

**The Impossibilists:  
A brief profile  
of the  
Socialist Party of Canada**

**by**

**Peter E. Newell**

**In memory of  
Geoff Verco (1925 – 2006),  
a friend for 66 years**

## By the same author

*Fighting the Revolution: Makho-Durruti-Zapata*  
(London, England, 1972)

*Zapata of Mexico*  
(Sanday, Scotland, 1979)  
(reprinted: Montreal, Canada, 1997)  
(reprinted: London, England, 2005)

*Stamps of Alderney*  
(Chippenham, England, 1982)  
(reprinted and enlarged: Brighton, England, 1988)

Photographs supplied by the late George Jenkins, Karla Rab Ellenbogen, Steve Shannon, Steve Szalai, John Ames, Adam Buick, the author and the Cumberland Museum on Vancouver Island.

Front cover designed by the author.

Peter E Newell left school at 17 years of age without any qualifications. He has been a draughtsman, a postman, a trade union journalist and official, a sewage worker and a local government officer. He has been a member of an appropriate trade union since 1944, and is a member of the retired members' section of UNISON. He retired from Colchester Borough Council in 1995. He spent some time Mexico, in 1979, and his *Zapata of Mexico* has been published in Scotland, Canada and England.

“...the possessing class rules directly by means of universal suffrage. As long as the oppressed class – in our case, therefore, the proletariat – is not ripe for its self-liberation, so long will it, in its majority, recognise the existing order of society as the only possible one and remain politically the tail of the capitalist class, its extreme left wing. But in the measure in which it matures towards its self-emancipation, in the same measure it constitutes itself as its own party and votes for its own representatives, not those of the capitalists. Universal suffrage is thus the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more in the modern state; but that is enough. On the day when the thermometer of universal suffrage shows boiling-point among the workers, they as well as the capitalists will know where they stand.

...The society which organises production anew on the basis of free and equal association of the producers will put the whole state machinery where it will then belong – into the museum of antiquities, next the spinning wheel and the bronze axe.”

Frederick Engels (*The Origin of the Family*)

### **Imagine**

Imagine there's no heaven  
It's easy if you try  
No hell below us  
Above us only sky  
Imagine all the people  
Living for today

Imagine there's no countries  
It isn't hard to do  
Nothing to kill or die for  
And no religion too  
Imagine all the people  
Living life in peace

Imagine no possessions  
I wonder if you can  
No need for greed or hunger  
A brotherhood of man  
Imagine all the people  
Sharing all the world

You may say I'm a dreamer  
But I'm not the only one  
I hope some day you'll join us  
And the world will be as one

John Lennon (1971)

“The Socialist Party of Canada was small and carefully organized. Its members were well-informed and often had been required to pass an examination in Marxist doctrine before admission. They accepted the strictures of the executive upon the necessity of discipline and unity and education, fundamentals of a revolutionary movement, and often paid the price for doctrinal purity by forfeiting popular support. Organized by means of constant correspondence with headquarters in Vancouver, the few thousand party members studied the writings of Marx and Engels and Liebknecht and Kautsky, and a dozen others in weekly educational meetings of their locals in Western and, in rarer cases, Eastern Canada.”

Gerald Friesen

# CONTENTS

Preface.....	1
Canada: An Introductory Note.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Chapter One..... The Origins of the Socialist Movement in Canada.....	6
Chapter Two..... Controversies, Schisms and Defections.....	48
Chapter Three..... War, Revolution and Bolshevism.....	72
Chapter Four..... General Strike and the One Big Union.....	95
Chapter Five..... The Decline and Fall of the Socialist Party of Canada.....	108
Chapter Six..... New Beginnings .....	119
Chapter Seven..... War Again (1939-1945).....	133
Chapter Eight..... Post-War Progress and Problems?.....	142
Chapter Nine..... Collective Death Wish? The Party Self-Destructs.....	140
Chapter Ten..... Aftermath: The Seventies.....	168
Chapter Eleven..... In Conclusion?.....	183
Postscript..... Summing up.....	195
Appendix One..... DeLeonism.....	211
Appendix Two..... Socialist Party of Canada Pamphlets.....	221
Appendix Three..... An Electoral History of the Socialist Party of Canada.....	225
Appendix Four..... Socialist Party of Canada locals (post 1931).....	229
Appendix Five..... SPC locals 1933-1939.....	???
Sources..... Books, articles, essays and reports.....	230

## PREFACE

The following is not a detailed, academic study of the socialist movement in Canada in general, or a specific history of the Socialist Party of Canada in particular. That was not intended. It is, hopefully, a profile. A more detailed account would have been possible, but in the view of this writer would have been boring to all but academics and professional historians. Although masses of facts could have been gleaned from existing correspondence, journals and newspapers, records and reports, and reminiscences, including tape recordings, much has been either lost or widely distributed at numerous locations. Much SPC material was lost in the Winnipeg floods. Other archives have been moved from Winnipeg to Victoria or Vancouver. Is, then, what follows accurate? In the main, yes.

