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union was affiliated after the estimate was made. In 1927, if members on strike and unemployed and new affiliates were included there would be 15,000 more. In 1928, if non-paying members and non-affiliants were included, there would be 30% more; in 1929, and '30 there would be 20% more. In '32, the decrease was really not so great as appeared because non-payers and new affiliates would have swelled membership much more than 25%. In 1934 this excess is 50% or 17,306 more than claimed. The Congress had 65 directly-chartered local unions of 6,151 members, unreported. In 1935, 7,515 members from directly-chartered unions should have been added; in 1936, 36,426 from directly-chartered unions, new affiliates, non-payers should have been added.

The total loss of 61,000 between 1921 and 1936 has the same causes as the drop in total Canadian trade union membership (explained in general introduction).

is in contrast with the overestimates made by the Catholic unions to the Dept of Lab. which are unwarranted by actual returns from individual unions.

Description of the General Activity of the Congress.

It is interesting to observe that the Congress has represented the interests of Canadian workers well on international organizations. At each yearly convention, the Canadian Congress, the British Trades and Labour Congress and the American Federation of Labour exchange delegates with mutual benefit. The Congress affiliated with the International Federation of Trade Unions in 1920 and has been attending regularly, up until 1936 at least. In 1925 and in 1928, the Congress was given representation on the General Council of International Federation of Trade Unions. In 1922, the Congress joined the International Federation of Working Women.

Since the formation of the League of Nations, the Canadian Congress has had a representative on the Governing Body of the International Labour Office of the League of Nations, which meets yearly. This delegate is the only representative of the workers of North America, since U.S.A. is not a member of the League of Nations. The Congress supports world peace, through disarmament, the League of Nations, the World Court, and the International Labour Organization. (1) In 1930, a Canadian Congress member was elected by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office to sit on the migration commission.

The fact that the Dominion Government, ever since 1919, has invited delegates from the Congress to attend the International Labour Conferences held in '20, '26, '27, '34, '35, '36, as the Canadian workers' delegation shows in what high esteem the government at Ottawa holds the Congress. In 1935, when the government passed the Employment and Social Insurance Act, a

(1) from "Labour Goes to Parliament Hill" by Thomas Wayling in the "Congress Journal, 1937.

Commission was set up to administer the unemployment fund. The representative for the workers on this commission was the president of the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress. The Honourable Mr. McDonald, Premier of Nova Scotia gave credit to the Trades and Labour Congress for being the pioneers (1) of social and labour legislation.

The Congress represents the Canadian workers in the Women's Trade (2) Union League of America; the American Association for Labour Legislation; the Canadian Council on Child Welfare; the League of Nations Society of Canada; Research Council of Canada; Dominion Council of Health; Dominion Fire Prevention Association; National Safety League and the Ontario and Quebec Sections of the League; Employment Service Council of Canada; Canadian Council on Immigration of Women; Frontier College, National Council of Education; Canadian Social Hygiene Council; Canadian Engineering Standard Association.

Description of Political Activities of the Congress.

There is a clearly marked distinction between the attitude of the Canadian Congress and the A.F. of L. toward politics. The A.F. of L. has learned through bitter experience to keep its members out of third party politics. In Canada because of the British influence, the Congress supported an independent labour party.

From its very beginning, the Congress encouraged its members and city councils to support working men in parliament. Due to the pressure of those who were anxious for Congress to lead a political party, the Congress granted provincial autonomy in political matters in 1906. In

(1) This statement was made in "Right of Workers to Organize" by J.A. D'Acoust in Congress Journal, 1937.

(2) This list is given in "Labour Organization in Canada", 1936.

1917, the executive council of the Congress suggested the formation of the Labour party on the same plan as the British party, i.e. the united action on the part of trade unionists, socialists, Fabians, Cooperators and farmers. With the instigation of the Congress, the Canadian Labour party gained provincial branches in Ontario, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba. The proposal for direct political action on the part of Congress was brought up in 1923 and 1924, but it refuses to do anything more active than re-endorsing the Canadian Labour party. In 1927, after the retirement of James Simpson, the Secretary of the Labour party, it has ceased to function and in 1936, of the provincial branches of the party, the Ontario and Alberta were the only active ones. In British Columbia, Ontario and Manitoba, independent labour parties have grown up without the sanction of the labour Congress. Since 1927, the Congress has not been involved as a body in politics but gives its sympathy to labour politics, following the British example. It is held back from active participation by American affiliation and desire for legislative and appointive favours from both major parties. In 1931, the resolution for the formation of a national labour party maintained by contributions of organized labour was defeated.

Internal and Legislative History.

The report of the Canadian Congress to the A.F. of L. in 1921 is very revealing. It states that in that year the International Trade Union movement was still continuing in spite of many forces which the report states to be menaces--the O.B.U., the Catholic Unions, the National and Independent unions. In 1921, Quebec's legislature passed a resolution urging workers to sever connections with International unions. In 1922

the "Congress Journal" was begun and it aided in strengthening the position of International unionism. In legislation, progress was made in extending and improving the Workmen's Compensation Acts, Minimum Wage laws, mothers' allowances, Factory Acts, and similar legislation of benefit to wage-earners as a whole.

In 1926, a resolution was presented by several unions affiliated with the Congress for an all-in-conference with every trade union faction in Canada present, to bring about union unity. The resolution was voted down as the members could see nothing but discord in such an assembly.

In 1934, the fiftieth anniversary of the Congress, the constitution was amended. Up to 1934, the Congress issued charters to provincial federations, trade and labour councils as well as to unions not eligible for membership in any of the existing recognized International or National organizations. But in 1934, amendment permitted the issuing of two classes of charters (a) those issued as federal units covering employees engaged in industrial activities and such charters will only be issued when application for same has been approved by the local labour council, (b) civic employees' units.

The legislative activities of the Congress have been fairly successful. There is close collaboration between the Dominion Department of Labour and the Congress and many reforms are enacted as a result of the pressure brought to bear on the government by the labour body. For example, by 1937, 50% of unemployed were taken off of the relief rolls. A national (1) house improvement program got under way. A National Employment Commission was appointed for studies in housing, unemployed youth and women, unemployed

(1)
from "Labour Goes to Parliament Hill" in Congress Journal, 1937.

on relief and Dominion grants to vocational education. Due to the efforts
 (1)
 of the Commission, relief camps were finally closed. The Dominion 8-hour
 day act and the Unemployment and Social Insurance Act, having been passed,
 are now before the Courts for legal opinion. The Congress' agitation
 for health insurance has been successful in some of the provinces but
 as yet not in the Dominion. The Congress approved of the establishment
 of the Bank of Canada and the government's predominant interest in the
 control and ownership of it. The Dominion and provinces have agreed upon
 a Farm Employment plan, providing for single homeless men. In addition,
 (2)
 a program is established to meet the serious conditions created by wide-
 spread drought in the Canadian West in the summer months.

The Congress has an ambitious legislative plan which has not yet
 crystallized into legislation but which is repeatedly being thrust before
 the government's attention. The Congress recommends that old age pensions
 be increased to a living wage and age of the pensioner be reduced from
 (1)
 seventy to sixty years; that the government insist on union-label goods;
 that a fair-wage officer be appointed in the Maritimes; that the
 government see that wages are paid in localities on the trade union wage-
 scale of the nearest town. The Council has been agitating violently to
 secure an amendment of the British North American Act in order to obtain
 (3)
 uniform labour standards, government regulation of highway transport,
 restriction of powers of the senate and the abolition of appeals to the
 Privy Council. It desires that the Industrial Disputes Investigation
 Act be broadened to include extra public servants, whereas it opposes
 the St. Lawrence waterways plan and the amalgamation of the two chief
 (3)
 Canadian railways. It made recommendations for the extension of the Dom-

(1)"Text of Memorandum Submitted to the Government", Congress Journal, 1937.

(2)"Opening of Parliament", Congress Journal, 1937

(3)Monthly Labour Review, Dec., 1936, from Ch. on Canadian Congress.

Union Fair Wage Act to industries protected by tariff regulations, a universal law for two weeks' vacation with pay, a more extensive housing program, amendments to Ontario's minimum wage act, the extension of provincial Workmen's Compensation Acts to cover all workers.

Special emphasis was placed on the Congress' mission in crystallizing public opinion in the case of the acute need for trade union legislation. Up until the present, the only retaliation of a union to a contract broken (1) by an employer is a strike. The provincial and Dominion governments recognize the legality of trade unions, but, except in Nova Scotia, there is no legislation to force employers to recognize unions. The Congress, therefore, demands legislation in all provinces legally to protect workers in their right to organize, to outlaw individual anti-union contracts and to curtail the powers of civil courts to grant injunctions against strikers.

(1) Ideas of this paragraph are partially obtained from "Right of Workers to Organize" by J. A. D'Acoust in Congress Journal, 1937 and partially from the Industrial Division of the Winnipeg Conference of Canadian University Students in December, 1937.

TRADE UNIONISM IN CANADA (1921-36)

CHAPTER X

THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF LABOUR.

Introduction.

In spite of the predominance of the International union movement, there are in Canada several non-international bodies, (numbering in 1921 15 and in 1924, 24), organized on strictly national lines. Some of these organizations are purely Canadian because membership is entirely within Canada e.g. government employees. The majority, however, have been organized in direct opposition to International unions either because local branches of an International body were neglected by the central body or because benefits and trade protection were not commensurate with the per capita tax paid to International unions.

The Canadian Federation of Labour is one among these non-international unions organized in opposition to the International bodies. It was formed in 1902, when the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress excluded from its membership Knights of Labour assemblies and National unions in affiliation with International organizations. It was, too, an organized opposition to the presumptuous attitude of the A.F. of L. who maintained a superior rather than a parallel jurisdiction to the Canadian Congress. According to its amended constitution of 1908, it was organized as a protection for workers against employers and against the domination of international unions.

It was given the power to issue charters to central organizing bodies, trade and labour councils, and craft unions which desire to be affiliated. One of its objects, as given in the preamble of its constitution, is the attainment of Canadian trade union unity. Yet it bars all international unions from membership. At its beginning, it was not inspired by an intense

nationalistic sentiment. Its formation was really only a defence mechanism against mistreatment by International unions, with patriotism as the excuse. Its methods were legislation and the defeat of laws opposed to the best interests of the industrial masses. There is little fundamental difference between the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress and the Canadian Federation. Both are interested in legislation. In the industrial field, the Internationals are more effective but in legislation the purely Canadian union has the advantage in dealing with a Canadian government.

Table 10--Membership of the Canadian Federation of Labour.(1)

| | | | |
|------|--------|------|-------|
| 1921 | 8,250 | 1925 | ----- |
| 1922 | 6,517 | 1926 | ----- |
| 1923 | 17,447 | 1927 | ----- |
| 1924 | ----- | 1936 | ----- |

Description of Membership

Vaccilation has been the keynote of Canadian Federation membership. Its membership rapidly increased after its formation in 1902 and decreased till 1920. In 1921, it began to rise, with a particularly large increase in 1923. Its movement does not correlate with the business cycle movement. From its general history, it is likely that its membership kept on increasing until 1927 when it merged in the All-Canadian Congress of Labour. This increase is due to an expansion of the Federation in Ontario cities and its reassertion in Montreal and Quebec and in the building trades of Calgary. At no time has it numbered one half of the members of the purely national labour organizations in Canada.

(1)

Figures for the three years given appear in Mr. Logan's "History of Trade Union Organization in Canada." Membership figures for 1924, '25, '26, '27, and '36, the year of its re-formation, were not reported to the Dept. of Labour.

History of the Federation's General Activity.

At first, the Federation based its strength on local unions but later on affiliated secondary bodies, already established or newly formed on industrial lines. By 1918, and later, it came to depend largely on locals, having fifteen by 1923. However, in 1920, two secondary central bodies joined i.e. the Canadian Electrical Trades Union and the Canadian Union of Bricklayers and Masons. In 1925, the Amalgamated Carpenters of Canada joined. In 1927 there was an astonishing leap in progress as the number of central bodies jumped from three to nine.

In 1927, the Federation played a leading role in forming the All-Canadian Trades and Labour Congress. The Federation was content to pass out of existence, merging its identity with the new Congress, not because of any dissatisfaction with its administration but because of a desire to give the right of way to the new Congress. Many of its members joined the new organization i.e. the Amalgamated Carpenters, the Canadian Electrical Workers' Union, the Canadian Federation of Bricklayers and Masons and Plasterers, and eight local unions.

In 1936, after the split (described in the Chapter XI on the All-Canadian Congress) one faction appointed a provisional executive and later a permanent board for the reestablishment of the old Federation. It drew to its ranks six central organizations embracing sixty local branches and five directly-chartered local unions.

Industrially, the Federation at its formation had its chief strength in the shoe trades, later among the miners and since 1921 in the printing, building, electrical, engineering and street-car industries. Its leadership originated in Quebec, passed to the Provincial Workmen's Association with increased support from Alberta. In 1917 the leadership

went to the Ontario printers. Since 1920, there has been fresh leadership from Quebec and Montreal and Ontario cities.

History of the Federation's Legislative Activities.

In its legislative program, its chief lobbying has been at Ottawa, Quebec, and Toronto. It has been less active in other provinces besides Ontario and Quebec. It stressed tariff legislation, favouring high duties while the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress favoured the removal of duties because of its international character. In its representation to the federal government, it has repeatedly insisted on rigid enforcement of the Alien Labour Law, in an attempt to injure the International unions. It has stressed the need for remedies for false representation made abroad to immigrants, the desirability of old-age pensions and above all the extension of the Canadian Industrial Disputes Investigation Act to cover a larger number of industries. Throughout its entire history it has favoured the use of conciliation and voluntary arbitration in settling disputes and only once, in 1913, did it support a strike.

History of Political Activities of the Federation

In Quebec, the Federation has had particular success in political action and in assisting member unions in the settlement of industrial disputes. In Quebec, the Canadian Federation had several representatives elected to parliament and got the government to pass a bill favouring Canadian unions. This is the only provincial government that was prevailed upon deliberately to discriminate against the International unions. Since the rise of the Ontario Labour party, the Federation has urged its members to support the party's candidates. In 1922, it pledged its support to the Canadian Labour party, while recommending the development

of labour parties in the provinces.

Although it is impossible to foretell the success of the reestablishment of the Federation, it is evident, in spite of the sporadic "pick-up" in activity in the middle 20's that the Canadian Federation of Labour has failed to be a potent force in the labour movement in Canada. Why? It lacked money to compete with the organized activities of the wealthy Internationals. In addition, it drew its support from a weak membership, unappreciative of the benefits of united action and unwilling to assume the responsibilities of a vital union policy.

Quebec was its first leader and Quebec has always lagged in the practice of unionism. Until recently too much time has been wasted in discussing vague political questions with no direct bearing on unions. In its early history, Quebec and Nova Scotia were linked up, which was an unfortunate arrangement. Nova Scotia was expected to support a high tariff policy when its life depends on securing coal at the lowest possible prices. Yet, even the large centres of Quebec and Ontario have flagging faith in the Federation. Why? The underlying motive i.e. patriotism for a strictly Canadian organization was not nearly strong enough to electrify the Federation with courage and energy. Because of the community of interests and problems, of the Canadian and American workers, the International unions are a natural development. When there is a choice between International and National unions, the worker is likely to choose the more wealthy and influential i.e. the International. The reorganization of the Federation in 1936, is not likely to be successful, since the Canadian group which has difficulty in standing when united, is hardly likely to stand when divided. (1)

(1) Material on the Canadian Federation in the files of "Labour Organization in Canada" is very sparse so it was found necessary to use to a small degree Mr. Logan's "History of Trade Union Organization in Canada for the source of Fed." leadership and causes of its weakness.

TRADE UNIONISM IN CANADA (1921-36)

CHAPTER XI

THE ALL-CANADIAN TRADES AND LABOUR CONGRESS.

Introduction

(1) The all-Canadian labour body was formed, not because of a strong nationalistic sentiment but because of the stubbornness of the Canadian Labour Congress in its discrimination against purely national unions. The Canadian Railway Brotherhood, considering itself maltreated by the Canadian Congress was especially instrumental in the formation of the (2) new central labour body. In 1917, the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada chartered the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees in the hope that it would be consolidated with the British Union of Railway and Steamship Clerks, an overlapping international body. When efforts to amalgamate the two were futile the Trades Congress revoked the Railway Brotherhood's charter. Further evidences of the Canadian Congress' intolerance of national unions appeared. In 1923 and '24, resolutions for greater Canadian autonomy were voted down. In 1925, request for charter to any body of workers in Canada, industrial or craft, in a functioning National or International union was refused. In 1926, the proposal of an All-in-Conference of trade unions was defeated.

The protagonists of the national labour movement present sound reasons for the formation of the All-Canadian Congress other than as an act of (3) piqued pride. It is a desire for political action and dissatisfaction with the International unions who, because they are nine-tenths American

(1) "Labour Organization in Canada", 1927

(2)

Chapter 2 in "Labour in Canadian-American Relations", by Ware, Logan, Innis.

(3). These arguments are presented by Mr. Sandwell, Feb. 6, 1932 in the Saturday Night in "Divorce from A. F. of L. mooted for Political Reasons."

and one-tenth Canadian show little interest in Canadian politics. Moreover, the International unions have established a policy of non-political intervention chiefly because any political action by International unions in the United States would be futile. In U. S. A., the federal government has little legislative capacity, for the residual powers go to the states, counting in this group labour legislation. But in Canada, the central government has a high legislative capacity and labour issues, though usually provincial may become federal when they become matters of "obligations arising from treaties." Hence political action by unions is a possibility in Canada which was not being filled by International unions. Then too, a purely Canadian body has the advantage in dealing with the Canadian government. The West has been very active in the support of a purely Canadian body for political reasons, because westerners have seen how much their agricultural organizations have achieved by political action.

A desire for an All-Canadian Congress was merely an exemplification of a world-wide wave of economic nationalism, as the various countries scrambled for the possession of gold. The economic interests of Canadians and Americans diverged as the differences in the value of the American and Canadian dollars created difficulties in the payment of fees to International union headquarters, and in collective bargaining for wage concessions, since the level of real wages in the late twenties was one fifth lower in Canada than in U. S. A. There is a stoppage of movement of workers between Canada and United States (because of unemployment in both countries), which makes ideas about a common brotherhood of workers difficult. Finally, Canada is bound to obey the labour clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, while the United States is not. There is a growing desire on the part of Canadian workers to use the Treaty for the improve-

ment of working class conditions while American unions can do nothing by pleading treaty obligations. Because of the growing divergence of their economic interests, Canadians felt that they would better express themselves through separate economic organizations. That at any rate was the sentiment of the founders of the All-Canadian Congress.

A plan was evolved in 1926 by the officers of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees, of the Canadian Federation of Labour, and of other National unions to bring together into a central body all unions not identified with the International trade union movement. A conference was arranged, for, in 1927 with invitations to all National and Independent unions in Canada. The Canadian Federation of Labour; Canadian Railway Brotherhood; O. B. U.; National Workers' Unions of Miners; electrical communications' unions; electrical trades; carpenters; bricklayers, masons, and plasterers; painters, decorators and paperhangers; railway engineers; Lumber Workers' Industrial Union became members of the new Congress.

According to its constitution, its purposes are three-fold, i.e.