Nevertheless, it is inevitable that some accounts, as well as some dates, may be incorrect. Indeed, some of the reminiscences, including taped accounts by old-timers such as Bill Pritchard or Jim Brownrigg, are known not to be accurate in some details. Even so-called electoral results, at the time, could not be said to be correct. Official results from Alberta, for instance, often merely refer to the candidate as SOC (“socialist”) without differentiating between the Socialist Party of Canada and the Social Democratic Party, or even an independent ‘socialist’. Some official reports include percentages; others do not. Some accounts and reports are taken from local newspapers, which were not even at the time accurate. Generally, where the result is reported in, for example, the *Western Clarion*, it states whether the candidate was a representative of the Socialist Party of Canada.

This writer, however, has done his best to give as accurate a general account of the socialist movement, its theories and policies, as well as many of its often colourful members, as possible during the last hundred years or so. That is all.

PEN



## **CANADA:**

### **An Introductory Note**

Canada is the world's second largest country (Russia is the first), with a land area of almost ten million square kilometres, covering 7% of the Earth's surface. From Lake Erie in the south to its northern borders on the Arctic Ocean, it measures 4,800 kilometres, and from east to west it spans more than 5,000 kilometres, putting Vancouver on the Pacific coast closer to Mexico City in Central America than to Halifax in Nova Scotia on the Atlantic seaboard.

Canada has two million lakes, containing 50% of the world's fresh water. It has 18 islands of more than 10,000 square kilometres in area, including one, Baffin Island, which is almost the size of France, and another, Ellesmere, which has a glacier twice the size of Switzerland. Its prairies alone cover more than the combined area of India, Pakistan and Nepal. Yet much of the land is still a wilderness. Almost 50% of its territory lies within the zones of permafrost, where the ground is frozen to a depth of 400 metres, and where the winter temperature falls as low as -60°C. Indeed, Canada's climate is of the extreme continental type, with scorching hot summers and long winters, where the temperature remains below freezing in every part of the country except for a small area in the south-west. In fact, the cities of Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto experience winters in which the temperature may fall below zero for more than 150 days in the year, although as elsewhere in the world, Canada has felt the effects of global warming in recent years. All of which means that barely 12% of the country's landmass is suitable for farming, concentrated mainly in the prairies of the west. Nevertheless the area is almost equivalent to the combined areas of England, France, Germany and Italy.

Canada, moreover, is rich in fish, furs and timber, as well as minerals of more than 60 different types, including iron ore, copper, gold, nickel, uranium and crude petroleum. Yet for all its size and natural wealth, the country has only a little over 32 million inhabitants. In 1881 Canada had a population of 4,435,000, of whom 3,400,000 lived outside urban centres. Forty years later, there were 8,800,000, of whom 4,800,000 resided in non-urban areas and 1,660,000 lived in cities of more than 100,000. The majority of Canadians, past and present, live within 300 kilometres of the United States border, while four-fifths of the country has never been permanently settled.

During the American War of Independence (1775-1783), the English-speaking people of what is now Canada, remained faithful to the Crown and to Britain. Furthermore, thousands of Empire loyalists moved up to the colony from America. In 1791, a Constitutional Act divided the old French colony into two parts, Upper and Lower Canada, which correspond with today's Ontario and Quebec. Lower Canada remained overwhelmingly French, but Upper Canada had an English-speaking majority. Both were granted limited representative government, as were the maritime colonies of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

In 1815, following the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Canada received its first large-scale British immigration. By 1837, agitation for more representative government led to armed rebellion in both Lower and Upper Canada. In 1841, however, Lower and Upper Canada were reunited, and became the joint colony of Canada. In 1848, Canada and Nova Scotia were granted "responsible government" in all local matters. And in 1858 the Crown Colony of British Columbia was created. It was united with the colony of Vancouver Island in 1866. In 1867, by the British North America Act,

Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia were joined together into the self-governing Dominion of Canada. In 1870, the new province of Manitoba, formerly part of the Hudson's Bay Company domain, joined the Dominion; and one year later, British Columbia federated. In November 1885 the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed. In 1896 the Klondike Gold Rush began. By 1905 the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan also joined the Dominion of Canada. Newfoundland however did not become part of the Dominion until 1949.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The acquisition of all the sources for this work took about seven years, the writing of it less than seven months. Surprisingly obtaining documents on, and by, the Socialist Party of Canada for the period 1990-2005 proved more difficult than for the previous 85 years. The following are thanked for providing all the correspondence, documents, e-mails, leaflets, pamphlets and other publications (except books cited in the sources) and tapes, etc. used and/or quoted in the book:

Adam Buick, formerly of Luxembourg and Brussels, for many documents, e-mails and other information;

John Ayers, the present General Secretary of the SPC, Cobourg, Ontario, for a number of leaflets as well as copies of the *SPC Newsletter and Report*;

Peter Campbell, Kingston, Ontario, who supplied numerous copies of early SPC and trade union publications as well as the relevant election results;

Marie (Gladys) Catt, Scarborough, Ontario, who wrote an account of the Toronto Local and the SPC's controversies in the 1960s, and also provided a number of taped conversations by John Ahrens and the late William (Bill) Pritchard;

Ronald Elbert, Boston, Massachusetts, USA, who gave me a number of taped conversations by John Ahrens, Bill Pritchard and William Roddy, between 1974 and 1976, for providing a copy of his university thesis, *The Paper War: Conflict and Democracy in the Socialist Party of Canada, 1960-1970*, as well as more than 750 photocopies of reports, statements and correspondence relating to the SPC's 1960s internal disputes;

The late George Jenkins, Victoria, British Columbia, for supplying many SPC documents and leaflets;

Shaun M. Kopczynsky, Duncan, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, who provided useful information on Ukrainian workers' involvement in the Canadian socialist movement, and gave me a copy of Peter Krawchuk's book, *The Ukrainian Socialist Movement in Canada (1907-1918)*;

Jim Plant, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire, England, who supplied all the copies of the *Western Socialist* containing articles on Daniel De Leon, and letters and articles on De Leon;

Keith Scholey, Kingston-upon-Hull, Humberside, England, who as the archivist of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, provided me with numerous reports and obituaries of former members of the SPC and for correcting and editing the original manuscript;

Charmian Skelton, Woking, Surrey, England, who exchanged views with me on the SPC, and provided a photocopy of a rare copy of the SPC pamphlet, *Slave of the Farm*, by Alf Budden, which she had acquired from the late Edgar Hardcastle;

Steve Szalai, Victoria, British Columbia, a former General Secretary of the SPC, who provided many articles, e-mails and publications on the Canadian socialist movement;

Steve Shannon, Mississauga, Ontario, is particularly thanked for his encouragement when I had become dispirited.

And lastly, Julian Vein, of London, UK, for proof-reading and adding and correcting, “last-minute” material.

It is, however, regretted that Mrs. Lilian Mackenzie Dodds (formerly Lestor), a surviving daughter of Charles Lestor, refused to provide me with any information regarding her late father.

PEN

## *Chapter One*

### **THE ORIGINS OF THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT IN CANADA**

Prior to 1900, according to the late Jim Milne in his brief *History of the Socialist Party of Canada*, “Socialism to this point was a mixture of reformism, Christian Brotherhood and not much else, and only at the turn of the century did the studies of Marx and Engels show noticeable influence”. This was largely true.

Early influences included the writings of Charles Dickens, Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Charles Darwin and the Bible. Such books as *Looking Backward* by Edward Bellamy, and *Merrie England* by Robert Blatchford, were eagerly read by many workers in Canada. Methodism and the ‘Christian Socialism’ of John Ruskin, as well as British Fabianism, added to the confusion. Even Madame Helena Blavatsky’s theosophy had some influence among so-called feminist socialists.

Many Finnish, German, Ukrainian and Jewish workers in Canada had previously been exposed to social-democratic, reformist, as well as nationalist ideas in Europe. Italian workers had been indoctrinated with anarcho-syndicalism. Many workers from Britain had already been influenced by such labour and Independent Labour Party leaders as John Burns, Tom Mann and James Keir Hardie. Labourism took root mainly in the east and centre of the country.

#### **The Socialist Labor Party**

The first political party claiming to be socialist in Canada was the Socialist Labor Party, an offshoot of the Socialist Labor Party of America. Until 1890, the SLP of America had been a largely reformist organisation, dominated by German-speaking members. Following the arrival of Daniel De Leon in that year, the party was moved towards an anti-reformist position, and by 1900, had removed all reforms from its platform.

The Socialist Labor Party of Canada was formed in 1896, mainly in the eastern provinces where it had sections (locals or branches) in London, Montreal, Toronto and Rat Potage. A local was established in Winnipeg, and in 1898, another was formed in Vancouver. In the same year, the SLP contested elections in Ontario, where it called for equal pay for men and women, while at the same time demanding that women should be prohibited from “occupations detrimental to health or safety”.