(1) industrial, political, and legislative. It strives to improve the economic and social conditions of the workers by organization for economic action in the labour field, by educating the working class for political action and by having favourable legislation passed. Its membership may consist of affiliated national unions, and chartered independent local unions. Charters may be issued to central councils composed of delegates of member unions to further the interests of the Congress in localities. But these local councils have no representation nor do they pay fees. An executive board carries on the work of the Conference between conventions. The official publication is the "Canadian Trade Unionist".

(1)
"Labour Organization in Canada", 1928.

It is significant to observe the essential differences and similarities between the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada and the All-Canadian Congress. The apparent difference is international feeling pitted against patriotic sentiment. This is an artificial distinction; none of the members of the new Congress are particularly nationalistic. The C.E.U. did not spring out of patriotism but ostensibly out of Western dissatisfaction with Eastern control. The other elements in the All-Canadian Congress were formed because they were barred from the older Congress. Since 1927, the new Congress has tried to superimpose nationalistic sentiment on its members but with little success. Patriotism, in Canadian labour organization, has its greatest strength in the Catholic unions of Quebec. Their exclusiveness is a hindrance rather than an aid to the national labour movement for it creates a split between religious and secular unions in Quebec. However, in spite of the efforts of the central organization to affiliate them, the Catholic unions are not members of the All-Canadian Congress. There is no essential difference between the Canadian Congress and the All-Canadian Congress on the grounds of sentiment.

A constitutional difference between the two is that the Canadian Congress organized by crafts and the All-Canadian body by industries. In practice, the All-Canadian body has gradually come to reject the task of organizing unions at all and is no more industrial than the old Congress, although the new body officially adopted industrial unionism as its principle in 1928. Its publication "The Canadian Unionist", although quite vehement in its insistence on industrial unionism and the class struggle is unbacked by any supporting action on the part of its affiliated unions. As to method, both central bodies stress publicity and legislative action. Both refuse to enter politics at the

of a party but both regard a labour party as complementary, in contrast to the A. F. of L. which refuses to support in any way an independent labour party. However, the All-Canadian body puts more stress on political action than the Canadian Congress for it goes so far as to encourage open debate on political issues in trade union meetings.

In 1927, it was asserted by the Canadian Congress that the new central body was the product of Communistic propaganda, organized for revolution. It was claimed that the Communist party, failing to "bore from within" the International unions, encouraged the formation of the national body to gain control of independent organizations. There is substantiating evidence that the claims of the old Congress were false. The O. B. U., prominent member of the new Congress, is quite conservative. The enmity between the O. B. U. and the Communistic party is well-known. Is it likely that the O. B. U. would be eager to join an organization in any way allied with its enemy? In 1927, the Communistic publication, "The Worker", denied precipitating the formation of the All-Canadian organization, yet foresaw it. It announced its intention of carrying on left-wing propaganda in both Congresses equally. In addition, the Communists are opposed to the League of Nations. Yet the All-Canadian Congress was anxious to join the International Labour Office of the League. It is almost certain that the new Congress never had revolutionary intentions. In recent years, it is becoming less radical and more conservative in an attempt to cater to Roman Catholic aid.

Table II-Total Membership Figures of the All-Canadian Congress (1927-36)

| (1) | | | | | |
|------|------------|------|------------|------|------------|
| YEAR | MEMBERSHIP | YEAR | MEMBERSHIP | YEAR | MEMBERSHIP |
| 1927 | 46,279 | 1930 | 27,963 | 1933 | 55,118 |
| 1928 | 51,643 | 1931 | 28,322 | 1934 | 52,355 |
| 1929 | 52,429 | 1932 | 50,356 | 1935 | 54,024 |
| | | | | 1936 | ----- |

(1) from files of "Labour Organization in Canada". For 1936 no membership was reported to the Dept. of Lab. because of Congress' dissension.

Description of Membership figures of the All-Canadian Congress.

The membership fluctuates amazingly from year to year, with no correlation whatever with the business cycle fluctuations. Its extraordinarily-large increases and decreases in membership are depend- end on the losses and gains in affiliated central organizations and labour councils, and directly chartered local branches. It is logical then that the explanation of membership changes and the general history of the Conference be combined into one story.

General History Combined with Membership History.

In 1927, eleven central organizations (previously mentioned) and sixteen local unions constituted the membership. In 1928, the increase in membership is explained by an addition of three new central unions, i.e. Auto Workers, Broker and Leased Wire Telegraphers, and Vancouver Waterfront Workers.

In 1929, although there was little difference in the total member- ship there was a change in its composition. The Amalgamated Building Workers joined, but the Auto Workers, and the Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers dropped out, while the Lumber Workers were expelled for non- payment of fees. Nine labour councils were included in the membership.

In 1930, there was a decided drop in membership because of the loss of two large unions i.e. the Mine Workers' Union and the C.B.U. with the addition of two smaller unions i.e. the Canadian Printers and the Ironworkers, File-drivers, and Riggers' Union. The C.B.U. had large expenses on a court case, which, its members claimed, benefitted workers in general. For this reason, the C.B.U. could not afford to pay the Congress' per capita tax and hence was dropped from membership. There was an increase in the number of labour councils affiliated by five.

In 1931, a national labour defence fund was set up to clear off a debt spent defending those who were implicated in a Montreal strike of the Canadian Electrical Trades Union. There was little change in the membership total, although the Brokers and Telegraphers' Union dropped out and an Association of Stationary Engineers joined.

In 1932, the membership swelled because the C. E. U. reaffiliated. The 1933 membership shows a substantial increase because of two new affiliates i.e. the Amalgamated Association of Seamen and the Canadian Bushmen's Union, while three of its members, Unions of Carpenters, Ironworkers, and Decorators amalgamated into a union of building workers.

In 1934, as in 1931, 1932, 1933, conventions were postponed by general request of members. Many local units were unable to meet the expense of sending delegates. Because of the acuteness of unemployment rather than spend money on delegates, unions preferred to use all their resources to assist unemployed members and to carry on further organizational work. (1)

This organizational work and assistance of unemployed prevented losses in membership in the depression until 1934 when membership began to feel the effects of the inevitable drifting and disorganization of the Congress because of lack of conventions. In 1935, a convention was once more held. Although there was a loss of one central affiliated union, a return of prosperity, raised membership figures, throughout its affiliates. The Congress in 1935 was very inactive. Its report was more of a theoretic attack on Internationals than a practical report on activities.

In 1936, there was an internal split in the Congress as the result

(1)

The number and names of affiliates of the All-Canadian Congress are all obtained from the files of "Labour Organization in Canada."

of a quarrel between the executive board and the president concerning the executive's annual report. The executive board's attitude was right-wing and the members' and the president's attitude was left-wing. The executive wanted to get into government favour while the members wanted a united front with international unions, which the executive vehemently opposed. The bulk of the membership elected the same president but a new executive board while the dissenters on the old executive re-established the Canadian Federation of Labour. Only time will tell whether the emancipated All-Canadian Congress can weather its internal dissension.

Political History of the Congress.

Politically, the Congress as well as encouraging discussion in union meetings, urges unions to participate actively in politics by supporting labour candidates in federal, provincial, and municipal elections, financially as well as morally.

"It is not sufficient that we should limit our political activity to demands for representation on government bodies but we must rather consider what action should be taken to obtain the direct representation of labour in parliament and legislatures to a much greater extent than now exists." (2)

After the dissolution of the Canadian Labour party, in 1931, according to an announcement in "Canadian Unionist", a national Labour party was formed assisted, and supported by the All-Canadian Congress to establish by constitutional means an equitable economic and social order. The national party has recently organized local sections at Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal. By 1936, the party was still in existence, but not very active. (3)

(1) Reasons for dissension are clarified in Ch. 2 "Lab. in Can.-Amer. Relations"

(2) President's Convention Address in "Canadian Unionist", Sept., 1936.

(3) Sat. Night, Feb 6, 1932 in "Divorce from A. F. of L. Moted for Political Reasons" by Sandwell.

TRADE UNIONISM IN CANADA (1921-36)

CHAPTER XII

THE COMMUNISTIC INFLUENCE ON THE CANADIAN LABOUR MOVEMENT

Introduction.

While the major influences moulding and guiding the Canadian labour movement have been American and British the most recent infiltration is from Russia. The Communist party had its finger in Canadian labour organization through the Communist party of Canada, the Canadian Section of the Third International, Canadian Labour Defence League, Young Communist League, Workers' Unity League, and the Farmers' Unity League, (1) which bodies were formed chiefly between 1921 and 1936. The Workers' Party of Canada of 1921, openly declared its Russian affiliation in 1924. Until 1928, the Communists worked within International unions. Upon failure through this method, they set up dual unions. For example, in 1928, the Lumber Workers' Industrial Union officially entered the Canadian Workers' party when the C. B. U. entered the All-Canadian Congress. In Canada, Communist societies have not been so severely squashed as in United States, so the Party still works within the International and National unions.

In addition to its indirect influence on trade union organization, through its educational and political societies, it formed the Workers' Unity League of Canada, an outgrowth of the Trade Union Educational League, in 1930 just after Tim Buck and seven other leaders had been sent to prison under Section 98 of the British North American Act. It was the official representative in Canada of the Red International of Labour Unions at Moscow, and an organization paralleling the Trade Union Unity League of

(1)

This list of organizations is given in "Labour Organization in Canada", 1936.

United States. Its aim was to reach the working class of Canada through her trade unions.

In order to mobilize the working class for the final overthrow of capitalism, the League proposed to continue boring within the old reformist unions by forming committees within them to propagate industrial unionism to win Communist membership and to form the nuclei for future industrial unions. It also pursued a policy of dual unionism for organizing revolutionary industrial unions as its affiliates was its central task. Its membership principally consisted of affiliated revolutionary unions, newly-formed industrial unions, national industrial leagues, and local industrial leagues from isolated areas, general leagues of (1) various industries, unemployed local councils, and national and local youth committees. Its official publication was "Workers' Unity."