Also in 1898, De Leon declared that the Socialist Labor Party must have an economic arm. He proceeded to found what he called the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, which then waged war on the American Federation of Labor (AFL). In 1899, the Vancouver local of the SLP established a local of the STLA in the city. Founded as a “general labourers’ union”, it never had more than a handful of members and soon collapsed. In both the United States and Canada, De Leon insisted on unquestioning acceptance of his policies, and hurled invective on any who deviated from his line. His followers in Canada did likewise. However, a number of the SLP’s members, particularly in Vancouver, found it increasingly difficult to co-operate with the De Leonists; and by 1899, a number of them quit to form a ‘Socialist Club’, which, in April 1900, became the United Socialist Labor Party of British Columbia

(USLPBC). Shortly after, the SLP became “an inconsequential sect”. The USLPBC became the Socialist Party of Vancouver.

Unlike the Socialist Labor Party, the United Socialist Labor Party of British Columbia/ Socialist Party of Vancouver co-operated with the AFL-affiliated unions. Within weeks of its formation it claimed a ‘paper’ membership of 250. In the British Columbia general election, the USLPBC, with the support of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council and the local branch of the Canadian Socialist League, nominated William MacClain, President of the Fishermen’s Union, as its candidate in 1900. Although he was (and still is) proclaimed as the first socialist to contest a British Columbia election, MacClain’s platform was “cluttered with reformist planks” according to Ross MacCormack (*Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919*). Moreover, his campaign focussed on “corporate domination” and opposition to Asiatic immigration. He received 683 votes (4.46%). The Conservatives won the election.

### **The Canadian Socialist League**

During 1898, former members of the Socialist Labor Party of Canada formed, first with a local in Montreal, the Canadian Socialist League. The CSL largely emerged, in the summer, in the east of the country. It soon made rapid progress. A loose federation of locals, each was permitted its own programme, as long as it was “consistent with socialist principles”. These “principles” were never sharply defined, comments Ross MacCormack. Supporters of John Ruskin’s ‘Christian Socialists’ joined the Socialist League, as did a number of Fabians.

The CSL was dominated by George Wrigley, who helped to establish the *Citizen and Country*, a social reform weekly, which, according to the *Western Clarion* (3 July 1903), “gradually developed into an avowed socialist paper” under his editorship. Wrigley was the organising secretary of the League until he moved, some time later, to British Columbia. His wife, Edith, edited the women’s column of the *Citizen and Country*. She was also active in the Ontario section of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union.

In June 1902, R. Parmeter Pettipiece, an itinerant printer from Ontario, who, since 1900 had been publishing *The Eagle*, began publishing the *Lardeau Eagle*, a miners’ journal, which supported the Canadian Socialist League. He then disposed of *The Eagle* and bought an interest in the *Citizen and Country*. He moved *The Citizen* to Vancouver and, in July 1902, with the assistance of George Wrigley, began to publish it as *The Canadian Socialist*. In October of the same year, he changed the name yet again to *The Western Socialist*. He later purchased *The Clarion*, published at Nanaimo on Vancouver Island, and merged the two together with a ‘strike bulletin’ of the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees, as *The Western Clarion*, which first made its appearance on 8 May 1903. And that it remained until 1925.

The United Brotherhood of Railway Employees was, at that time, on strike throughout the west of the country. Explaining the inclusion of the ‘strike bulletin’ in the merger, “it was felt that an overlapping of work existed, and the UBRE possessing no mail privileges was shortened in its range of influence”, writes Milne. It was also hoped to “establish in *The Western Clarion* a labor paper that will do full justice to the labor movement, industrial and political”. A circulation of 6000 copies three times a week was guaranteed.

During the summer of 1900, Wrigley called for the establishment of a British Columbia socialist organisation. There was co-operation between the United Socialist Labor Party and the local branch of the Canadian Socialist League when, in October 1900, delegates from Nanaimo, Vancouver, Victoria and several other places met in Vancouver to hold “the first socialist convention”. A red flag flew over the hall throughout the duration, despite efforts by the police to pull it down. The delegates were urged to “assist in building up and strengthening the Trade Union movement, as well as promoting class conscious political action” (MacCormack). The delegates agreed to establish a provincial federation of the Canadian Socialist League. It made “the collectivisation of the means of production” as one of its demands; the platform was, however, basically reformist. The federation never got off the ground.

Nevertheless, by 1902 the Canadian Socialist League had more than 60 locals in various parts of the country, including Manitoba, New Brunswick and the Northern Territories, but mainly in Ontario and British Columbia.

### **The Socialist Party of British Columbia**

Between 1890 and 1900 a number of works by Marx and Engels in English became available, in Britain and America, in fairly cheap editions. They included *The Communist Manifesto*, *Capital* Volume One, *Wage, Labour and Capital*, *Value, Price and Profit*, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844* and *The Poverty of Philosophy*. Many of these were published by Charles H. Kerr and Co. of Chicago. Limited, but more expensive, editions of *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in France*, *The 18<sup>th</sup> Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* and *Class Struggles in France* had been published in London. Such works by Marx and Engels began to circulate among workers in Canada by the turn of the century. Some who read *Capital* admitted that they found it heavy-going.