In 1932, the League broke off affiliation with the Red International of Trade Unions. This cleavage was by no means an antagonistic move, for the League sought to strengthen its fraternal relations with the Red International, with the Minority movement of Great Britain, and the Trade Union Unity League of United States, without being a member of any

Description of Membership.(1)

At its formation, two central unions identified themselves with the League i.e. the Industrial Unions of Needle Trades Workers and the Lumber and Agricultural Workers. In the Mine Workers' Union of Canada, after an internal dispute, the president was ousted and an U.W.L. of L. man was elected in his place. In 1931, by a referendum vote of two-thirds majority the M.W.U. of C. became affiliated with the League. The total membership was enhanced by a number of directly chartered local unions

(1)

Information is obtained from "Labour Organization in Canada", 1931, '32, '33, '34, '35, '36, in the section entitled "Revolutionary Unionism".

including furniture workers, boot and shoe workers, fur, dress, and food workers, fishermen, relief camp workers, domestic servants, and cleaners and dyers. During 1933, six additional central labour organizations were organized by the League itself. These, plus four district councils and twelve directly chartered unions make up its first reported membership of 21,253. 1934 showed a membership of 24,086 with an increase of two national industrial unions, eight district councils and eighteen new local branches. In 1935, negotiations were going on between the Workers' Unity League and the International unions for the transference of the membership of the former into the latter unions. Only the membership of a few locals was untransferred, giving a membership of a mere two thousand. In 1936, as a result of further negotiations the memberships of the remaining locals of the W.U.L. of L. were absorbed by locals of International bodies, with the exception of a few Mine Workers' Unions which were refused entrance into the United Mine Workers' Union of America, and the League passed out of existence. Headquarters for Communistic trade union activity is now the Workers' Party, the Communistic political representative in Canada.

Description of General Activity.

In 1930 and '31, when all Communistic societies were branded as unlawful, presses seized, and Communistic leaders arrested as members of illegal societies, the Workers' Unity League called protest strikes against the raids with little result. There were a few mass meetings framing resolutions demanding a release of Communistic leaders. The resolutions demanding releases were unacted upon. Since the League was not so sharply suppressed by the government as the official Communistic party, the Communists diverted their activities through the Wor-

kers' Unity League. It proposed non-contributory unemployment insurance and encouraged hunger parades which were more pathetic than dangerous.

Whether or not the establishment of revolutionary unionism is approved of, it must be admitted that the League's policy of militant dual unionism was effective. Its members instigated and fought the furniture (1) workers' strikes in Stratford and Hamilton and as a result nearly doubled the League's membership in a single year. Many people attribute the unusually high number of stoppages in industry through labour disputes in Canada in 1934 to the disturbing force of the Workers' Unity League.

Can the death of the Workers' Unity League be looked upon as a result of decadence and decay? It was not a collapse, but a deliberate stratagem. At a call from Moscow, the Communist party in Canada abandoned its militant policy of dual unionism because it was intensifying the sectionalism of Canadian trade unions and winning enemies instead of friends for the Reds. In seeking trade union unity, it adopted the "United Front" policy, i.e. working uniformly within all the unions of Canada to befriend them, gain control of them, and once having control, turning them into industrial unions, organized for revolution. Instead of opposing the non-revolution Labour and Socialist movements and flaunting revolutionary intentions like a red flag before the world, the Communists have become compromising and have dropped all talk of revolution in order to make alliances with progressive labour bodies.

(1)
It is noticeable that such Communist leaders as Tim Buck, Stewart Smith,

(1)
Saturday Night, April 24, 1937, "United Front is Moscow's Wooden Horse."

by Henry Somerville.

alderman of Toronto, Fred Collins, leader of the Stratford strike, J. B. Salsberg, Toronto organizer of the Workers' Unity League, no longer speak of revolution although they do not deny their former utterances.

The new "United Front" tactics are showing definite results. Canadian Trades and Labour Congress and the Toronto Trades and Labour Council who were so bitterly hostile that they would not tolerate any members with "Red" tendencies are now allowing Communistic delegates. The Toronto Council is so friendly that in 1937 it had eighty delegates that might be called Reds i.e. they voted for Communistic resolutions or they formerly figured in Red Unions. The number of strikes in Canada in 1936, was only one half that of 1934, apparently due to the Communists' new peaceful policy. A definite proof that the Workers' party is winning the good will of its former enemies is shown by the fact that the Toronto Council voted ten dollars to the new Communist paper "The Clarion", augmented by contributions from individual International unions.

The dissolution of the W.U.L. was a wise move, not only because it is befriending established Canadian unions but because it is preparing, from its new friendly reception, for the C.I.O. infiltration of Canada. The C.I.O., because it is already industrial and because its leaders are local, new, and inexperienced, lends itself admirably to the Communistic (1) "boring from within" method. Abandoning militant dual unionism is preparing the way for the successful capture of the C.I.O. by the Communists in Canada.

(1)

This prediction is taken from Ch. 2 of "Labour in Canadian-American Relations", by Logan, Innis, Ware, in a description of the Communistic influence on Canadian labour.

TRADE UNIONISM IN CANADA (1921-36)

CHAPTER XIII

THE COMMITTEE FOR INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION (1935-37).

Events Leading Up to its Formation
(1)

The flagging membership in the American Federation of Labour finally was stayed by the New Deal of the Roosevelt government in 1933. The United States government had, since 1921 no special interest in pleasing organized labour, but in 1933, after the emergency closing of banks, it was ready to court labour's favour. The National Industrial Recovery Act and the Railroad Emergency Act recognized labour's right to bargain collectively by representatives of its own choice. Government favour gave membership such an uplift that even when the N. R. A. was terminated, the trade union membership of the Federation of Labour kept on growing.

A further result of the New Deal paved the way for the formation of the Committee for Industrial Organization. Because of government favours to labour, trade union sentiment penetrated impervious sections of the wage-earning population, previously antagonistic or indifferent to unionism. A new union "esprit de corps" permeated masses of unorganized workers in steel, automobile, rubber, cement, and textile, industrial and agricultural casual labour and "white-collar" industries. Everywhere groups formerly lethargic, agitated and struck. At the 1935 convention of the American Federation of Labour, John Lewis bitterly harangued the Federation for having failed to take advantage of the new labour morale in organizing the mass production industries untouched by craft unions. He probably realized that if the conservative trade union

(1)
The fundamentals of this explanation are obtained in Chapter IV of "Labour in Canadian-American Relations", Ware, Logan, Innis, on the C. I. O.

element did not take hold of the masses ripe for organization the Communists and revolutionaries would.

One month after the Convention, John Lewis resigned from the Vice-presidency of the Federation to form a Committee for Industrial Organization, to give form and meaning to the enthusiastic response of the people to government recognition of labour organization. Its purpose was to encourage and promote the organization of unorganized workers in mass-production and other industries on an industrial basis. Its aim was, in organizing new groups of workers, not to set up dual unions, antagonistic to the American Federation of Labour but to gain new (1) affiliates for the Federation in fields where only industrial unionism will work. It planned to campaign in fields untouched by the A. F. of L. but to convert it to industrial unionism by the C. I. O.'s successful results at organization. It was intended as an educational league conducting a campaign for industrial trade unionism within the old central body. The problem was not craft versus industrial unionism for the Federation officially recognized both. It was dissatisfaction with the Federation for its failure to seek membership on a wider basis.

Composition of the New Committee

The new Committee's president was John Lewis, head of the United Mine Workers of America. Its executive was Sydney Hillman, president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and C. Howard, president of the International Typographical Union. Eight unions joined the Committee with a total membership of 983,000 approximately one third of the total membership of the A. F. of L., i.e. quite a substantial portion. Its

(1) members were the United Mine Workers of America; International Ladies'

(1) "Labour Organization in Canada", 1935 in "Incidents of Special Interest to Organized Labour."

Garment Workers' Union; United Textile Workers of America; International Association of Oil Field, Gas Well, and Refinery Workers in America; the United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers' International Union and the International of Mine, Mill and Smelters' Workers. Each of these C. I. O. affiliates have local branches in Canada, so the C. I. O. entered Canada in 1935 at the very same time as it did the U. S. A.

Attitude of the Old Federation to the C. I. O.

The old Federation refused to sanction the new Committee and regarded it as an instrument of internal division and rebellion against the executive council's administration. It advised the Committee to dissolve and upon the Committee's flat refusal to do any such thing, it suspended all the C. I. O. members from the advantages of affiliation with the A. F. of L. except the International Typographical Union and the Hatters' International, who were not entirely "C. I. O.". However, it only "suspended"; it did not "expell". The executive council of the Federation appointed a sub-committee to confer with the C. I. O. on condition that the new body first disband. Naturally, under such conditions negotiations fell through. Because of the C. I. O.'s successful campaigns in steel and automobile workers and a few raids on craft unions, a joint meeting of International unions and C. I. O. was planned for 1937, to settle the problem of expulsion.

The failure of the Federation to expel the C. I. O. immediately had a multiplicity of causes. There was not a united front against the C. I. O. because the strongest element of the A. F. of L. , the building trades department, had itself an internal division that is not yet firmly

cemented. Then again, the Typographers, the oldest craft union of the country, had its president as secretary of the Committee so it could not offer any effective opposition. In 1935, Berry, president of the Printing Pressmen, was too occupied in backing a pro-Roosevelt labour parade, to take part in expelling the new Committee. William Green, president of the entire Federation, is by nature conciliatory and since he is a miner is bound by loyalty to the U.M.W. of A., one of the chief affiliates of the C.I.O. The fact that, if the U.M.W. of A. refused to have him as their representative, he would automatically have to give up his presidency of the A.F. of L. may have stayed (1) his hand against the agitating faction. Matthew Wall, Lewis' bitterest enemy had lost his former strength and was forced into being conciliative. For these reasons, resistance to the new Committee was not strong enough to have it expelled outright.