Most of the workers who migrated to Canada, from Europe and Asia, were looking for a better life than that which they had experienced previously. Many imagined that Canada would be different. Often they were disillusioned. Conditions, even in 1900, were not unlike those described by Engels more than fifty years before in Birmingham and Manchester. Indeed the infant mortality in Montreal was worse than in Calcutta or Shanghai. In Winnipeg there was no main drainage in the city until the 1920s. Vancouver was much the same. Most workers toiled between 55 and 60 hours over a six day week. Between 1880 and 1900 capitalism developed rapidly, first in the east of the country and then westwards as far as the Pacific Ocean. British Columbia and Ontario became industrial areas, embracing, in the words of Jim Milne, “some of the country’s harshest industries – mining, logging and fishing”. It is not surprising, therefore, that parties claiming to be socialist emerged in the west. Nor is it surprising that the writings, and ideas, of Marx and Engels influenced an increasing number of workers in the west of Canada.

In the summer of 1901, ‘socialists’ in Vancouver, led by Ernest Burns, decided to revive what had been the Vancouver local of the Canadian Socialist League under the name of the Socialist Party of British Columbia. Numerically, it got off to a good start by absorbing almost all of the League’s branches in the province, as well as some De Leonist remnants. It adopted the platform of the Socialist Party of America “after some very warm discussions” (MacCormack). The newly-formed executive committee was, however, instructed to draft an additional set of ‘immediate

demands'. They then agreed on "a composite platform which would represent the average ideas of the membership". It read as follows:

1. Direct legislation.
2. Proportional representation.
3. Abolition of property qualification for voters and candidates at municipal elections.
4. Abolition of the system of cash deposits for candidates at provincial elections.
5. Adult suffrage.
6. A minimum wage law, fixing wages at not less than \$2 a day for adults.
7. Reduction of hours of labor in all trades to 44 a week.
8. All coal mines to be owned and operated by the Province, in the interests of the people.
9. Graduated land tax, similar to New Zealand law.
10. Free medical attention to all needing it.
11. Scientific and practical management of fisheries, forests and waterways, in the interests of the Province.
12. Employment of unemployed labor on useful productive work.
13. Extension of powers of municipalities.
14. The education of children under 14 years of age to be free, secular and compulsory. Text books, meals and clothing to be supplied to children out of public funds when necessary.
15. Municipalisation and public control of liquor traffic.
16. Abolition of poll and personal property tax.
17. No more bonusing private individuals or corporations, with land grants or cash subsidies.

*(Western Clarion, 12 January 1907)*

Such were the reforms demanded by the Socialist Party of British Columbia in 1901. Not surprisingly, criticism came from several quarters almost immediately, the subject of which we shall return to later.

### **The Socialist Party of Manitoba**

The Socialist Party of Manitoba was founded in 1902. It had an Object, platform and list of immediate demands:

#### **OBJECT**

The Socialisation of the means of Production, Distribution and Exchange, to be controlled by a Democratic State in the interests of the entire community, and the complete emancipation of Labor from the domination of Capitalism.

#### **PLATFORM**



1. All Organisers or Administrators to be elected by Equal Direct Adult Suffrage, and to be maintained by the community.
2. Legislation by the People in such wise that no project or law shall become binding till accepted by the majority of the People.
3. The abolition of Standing Armies and the establishment of National Citizen Forces. The People to decide on Peace or War.
4. All Education to be compulsory, secular and industrial, with full state maintenance for all children.
5. The administration of Justice to be free to all.
6. The means of Production, Distribution and Exchange to be declared and treated as Collective or Common Property.
7. The Production and Distribution of Wealth to be regulated by the Community in the common interest of its members.

### **IMMEDIATE DEMANDS**

1. The public ownership of all industries controlled by monopolies, trusts and combines. No part of the revenue of such industries to be applied to the reduction of taxes on property, but to be applied wholly to the increase of wages and shortening of the hours of labor of the employees and to the improvement of services.
2. The education of all children up to 16 years of age, and state and municipal provision for books, clothing and food. The establishment of Provincial Colleges for the education of both sexes.
3. No child to be employed in any trade or occupation until 16 years of age. The penalty for infringement by employers to be imprisonment.
4. Eight hours or less to be the normal working day, or not more than forty-four hours per week and a minimum wage to be fixed in trades and industries by legislative enactment. Imprisonment to be the penalty for employers and employees infringing the law.
5. The establishment of a public employment bureau. The provision of useful work for all unemployed at current wages.
6. The establishment of adequate pensions for aged and infirm workers.
7. Equal civil and political rights to men and women. Abolition of financial and property qualifications for candidates and electors at all elections. Canvassing to be made illegal. Election days to be legal holidays.
8. Abolition of the Senate, establishment of initiative and referendum, proportional representation, and right of recall of representatives by their constituents.
9. The establishment of an exclusively national currency and the extension of the Post Office Banks so that they shall absorb all private institutions that derive a profit from operations in money and credit. All fire, life and other insurance to be operated in the interests of the whole people.
10. No further alienation of Dominion or Provincial lands. Grants to be revoked when conditions of grant have not been fulfilled. Land to be leased only until such time as it is utilised by the community.