Because of the competition of the new Committee, the Federation made a few sporadic and unsuccessful attempts at organizing at least partially on industrial lines. The Federation, before the C.I.O.'s formation had attempted to organize automobile workers in Federal trade unions. The International unions claimed all the craftsmen in the automobile industry so the Federal unions only had assembly-line men. The craftsmen were the only ones who were experienced enough in trade unionism to give leadership to the new Federal unions, so when they were withdrawn by the International, the Federal unions were infinitely weakened. A national conference of automobile workers comprised of only 150 Federal locals. Dissatisfied with their infant status in the Federation, they reorganized themselves into the United

(1) Hamilton Herald Feb.22/36 "craft Unions in U.S.A. face Grave Tests."

Automobile Workers, elected a new president, Homer Martin, and joined the C.I.O. as a new International union.

Directly chartered federal unions of radio workers, seeking a national industrial union charter from the Federation, were placed by the executive council under the jurisdiction of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and even threatened to leave the Federation. Within the Electrical Workers' Union, a class B membership was set up to include all workers in the electrical industry. Up to the present there has been no clash between the industrial and the craft alignment. The Metal Trades Department of the Federation got an agreement from Remington Rand covering all workers in the industry. Rand broke the agreement and carried on an anti-union campaign. Thus the attempt of the Metal Trades Department to include all workers (not just those of one craft) in a labour agreement was futile.

Progress of the C.I.O.

During 1936, the Committee for Industrial Organization gained several new central bodies, swelling its ranks to fourteen affiliates before the close of the year. Mr. Lewis and President Green were planning a joint drive of the C.I.O. and the A.F. of L. to organize the nation's steel workers. Mr. Green intended to conduct a steel workers' organization on a craft union basis, while the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers of America voted to conduct their membership drive on industrial lines. When this latter association formally affiliated itself with the C.I.O., the membership drive under the auspices of the

(1)

"Labour Organization in Canada", 1936.

executive council of the Federation was abandoned. Lewis formed a Steel Workers' Organizing Committee to carry on work in the steel industry. The other new affiliates of the C. I. O. were the Federation of Flat Glass Workers of America; the United Automobile Workers of America; the United Rubber Workers of America; the Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of America and the United Electrical and Radio Workers of America.

The main organizing attack of the C. I. O. was directed at the steel industry. Masses of steel workers were unorganized especially in United States Steel plants and smaller company plants like Wierton and Republic. Steel concerns owned coal mines. Steel must then be organized to allow the miners (i.e. Lewis' union) to retain its strong bargaining position in coal. The steel industry was regarded as the source of the strongest anti-union sentiment in the United States. It was with a vengeance that the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee of the C. I. O. began its steel campaign and achieved a steady progress under the leadership of Philip Murray.

Besides its steel campaign, the C. I. O. supported Mr. Roosevelt in the 1936 election and became involved in the spontaneous movement among the automobile workers. Roosevelt's Automobile Labour Board with its principle of "multiple representation", i.e. each bargaining group dealing with the company on the basis of employees' strength as shown by elections carried on by the automobile board, was causing confusion because it ran counter to the principle of majority, to which organized labour was accustomed. There were strikes in Toledo and Akron, Ohio in the automobile accessories industries, instigated by the Communists

as part of their "United Front" policy. The C. I. O. pledged to support the unorganized, set out in earnest to organize labour in the automobile industry. The major portion of the automobile workers responded readily to C. I. O.'s approach but one union within the automobile field remained loyal to the A. F. of L. i.e. the metal polishers. Because they have to switch from one industry i.e. automobiles, in the winter to another industry i.e. jobbing in the summer they found craft unionism more suitable than industrial unionism. C. I. O. organization in the auto industry started in the fringe i.e. the accessories while in steel it started on the big unit. In the auto industry it was drawn in by the course of events while upon steel it planned a premeditated attack.

The new tactic of "sit-down" had its initial try-out in the automobile industry. In a community where the forces of law and order prevent picketing and allow plants to import non-union labour, the only way the worker can protect his job is by staying in the factory where the police cannot remove him with violence. Stay-in strikes were employed in certain states of the Union in order to safeguard otherwise unprotected workers from the vicious attack of armed thugs. Of course, it is illegal to occupy another's property. An investigation by the U.S.A. senate has revealed undoubtedly that where sit-down strikes occur, employers have first used illegal means of denying the right of unionization and collective bargaining. Under such conditions, organized labour regards sit-down strikes as justified.

However, although the sit-down appears to be a logical alternative to peaceful picketing, yet it is dangerously suggestive of the occupation of factories in France in 1936, an expression of labour sentiment regard-

(1) Christian Science Monitor, Jan. 21, 1936, "Labour's Evolutionary Phase Promises Period of Turmoil".

(2) Ch.4, of "Labour in Canadian-American Relations."

(3) statement of C.H. Millard, pres. of local 222 of U.A.W.

ing the election of the Popular Front government under M. Blum. When it is realized that occupation of factories is one of the sinister features of labour anarchy in Italy which led to the rise of fascism, (1) the "sit-down" strike in America might well cause alarm.

The sit-down tactic was used in Flint and Detroit, Michigan. The governor of Michigan refused to enforce court injunctions against the strikers. Tactfully, he persuaded the "sit-downers" to walk out of the plants and the General Motors to meet the U. A. W. representatives. As a result, an agreement, was signed between the employer and the employee without any governmental authority in the United States taking any strong stand against the automobile strikers. That was left for Premier Hepburn in his involved relations with the Oshawa automobile workers' strike.

Activities of the C. I. O. in Canada.

The Oshawa automobile workers were unorganized before the 1937 strike. A large part of the workers were drifters with no experience in collective action. Such sectional craft unions as there were in Oshawa were so isolated from each other that they broke down in two months at the time of the Oshawa strike, showing how inadequate craft unionism is in mass-production industries.

In March, 1937, there was discontent in the Oshawa plant and a walk-out when General Motors sent industrial engineers to speed up production. The workers asked for a C. I. O. organizers from the U. A. W. of Detroit. Thompson came to unionize the Oshawa plant. In contrast to Mr. Hepburn's objection to so-called "foreign agitators", Mr. Thompson was accepted by the workers themselves, the General Motors management and the Ontario

(1) Saturday Night, April 17, 1937—"Canadian Trade Unionism and the C. I. O." by Henry Somerville.

Minister of Labour, Mr. David Groll. Negotiations went on between General Motors, and Mr. C.H. Millard, president of local 222 of the U. A.W. of America and Mr. Groll. Thompson dropped out on the advice of Mr. Groll while Mr. Hepburn was still vacationing in Florida. To speed up the negotiations which were dragging on, a strike was called and 3,700 workers or 98% of the working force obeyed the strike call. A committee of workers was formed to meet the company officials but at the same time, the strike-organizers allowed half the office staff and those repairing parts to return to work.

The strike was not "sit-down" and, contrary to the general impression it was orderly. Mayor Hall of Oshawa (also honorary Vice-president of the Automobile local Union) deputized a number of strikers to police the picket line. All liquor stores and beverage rooms were closed during the strike. It is of interest to note that at the conclusion of the strike the Chief of Police of Oshawa declared that Oshawa had established an all-time record for law observance since there had been only one arrest for any cause whatsoever, and that a transient vagrant who (1) asked to be put in jail for his room and board. Hence Mr. Hepburn's use of troops during the strike was entirely unnecessary and uncalled for.

The union's demands were not excessive, in fact, the same demands as the automobile workers had been granted in the United States. They were a change in the 54-hour week, some wage adjustments, seniority rules, collective bargaining and recognition of their affiliation with the United Automobile Workers of America. Although General Motors granted this recognition in Detroit, it would not deal with the International in Canada. This refusal was nothing more than "face-saving" for informally the plant did deal with the International union through Mr. Millard,

(1) This statement was made by Mr. D.H. Millard.

president of the local union of the U.A.W., at Oshawa and indirectly with Thompson of the International through Oshawa's mayor.

At this point in the dispute, Mr. Hepburn returned from Florida and stepped into the picture. It was alleged that his hostile attitude to the automobile workers had a political explanation. He had lost support on two issues, the beverage room and the separate school tax-
(1)
ation. Through the strike- publicity he made a bid for public support. His attitude was also influenced by a farmer's party cabinet minister
(1)
whom he wished to please.

Besides political causes, there were economic reasons why Mr. Hepburn feared the C. I. O. influence in Canada. Weakness and sectionalism characterized trade union organization in Canada. The All-Canadian Congress, the Confederation of Catholic Unions and the Workers' party (Communitic) were all striving with the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress for supremacy as Canada's official labour leader. In 1935, only the railway, building, and coal industries were well-organized, although there were recent improvements in the unionization of men's and women's clothing, shoes and printing. While International unionism is most firmly established in the railroads, building, printing and coal and (recently) apparel industries, the extractive industries, especially gold, have been singularly unorganized except for a few unsuccessful I. E. W. raids. The new gold millionaires were strongly antagonistic to any energizing labour force such as the C. I. O. which would organize miners and reduce the capitalists' profits. Mr. Hepburn's attitude would appear to have coincided with that of the vested interests of mining capitalists. Then too, he felt he could afford to lay down the law to foreign trouble-makers without stopping the

(1) Ch. 4, of "Labour in Canadian-American Relations", Ware, Innis, Logan

necessary flow of American capital into Canada and the consequent employ-
(1)
ment of Canadian labour.