11. All revenue to be raised by taxation on land values, by cumulative income taxes, and by inheritance taxes.
12. Municipalisation and public control of the liquor traffic.
13. The establishment of free public hospitals, convalescent homes, medical service and dispensaries.

(*The Voice*, November 7, 1902)

Jim Milne notes that “The Party in Manitoba had some distance to travel on the road to Socialist understanding”. Indeed its policy and programme was pure reformist labourism. In fact, shortly after, the SPM fielded a candidate in the Winnipeg civic election as a “Labor Candidate”, was endorsed by the local Labor Representation League, and did not even mention the word “socialism” during the campaign.

Nevertheless, it did produce a number of genuine socialists, such as George Dales, who later became editor of the *Western Socialist* and Dominion Secretary of the Socialist Party of Canada. The Socialist Party of Manitoba did not have a very large membership, the Province being largely agricultural, and the Party membership being confined almost entirely to the city of Winnipeg.

### **The Socialist Party of Ontario**

The Socialist Party of Ontario was formed in 1903 at a convention of the Ontario Socialist League. The convention was attended by about 50 delegates from Calt, Guelph, London, Manitoulin, Mount Forest, Orilla, Paris and Toronto. The convention began by passing the following resolution:

We, delegates of the Socialist League of Ontario, and comrades unaffiliated throughout the Province, in convention assembled, affirm our belief in the materialist interpretation of history that in every historical epoch the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organisation necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained, the political and intellectual history of that epoch, and declare our allegiance to the program of international revolutionary Socialism as the only class conscious movement, to attain this desired end we declare our aim to be the organisation of the working class and those in sympathy with it into a political party, with the object of conquering the power of governments and using them for the purpose of transforming the present system of private distribution into the collective ownership of all the people.

The newly formed Socialist Party of Ontario, it would seem, had a better understanding of society than did the Socialist Party of Manitoba. The resolution, moreover, did not contain a list of immediate demands, palliatives or reforms. Nevertheless the convention concluded with the following statement:

While accepting many so-called reform measures, such as direct legislation, proportional representation, public ownership of utilities, etc., as democratic and therefore socialist, we recognise the fact that when administered by a capitalist government they can at best be but

palliatives and, therefore, set our faces rigidly against any alliance or fusion with any independent or so-called reform party advocating any or all of these or other demands that do not include the aims and purposes as herein declared, but shall pledge our representatives to vote for any and every measure that shall be for the betterment of the working class in field and factory.

All of which nullified the original resolution of the convention.

Previously, in May 1902, a number of self-proclaimed socialists (excluding eight 'socialist' labour reformers) participated in the Ontario federal elections. They were:

S. Carter	South Wellington	413 votes
S. Corner	South Toronto	163 votes
Margaret Haille	North Toronto	81 votes
J.A. Kelly	West Toronto	265 votes
J. McMillam	Manitoulin	241 votes
J. Simpson	East Toronto	265 votes
H.G. Wilshire	West Elgin	425 votes

All were probably members of the Ontario Socialist League, which, in 1903, became the Socialist Party of Ontario, and, at the beginning of 1905, participated in the founding of the Socialist Party of Canada. Little is known of most of the candidates except, perhaps, James Simpson. According to one account Simpson received in the May 1902 election 375 votes (6.4%) in East Toronto. In January 1905 he was a candidate, almost certainly on behalf of the Socialist Party of Canada, formed that month, in North Toronto, where he received 211 votes (2.3%). A year later he increased his vote to 250 (3.8%). And at the general election in January 1908 he was nominated yet again for North Toronto, where he obtained 220 votes (2.6%). His name does not appear again as a candidate.

### **The Revolutionary Socialist Party**

Opposition to the adoption, at its foundation in the summer of 1901, of the list of immediate demands by the Socialist Party of British Columbia, came primarily from Nanaimo members. Everyday conditions in the coal mines of Vancouver Island in general, and Nanaimo in particular, "seemed to confirm the doctrine of the class struggle and the need for a socialist revolution", comments Ross MacCormack. And, he continues:

The controversy quickened between the gradualists, who contended that while the coming revolution was assured by history, it was only practical for socialists to work for the relief of the working class under capitalism, and the so-called Impossibilists, who argued that not only was the reform of capitalism impossible but the efforts to achieve reform could only delay the advent of the co-operative commonwealth by diverting the proletariat from the class struggle.

In actual fact, while the Nanaimo socialists argued that struggling for reforms would delay the establishment of socialism, they did not claim that the reform of

capitalism was impossible. They, therefore, decided that they must found a completely separate, revolutionary, party. First, they invited Eugene T. Kingsley to Vancouver Island.

Some years previously, Kingsley suffered an industrial accident in California, which resulted in the amputation of both his legs. While recuperating in hospital, he read quite a lot of the writings of Marx and Engels. He then joined the Socialist Labor Party of America in Oakland. He became an active propagandist for the SLP, and was several times that party's candidate for Congress. For a time Kingsley was loyal to De Leon, but when De Leon moved away from purely political activity and towards industrial unionism, Kingsley opposed him and resigned from the SLP. Kingsley's political views were largely those of the pre-1900 Socialist Labor Party, and of Karl Marx. He rejected reform and he regarded political action as the only way forward for the working class. And so he came to Vancouver Island. Ross MacCormack adds that the introduction of revolutionary 'Impossibilism' to British Columbia was not brought just by Kingsley, but had its roots in the pre-1900 Socialist Labor Party and the British Social-Democratic Federation, some of whose members had emigrated to British Columbia and Vancouver Island.

Early in 1902, or perhaps late in 1901, the Nanaimo members of the Socialist Party of British Columbia resigned, and shortly after formed the Revolutionary Socialist Party (of Canada), with branches in Northfield, Ladysmith and Vancouver, as well as in Nanaimo. They obtained *The Clarion* as the party's journal. Just how many members the Revolutionary Socialist Party had is not known, at least to this author. A few years later, the Nanaimo Local of the Socialist Party of Canada, of which the RSP was then a part, had 30 members. The Revolutionary Socialist Party, at its formation, probably had between 60 and 100 members. On 1 December 1902, a writ for a by-election was issued for North Nanaimo. The government (Conservative) candidate was William McInnes; his opponent was Parker Williams, a member of the Revolutionary Socialist Party. The RSP platform was the abolition of capitalism and the wages system – and no immediate demands or reforms. The outcome was: McInnes 263 votes (62.92%) and Williams, on behalf of the RSP, 155 votes (37.08%). (According to the *Canadian Parliamentary Guide, 1903* and *The Year Book of British Columbia, 1903* by R.E. Gosnell, Parker was the Socialist Party of British Columbia candidate. They do not list the RSP separately from the SPBC as does Milne in his *History of the Socialist Party of Canada*. William Wallace Burns McInnes is listed as the "Government candidate"). One or two old-time Canadian socialists have claimed Parker Williams was the world's first revolutionary socialist parliamentary candidate, and the Revolutionary Socialist Party the world's first genuine anti-reformist political party.

One of its foundation members was James Pritchard, father of William Pritchard, who later was a well-known member of the Socialist Party of Canada and the Workers (World) Socialist Party of the United States (WSPUS). James Pritchard was born in Wales, but moved to Salford, near Manchester, to find employment. For a time, he worked in the Ermen and Engels textile mill. Before emigrating to Canada, he became a Steelworkers and Women's Chain-makers' Union organiser. He may have been a member of the Social-Democratic Federation in Salford. After moving to Canada, Pritchard led the drive to organise coalminers on Vancouver Island into the Western Federation of Miners, where he worked as a miner. In 1903, he was blacklisted and moved to Vancouver. He died on 15 April 1952, aged 90, still a member of the Socialist Party of Canada.

In the autumn of 1902, James H. Hawthornthwaite, the independent M.P. for Nanaimo, joined the Revolutionary Socialist Party. Previously, Hawthornthwaite had been the leader of the Nanaimo Labour Party. A clerk employed by the Nanaimo Coal Company, he had been a real estate and mining promoter. He was first elected in Nanaimo in 1901, by acclamation.

### **Again the Socialist Party of British Columbia**

In the fall (probably September) of 1902, with delegates from the Revolutionary Socialist Party in attendance, the Socialist Party of British Columbia held its second annual convention to debate a new platform and constitution. According to Janice Newton, in her book *The Feminist Challenge to the Canadian Left, 1900-1918*, there were no women present. A few of the delegates argued in favour of retaining the inclusion of immediate demands in the platform, including the demand for women's suffrage. Nevertheless the majority opposed such measures.