The Premier's action in the strike was impetuous. He overruled entirely his labour minister's efforts at settlement. His attacks on foreign agitators were not altogether warranted, for as soon as Mr. Thompson, the American C. I. O. representative at Oshawa had done the fundamental "spade-work" of organization, he withdrew and was replaced by a native leader i.e. Mr. Millard, who became the general organizer for the U. A. W. What might appear paradoxical is that Mr. Thompson, although from Detroit was a British subject, while the company which
(2)
Mr. Hepburn was protecting was American-controlled. Mr. Hepburn insisted that General Motors Corporation deal only with the local employees' committee. This was contrary to the general practice of non-C. I. O. International unions in Canada. Upon the authority of the collective bargaining clauses of the Ontario Industrial Settlements Act, industrial firms had been making agreements with International unions for many years. Mr. Hepburn's statement regarding "foreign agitators" seems a little out of place in view of the last-mentioned fact and in view of the fact
(3)
that American capital is tolerated in Canada to the extent of \$3,996,000,000 in 1937. Mr. Hepburn, then refused the customary provincial relief to strikers and called out local, provincial and federal troops in spite of Mayor Hall's protest that military action was entirely superfluous. The mayor of Oshawa even appealed to the Dominion government to stop

(1) Ch.4 of "Labour in Canadian-American Relations", Ware, Logan, Innis.

(2) Sat. Night, Apr.17/37 "Canadian Trade Unionism and the C. I. O."

(3) Investment figure for 1937 is given in the 1938 Financial Post Business Year Book and Market Survey under "Canada's Capital Balance Sheet and Transactions, 1937".

Mr. Hepburn from sending troops against the wish of the municipality. Thus, the Oshawa strike became a national situation. The federal power stopped sending any more troops and refused to take any part in the settlement of the dispute.

Mr. Hepburn refused flatly to deal with Thompson. His meeting with Millard and Cohen (the union lawyer) did not result in any successful negotiation. Thereupon, Mr. Hall made a rather radical move. He asked for sympathetic strikes of auto workers in the United States, but Mr. Lewis, in an attempt to keep the dispute localized refused him. Mr. Hall then threatened to advise the Canadian union to drop away from the International union. However, he was so severely reprimanded by his City Council for this threat that the suggestion was never acted upon.

Mr. Hepburn forced the resignation of the only two left-wing ministers in his cabinet, Attorney-General, Arthur Roebuck, and the Labour Minister, David Groll and himself took over the duties of labour minister, his alleged reason being "to prevent the spread of the C. I. O." "It will be in the mines, demoralizing that industry and will send stocks (1) tumbling." It may fairly be asked whether Mr. Hepburn could prevent the spread of the C. I. O. by defeating the Oshawa strike when the C. I. O. since 1935 had become firmly entrenched among the Miners of Nova Scotia and British Columbia, the textile workers of Quebec, and in the industrial centres of Toronto and Montreal. Hence, the alleged purpose of his interference is open to question.

With his failure to negotiate, the scene shifted to Detroit but again the settlement failed. The local once more refused to meet the Premier without Thompson. Cohen and Millard, with long-suffering patience planned another meeting with the Premier which proved fruitless.

(1) This is a newspaper remark made by Mr. Hepburn and quoted by Mr. Millard.

The planned meeting came to an abrupt close when Mr. Hepburn refused to negotiate further because Mr. Millard phoned long-distance to Martin (president of U. A. W. of America) for advice.

With one desperate final effort at settlement, Martin, Thompson, and Millard planned to settle with the plant manager through Mayor Hall but the proposal was turned down by the mass of Oshawa workers. Since production was seriously injured by the unusually long negotiations, Mayor Hall sent the workers back on the job and Thompson left Oshawa permanently.

Cohen and Millard dissociated themselves from the C. I. O. central, (1) and finally enacted an agreement with Mr. Hepburn, which included exactly the same concessions which General Motors had made to the Union in United States. They included the reduction of hours of work from fifty to forty-four per week, time and a half for overtime, shop committees of stewards, seniority, pay day, five-minute rest periods in morning and afternoon. Wage increases took care of hour reductions in maintaining earnings while hour reductions made it possible for General Motors to employ a greater number of men. However, the agreement, upon Mr. Hepburn's insistence, was with the local union instead of with the International.

General Effects of the Oshawa Strike.

The effect on international relations of the protracted Oshawa strike was to link together more closely the American and Canadian working people for they had shared a common experience in the automobile industry. There were no hard feelings between the union and the General Motors Corporation, (1) for the company was ready to agree to the terms finally reached before

(1)

Ch.4 of "Labour in Canadian-American Relations", Ware, Innis, and Logan.

the strike began. The company's equipment and premises suffered no damage. There was no more alien interference than is found in the strike of any ordinary international union of the American Federation of Labour.

Attitude of Workers to Provincial Government.

The attitude of the Oshawa workers to the Ontario government is bitterly resentful. The Premier's interference merely retarded the settlement and his military actions were unnecessary since the strike was orderly, insulting the intelligence of the Oshawa mayor and the workers. The blazing newspaper headlines "the Ontario Government is 100% behind General Motors" were not true to fact since they appeared before the government had made an investigation of labour conditions. Mr. Hepburn aroused (1) resentment when he dictatorially banned news reels on the strike. The workers felt very strongly that the government should only arbitrate when its help is asked for, instead of forcing itself into a labour dispute without any justification.

Attitude of the Press.

The "Globe and Mail", purchased and amalgamated in 1936 by a mining capitalist and now directed by an ex-broker took an anti-union stand since it feared C. I. O. organization among gold miners. The Toronto "Telegram", although it has conservative traditions supported a Liberal administration by taking a definite anti-C. I. O. attitude. While most of the Canadian newspapers fell in line in condemning the C. I. O., the (1) Toronto "Daily Star", in spite of its Liberal traditions defended the C. I. O., breaking with the Liberal government.

(1) Nation Magazine, May 1, 1937 "Battle of Oshawa" by Roger Irwin.

Attitude of Dominion Government to Strikes.

The attitude of provincial and dominion governments provided a colourful contrast. After sending a small smattering of troops to Toronto, Mr. King refused to support the Ontario Premier's stand. The federal labour minister maintained that American organizers had free entry into Canada as representatives of the A. F. of L. or the C. I. O. or any other labour organization. The Dominion government has no interest in distinguishing between native and alien unions but stands ready to offer conciliation impartially, upon request. However, it does regard "sit-down" strikes as illegal.

Attitude of Canadian Labour Organizations to the C. I. O.

The Toronto District Trades and Labour Council officially approved of industrial unionism, in mass-production industries and by April 15, 1937, seated members of local 222, of U. A. W., an affiliation of the C. I. O., along with members of the A. F. of L. It also gave official encouragement to the Oshawa strikers. This pro-C. I. O. attitude is entirely different from the anti-C. I. O. policy of the A. F. of L. in the United States. Yet Toronto is the strongest A. F. of L. centre in Canada. Its attitude is significant in two ways:- firstly, it signifies the freedom of Canadian city centrals from American domination and it epitomizes the Canadian reception of the C. I. O. The Canadian Trades and Labour Congress, the American Federation of Labour of Canada, was almost as sympathetic as the Toronto Council to the C. I. O. Oshawa strike.

Status of the C. I. O. in Canada(1)

To-day in 1938, Canadian unionism is more "C. I. O." than "A. F. of L."

(1) This information is taken from ch.4, of "Lab. in Can-Amer. Relations"

C. I. O. organization dominates the miners, clothing workers, printers, textile workers, metal miners and automobile workers. The A. F. of L. holds sway only in the metal and building trades. Canada, indeed, offers a promising future to the C. I. O. and establishes one further link of unity between Canadian and American labour. Its electrifying effect in the mass production industries has introduced a revivifying force in the weak and flabby condition of Canadian trade union organization. It is possible that it may become a force for Canadian trade union unity, breaking down the present deplorable sectionalism in labour organization.

Prospects for the Future of the C. I. O. in General.

This is not the first time in the history of trade unionism that industrial union organization has attempted to challenge the tradition of craft union alignment. The O. B. U. with industrial union ambitions smashed its head against the brick wall of craft unionism. Its champion (1) Mr. Haywood, faded into oblivion in Soviet Russia while the O. B. U., eventually conformed to the standard of craft unionism. Whether the most recent attempt at industrial unionism has enough strength behind it, to break the apparently-impregnable foundation of craft unionism will only be ascertained correctly from the perspective of history.

Certainly conditions justify industrial unionism to a greater extent in 1936 than in the early 1920's when the O. B. U. failed to establish its principle. With the increase in the size of the industrial unit, and in the extent of monopoly and in the number and strength of company unions, labour action by industry instead of by trade is necessary. With the mechanization of industry which has increased significantly since the O. B. U.'s attempts at industrial unionism, skilled craftsmen are

(1)

Hamilton Herald Feb. 22/36 "Craft Unions in U. S. A. face grave tests."

outnumbered by unskilled labourers, who are entirely excluded from craft unions. There is an acute need for some form of union which will whip into action these depressed and unorganized masses of labourers. Since this need for organization is becoming more and more acute, the prospects of success of the C. I. O. are quite bright.

However, there are several major difficulties. The world history of trade unionism demonstrates that unskilled labour is exceedingly difficult to organize and control. It does not produce as high a quality of leadership, is not as interested in union progress, and is not as easily managed as the aristocracy of labour, the craftsmen. The fact that the C. I. O. is dealing with a class of labour which does not lend itself as well to organization as craftsmen limits its possibilities of success.

The C. I. O. may well contemplate a bitter battle with employers. In Canada, labour itself has welcomed the C. I. O. with open arms and in United States, in spite of the antagonism of the A. F. of L., C. I. O. has gained considerable favour with labour. However, it still has not surmounted the opposition of employers which doubled during the widespread publicity unfavourable to the "sit-down" strike tactic. The steel, motor, rubber and gold and other great non-union industries have been for a long time the strongholds of opposition to organized labour. These are the very fortresses which the C. I. O. are planning to conquer.

The C. I. O. has greater chances of success with employers already dealing with craft unions. It is not a pleasure for the employer to hold conferences and sign contracts with representatives of ten or fifteen craft unions in his shop. Under an industrial union system, he only

(1)
Christian Science Monitor Jan. 20/1936 "Labour splits into factions to unionize mass industries." Frederick W. Carr

(2)
Ham. Herald Feb. 22/36 "Craft Unions in U. S. A. face grave tests."

needs to face one committee and one contract. It is an onerous task for the employer to deal with the jurisdictional claims of many unions. Under a C. I. O. system, this confusion vanishes for, as its proponents claim, the employers sign on one dotted line, not twenty, and rest in peace until the contract is run out. Here is a definite advantage to industrial unionism which may appeal to employers when newspaper publicity, damaging to the C. I. O. dies down and when the new Committee strikes firmer roots.

The C. I. O.'s likelihood of obtaining wage increases is not nearly so great as that of the A. F. of L. It has been the custom of skilled craftsmen to organize to obtain higher wages for themselves alone, and let the vast majority of workers, the unskilled and unorganized labourers, shift for themselves. It has been a selfish but a successful policy. Employers were willing to give wage advances exclusively to a few, the skilled craftsmen. However when they are asked to grant raises to the many, skilled and unskilled, their response is not likely to be so spontaneous or willing as when only one particular craft made its request.

There is already abundant proof for this prediction. The machinists, carpenters, electricians in the union coal mines, organized on an industrial basis, declare that the standard of their wages is much lower than that set (1) by their respective craft unions. However, this difference in wage standards may only be because of the comparative newness of the C. I. O. Perhaps when the C. I. O. becomes as firmly entrenched as the A. F. of L., wages of the skilled and the unskilled will be at an equally high level.

(1) In the Christian Science Monitor, April 9/36, in "Labour Turmoil Hits Three Million Workers in U.S.A.", A. E. Wharton, president of the International Association of Machinists, vouches for the truth of this statement with regard to machinists. The same answer comes from the office of the general president of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters, and Joiners of America, as well as from the president of the Electrical Workers, at the last convention of the A. F. of L.

In predicting the future of the C. I. O., one might well note that, (1) "Organized labour has rarely assumed such a risk or played for such a prize. If it succeeds in the great non-union industries of America--automobile, steel, rubber, aluminium-ware, radios, chemicals, cement,--it will become immeasurably powerful. But if it loses, it is likely to be thrown back on itself and weakened by division."

In Canada, there are many factors, before mentioned, which point to its success and hence to its unifying effect on trade union sectionalism. However, if the C. I. O. should fade like the O. B. U. and the I. W. W. in Canada, the position of Canadian trade unionism will be left much weaker and more divided than ever before.

The Communistic Influence on the C. I. O.

One of the common charges against the C. I. O. is that it was initiated by Communists. Just as the old Trades and Labour Congress of Canada accused the new All-Canadian Congress of revolutionary intentions, so the A. F. of L. use the charge of Communism as a weapon against their opponent, the C. I. O. John Frey, president of the Metal Trades Department of the American Federation of Labour assailed the Communist promotion of industrial unionism within organized labour.

However, Mr. Lewis is regarded as Conservative. His committee is not planning a universal change of union structure with revolutionary intentions like the Communists are visioning, but industrial unions merely in one particular section of our economic set-up i.e. in the mass production industries. According to labour experts, Mr. Lewis has no other intention than to change the form of union organization better to suit a changed economic situation. He may have visions of a national labour p-

(1) Ch. Sc. Monitor, Jan. 20/36 "Labour splits into factions to unionize the mass industries."

arty but certainly he appears to have no Communistic tendencies.

(1) "Men and women of every colour, creed and character, constitute the membership and leadership of the C. I. O. affiliated unions, and anyone who suggests that C. I. O. is Communistic, is also assuming that our church-going, law-abiding, steady and in most cases rather conservative industrial workers' population, has miraculously been captured by emissaries from afar and suddenly become a lawless, "Red" menace. The truth is, that the industrial unions of the C. I. O. have within their ranks liberals, Conservatives, C. G. F. Communists, Social Credit-ers, etc., just in the same proportion as they exist within the industry being organized, for membership and leadership in the union depends in the first instance upon being actually employed in the industry."

But if the C. I. O. denies all connection with the Communists, the Communists have espoused the Lewis campaign with ardour. They see Lewis succeeding in establishing industrial unionism which they have tried and failed to organize since 1900. Recently, the national labour secretary of the Socialist party, made the statement that if Lewis succeeded in establishing strong, industrial unionism, "one of the necessary conditions for the attainment of socialism will be realized." The Socialists admittedly envisage the possibility of uniting the industrial unions of the C. I. O. into one big union which by a general strike will seize the instruments of production.

The Communists may be helpful in working within the A. F. of L. for adoption of labour policy but any radical support of Lewis in the capture of the great unorganized industries is felt by union men to be of inestimable harm to the progress of the C. I. O. Employers are already antagonistic to the new committee so that even the slightest tinge of Communism or

(1) Quotation from C. H. Millard, pres. of local 222 of U. A. M. of A.

(2) Paul Porter is the secretary.

Socialism associated with the C. I. O. would spoil any chances of favour with employer and government. The plans of the Communistic party of applying its "United Front" policy to the new labour organization constitutes another menace to the growth of the flourishing infant-C. I. O.

TRADE UNIONISM IN CANADA (1921-36)

CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSION

Philosophy of Canadian Trade Unionism.

As a conclusion to the story of Canadian trade union organization, it is fitting to inquire into the purposes and the functions of the movement. The most obvious "raison d'etre" of the unions is the perpetual struggle for higher wages, shorter hours, and more pleasant and more sanitary working conditions for their members, both by economic and political means. William Green, president of the A. F. of L. states the creed of unionism, in United States which may be applied equally well to that of Canada.

(1) "We believe that higher wages and shorter work periods are revolutionizing forces in workers' lives, lifting them to higher levels of living. The union is the instrumentality workers can use to change conditions which make them an underprivileged group and put them on an equal footing with other contributors to production."

The desire to secure material gain for its members is the backbone of Canadian unionism, expressing itself in collective bargaining.

However the trade unionist is interested in more than shop conditions. As a member of a union, he shows an interest in economic, political and social questions alike, which affect his welfare. It is the desire of the union to make its collective power felt in education, industry,
(2)
agriculture, transportation, and social service. It seeks to participate in institutions governing every phase of life so that it may improve not only the working conditions but the living conditions, social, religious,

(1) in pamphlet "For Better Understanding", published by A. F. of L.

(2) in A. F. of L. pamphlet "Trade Unions develop workers."

communal, of its members. In addition, because it brings a large variety of important problems to the attention of its members, it enriches the intellectual development of the workers.

The least obvious, yet most significant function of a trade union is the development of the character and personality of unionists. The fact that the union makes possible a measure of equal bargaining power with the employer, gives to the worker the joy of independence which he unconsciously carries from his place of work to the affairs of everyday life. Once an employer signs a wage agreement (through the pressure which the union places upon him) the worker has security at least until the contract has terminated. He need not cringe before the absolute power of an employer with the dread of losing his job at any moment. The thrill of cooperating with his fellow-workers toward a common goal gives him a sense of achievement and a fuller development of his social nature, both of which are indispensable to meaningful living. Sharing in the duties which a union imposes on its members, gives responsibility which unfolds character more fully than any other force except perhaps suffering.

Above all, it gives to the worker the sense of having a stake in the wealth of the country. In Canada, the concentration of wealth into a few hands has reached such proportions that wage earners whose incomes are below \$1,000 comprise 56.2% of the population and only one-quarter of (1) the wealth. On the other hand, those who earn over \$1,500 make up a mere 20% of the income receivers, yet they secure almost one half of the total national income. In "an economy which permits the great majority of our working people to be without sufficient income to provide the bare necessities of life and at the same time rewards a comparatively small group in

(1) Chapter 1, pg. 16 of "Social Planning for Canada"

the highest economic level with an incredibly large share of the total income." the common worker is certainly no property-owner. Yet there is an intangible quality in ownership which gives to its possessor a sense of distinction and power as essential to human life as meat and drink. It develops his initiative and expands his generosity. The privilege of ownership is allowed to only a deplorably small minority of Canada's population. To the millions of small wage-earners who have no property they can call their own, the sense of power which comes from the collective bargaining of trade unions compensates to some extent for the feeling of loss and inferiority of the impoverished. The power which trade unions give to control their own wage-earning destinies, is the most important function which they perform. Trade unions not only give them the key to secure a larger share of the national income but the feeling of belonging to and figuring significantly in the Canadian economy.

Trade unions are an embodiment of the ideal of democracy. Because of large-scale production and the consequent concentration of control of industry into a few hands, the autocratic principle of employers' control is distinctly different from the democracy of the political structure and of other institutions. Trade unions are fighting against the control of industrial dictatorship for, in the industrial world they insist on the right of the governed i.e. the workers, to representation. The workers' struggle to share control and management of industry with the employers is called by William Green a "Crusade for Justice". "The result of trade (1) unions is to remove the handicaps of the underprivileged groups while recognizing and respecting the functions of other groups." Trade unions are waging a struggle to carry the democratic principle into the economic

(1) from pamphlet of A.F. of L. "To better understanding".

arena.

A union exists for the sake of its members and not for its own glorification. "The true purpose of a union is the advancement of the (1) welfare of the workers who make up its membership, and that any attempt to improve the position of the union by a sacrifice of their welfare is improper." Several years ago, some railway unions and railway managements collaborated in order to maintain a type of union by which the workers no longer wished to be represented. This was a violation of one of the essential principles of unionism but as a general rule in Canada the union does exist for its members.

The Canadian labour movement, on the whole, is evolutionary not (2) revolutionary. The revolutionary bodies, e.g. the I.W.O. have few members and almost no influence in Canada while the Workers' Unity League of the Communist party was completely dissolved. The Canadian unions are interested in improving conditions for the present generation while Communism is providing for future centuries. The Canadian movement struggles for and prizes small improvements while Communism scorns slight gains and wants to establish a perfect society in one huge upheaval. The Canadian movement seeks constructive building, not demolition. While all Canadian unions, except Catholic, recognize the class struggle, very few of them are deliberately aggressive.

The objective of the Canadian union is to make the best business deal possible with employer on behalf of the workers on the friendliest terms possible. The union is not anxious to wage battle but uses a strike as a last resort when the employer breaks a contract, and not as an instrument (3) to overthrow the capitalistic system. The peaceful policy of mutual

(1) from the President's Convention Address of the All-Canadian Congress, 1936
 (2) Statement of the Industrial Commission of the National Conference of University students, Dec., 1937.

(3) Strikes are necessary since courts will not force employer to keep his wd. "The Worker's Rights", 1936. Canadian Unionist.

trust and free cooperation between employer and employee is considerably used even in weakly organized Canada, especially in the railway industry and in the Catholic unions of Quebec. However, there is the danger that with its insidious "United Front" policy, the Communistic party may seize Canadian labour unless American unions are accepted as no more "foreign" than American capital in Canada, unless employers cooperate more willingly in peaceful conciliation, unless governments remain impartial in their arbitration. Unless unions' efforts at peaceful cooperation are supported, they may be forced to turn to revolutionary methods.

What ensures the success of the union in fulfilling the functions previously mentioned? The union's success is in direct proportion to the intelligence and unity of wage-earners. Because of free and compulsory education in Canada and the comparatively-high living conditions, the intelligence of Canadian workers is quite high making for successful union action. But Canadian trade unions are in a state of disunity for reasons elaborated in Chapter three, which are deterrents to successful union action.

Economic necessity is an effective goad to united action, a condition true of the cooperative as well as the trade union movement. Not until the post-war economic dislocation and more specifically the 1930-33 depression was economic necessity acute enough to inspire really effective trade union action.

In order to weather the bad years as well as the good, a union just like a cooperative society must be based on something more lasting than the pecuniary motive. The unionist must be imbued with the philosophy (1) of trade unionism as a way of living to achieve definite objectives.

(1)

"A Way of Living"-- A.F. of L. pamphlet by William Green.

In Canada, trade unionism as a way of living to achieve freedom and justice and economic democracy has not been strong, since in depressions, when pecuniary advantages of trade union membership are low, trade union membership falls off markedly. All but a small proportion of the members appear to lack the courage of their belief in cooperative labour action. Only the Catholic unions, with a fairly constant membership, seem to have strong enough principles to withstand the destructive influence of depressions but their steadiness is partly due to the external influence of the Church.

To have successful unions, trade union leaders must not only have strong principles but a practical knowledge of the technique of bargaining. On the whole, the leaders of Canadian labour have carried on wage negotiations on calm and sensible lines and, to a certain degree, have shown real ability and a realization of responsibilities.

Spontaneous voluntary action and not coercion is the true basis of trade unionism. "No lasting gain has ever come from compulsion. If we seek to force, we but tear apart that which, united, is invincible. There is no way whereby our labour movement may be assured sustained progress in determining its policies and its plans, other than by sincere democratic (1) deliberation until a unanimous decision is reached." When voluntarism is the life-blood of unionism, no amount of war against the labour movement can suppress it. In the democratic countries of England, Germany (previous to fascism), Belgium and France, trade unionism waged a successful battle for concessions and recognition because it was inspired by voluntary action. History may repeat itself in the struggle between the employers, government, and other forms of unionism with the new and

(1) Toronto Globe and Mail Oct. 25/37 "Trade Unions in Canada."

(2) "Samuel Gompers's Creed"--A.P. OF L. pamphlet.

vital force, C.I.O.

Now that the functions of trade unions in Canada and the factors governing their success have been discussed, one further question must be raised. Are trade unions the best possible means of improving the conditions of the working class? It has always been the claim of defenders of unionism that, although unions were not perfect, they were the best possible instrument of the working class. But there are certain arguments which challenge the defence of trade unions.

A Critical Evaluation of the Efficacy of the Canadian Union Movement.

The Classical school of economists believed in a normal wage rate which under conditions of perfect freedom of competition would be reached. The classical economists regarded trade unions as futile because they attempted to disturb the working of the "laissez-faire" system, causing wages to diverge from the "normal" rate. The economists of the latter part of the nineteenth century, especially Alfred Marshall, swung to humanitarianism, looking upon unions as organisms necessary to better conditions for the working class. However, since the Great War, economists have shown a sharp divergence of opinion, some approving of unionism because they believe there is no natural level of wages, and others condemning it because they believe it forces wages above the natural level.

Mr. Maynard Keynes, well-known British economist, while he is in complete sympathy with the working class sets forth some sound arguments to prove that trade unions do not bring about the permanent betterment of the material conditions of the working class. If unions force wages up higher in one country than those of other countries, profits in the

given country are reduced. Capital is less remunerative and seeks more (1) profitable investment abroad. It is assumed that there is free movement of capital between countries. Since there is much inter-lending between Canada, Great Britain, United States and other countries, this assumed condition is true to the facts of the modern economic world. In a country of non-international currency, the effect of lending abroad would be to tilt the exchanges against us, thus raising prices and lowering real wages and defeating the action of trade unions.

In a gold standard country, if unions force the wage rates higher than those of other countries, gold will go abroad, and bank rates rise, discouraging new industrial enterprise within the country and the resultant unemployment will entirely defeat the trade union's mistaken effort to improve working conditions. Then too, too high wages will encourage the employer to economize in his use of labour, thus throwing some men out of work and decreasing the total quantity of real wages.

The recent experience of England proves the validity of Mr. Keynes' reasoning. In 1925 and after, when sterling was restored to gold parity, real wages in Great Britain increased substantially with a consequent fall in profits. Because of the rigidity of the wages in many industries due to the over-swollen power of the unions in England, many branches of British industry became so unprofitable that Englishmen lent to new enterprises abroad where they received higher interest rates, thus creating serious unemployment at home. Then too, high wages curtailed exports, swelling the ranks of the unemployed drastically.

(2) "It becomes very clear that to throw the burden of betterment

(1) Mr. Keynes presents these arguments in Saturday Night, April 2/30, in "Are the Trade Unions Right?"

(2) This quotation is by Mr. Keynes in the same article.

(of the wage-earning class) onto a particular section of employers is to put them at a hopeless disadvantage with their competitors and calculated to reduce their output and the volume of employment which they can offer."

Alternative methods of effecting a greater degree of justice and charity in the distribution of wages is taxation of profits in general (not of some employers in particular). Such a plan would be very applicable to the Canadian situation since Canada has one of the most regressive (1) systems of taxation of any country in the world. This revenue received from taxation could be redistributed in the form of social insurance with the chief burden of premium payments resting on the state, larger pensions, expenditure on health, recreation, education and subsidizing of house rent by the state, children's and family allowances.

There are many conditions in the Canadian economic situation entirely different from the English situation which contradict Mr. Keynes' disapproval of the trade union movement. The labour movement in Canada is not nearly strongly enough organized to maintain rigidity of wages as in England (with the possible exception of Canadian railway brotherhoods). Far from having excessive bargaining power, the Canadian labour movement, beside the strong and domineering English unionism, is timid and precarious, and needs every encouragement rather than condemnation.

Furthermore, Canadian wages are not and have not been markedly higher than those of the countries to which she exports. In fact, many American industrial concerns set up plants in Canada because they can hire Canadian labour at cheaper rates than American labour. A comparison was made by the Labour Office of the League of Nations of real wages in representative

(1) Professor Kenneth Taylor, McMaster University.

cities of United States, Canada and Great Britain. The wages of United States were highest, Great Britain lowest and Canada occupied an intermediate position. However, since the free income through social services is much greater in Great Britain than in Canada, the real wages of the two countries are probably very similar. There is little danger of driving investment out of Canada because of too high wages.

Since the inequalities of wealth are so glaring in a country as young as Canada, the level of wages can still be raised considerably before they precipitate such disastrous consequences as Mr. Keynes cites. In addition, his alternative, a general taxation on profits has its limitations above which taxes cannot be raised without seriously paralyzing business initiative and enterprise.

Mr. Keynes suggests an extension of state social services. It is the ambition of both the old and the new Canadian Labour Congresses, not only to raise wages by economic action, but by political action to induce the Provincial and Dominion governments to broaden its social services. The progressive legislative program of the Canadian labour unions, especially of the Trades and Labour Congress, has succeeded in forcing the state to enlarge its social services to include some of the very reforms suggested by Mr. Keynes, which never would have been accomplished had it not been for the pressure of the unions. Political labour action in Canada needs the strong backing of economic organization; hence trade unions are necessary.

It is the conclusion of the writer, that in Canada trade union organization is one of the best means of bettering the conditions of the underprivileged classes by the improvement of working conditions through

economic action, and by favourable legislative reforms through union political action. Canadian unionism is not open to the criticisms which Mr. Keynes levels at the British union movement. In conjunction with the cooperative, the Canadian trade union movement should be fostered in every possible way as a means of effecting a greater measure of justice within an inequitable economic system. Unless democracy is reconstructed by such suggested methods, Canada will become a fertile hotbed for the menacing seeds of Communism and Fascism.

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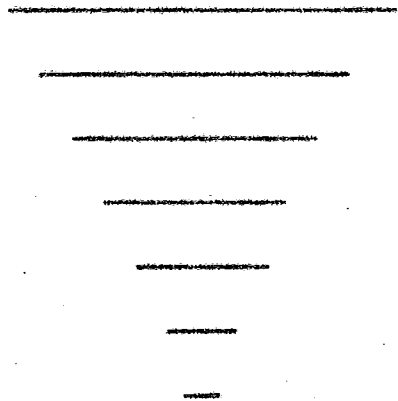
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