According to Jim Milne, in his *History of the Socialist Party of Canada*, there were further discussions between the SPBC and the RSP, the result being the coming together of the two parties, the rejection of the former reform programme of the SPBC, and the adoption of the 'advanced' programme of the RSP, which had probably been drawn up by Eugene T. Kingsley, in co-operation with James Pritchard, Parker Williams and other members. A convention of the united party, held on 8 September 1903, confirmed this action in a resolution carried unanimously:

Resolved that this convention place itself on record as absolutely opposed to the introduction of palliatives or immediate demands in propaganda work, as being liable to retard the achievement of our final aim, that the Socialist Party of British Columbia henceforth stands firmly upon the one issue of the abolition of the present system of wage slavery as the basis for all political organisation.

(*Western Clarion*, 11 September 1903)

The programme and the platform, on which members and parliamentary candidates were expected to take their stand, was as follows:

We, the Socialist Party of British Columbia in convention assembled, affirm our allegiance to and support of the principles and program of the international revolutionary working class.

Labor produces all wealth, and to labor it should justly belong. To the owners of the means of wealth production belongs the product of labor. The present economic system is based upon capitalist ownership of the means of wealth production; therefore all the products of labor belong to the capitalist class. The capitalist is the master; the worker is the slave.

So long as the capitalists remain in possession of the reins of government all the powers of the state will be used to protect and defend their property rights in the means of wealth production and their control of the product of labor.

The capitalist system gives to the capitalist an ever-swelling stream of profits, and to the worker an ever-increasing share of misery and degradation.

The interest of the working class lies in the direction of setting itself free from capitalist exploitation by the abolition of the wages system. To accomplish this necessitates the transformation of capitalist property in the means of wealth production into collective or working class property.

The irrepressible conflict of interests between the capitalist and the worker is rapidly culminating in a struggle for possession of the power of government—the capitalist to hold, the worker to secure it by political action. This is the class struggle.

Therefore, we call upon all workers to organise under the banner of the Socialist Party of British Columbia with the object of conquering the public powers for the purpose of setting up and enforcing the economic program of the working class as follows:

1. The transformation, as rapidly as possible, of capitalist property in the means of wealth production (natural resources, factories, mills, railways, etc.) into collective property of the working class.
2. Thorough and democratic organisation of industry by the workers.
3. The establishment, as speedily as possible, of production for use instead of for profit.

The Socialist Party, when in office, shall always and everywhere until the present system is abolished, make the answer to this question the guiding rule: Will this legislation advance the interests of the working class and aid the workers in their class struggle against capitalism? If it will, the Socialist Party is for it; if it will not, the Socialist Party is absolutely opposed to it.

In accordance with this principle, the Socialist Party pledges itself to conduct all the public affairs in its hands in such a manner as to promote the interests of the working class alone.

On 8 October 1903, the *Western Clarion* commented: “The Socialist Party of British Columbia [is] just two years old – one in the ‘reform’ and one in the ‘revolutionary’ stage – and stands upon the clearest and most uncompromising platform in the world.” Later that year, the executive committee of the SPBC, which controlled the *Western Clarion*, elected Eugene Kingsley as editor. In the words of Ross MacCormack: “By the end of 1903, the ‘Impossibilists’ virtually controlled the SPBC”.

## Socialist Party of British Columbia: Elections

On 3 January 1903, the *Western Socialist* urged workers, in elections where there were no socialist candidates, to write “Socialism” on the ballot paper. A few weeks later, during a local by-election, the Socialist Party of British Columbia issued an election manifesto in which it declared: “No consistent Socialist can support or vote for any of the three (candidates) and this party recommends all voters in sympathy with the principles of the BC Socialist Party to go to the polls and there register A PROTEST against capitalism by marking their ballots thus: I WANT SOCIALISM” (*Western Socialist*, 5 January 1903). The voting laws in British Columbia, at this period, required a 12-month residency in the Province, and a 60-day residency in an electoral district for candidates and would-be voters. Janice Newton notes that such laws were used by employers to disenfranchise socialists. Often, before an election, workers would be laid off, thus making it difficult for them to settle and build homes; and mining companies also had restrictions on workers building homes on land owned by the companies, adding to the difficulties of workers establishing settled families in the areas of the logging and mining camps of British Columbia. Such actions, argues Newton, reinforced and masculine character of the early socialist movement in Western Canada.

Nevertheless, at the 10<sup>th</sup> Provincial general election the same year, the Socialist Party of British Columbia first nominated 13 candidates. The number was reduced to 10 on nomination day. They were:

<b>candidate</b>	<b>constituency</b>	<b>votes</b>	<b>% of total</b>
John Ross McPherson	Fernie	221	26.12%
John Riordan	Grand Forks	232	30.89%
Ernest Mills	Greenwood	229	35.34%
Samuel Shannon	Kaslo	164	24.74%
James Hurst Hawthornthwaite	Nanaimo City	486	43.98%
Parker Williams	Newcastle	288	40.06%
John William Bennett	Revelstoke	186	22.04%
John Thomas Mortimer	Vancouver City	1328	5.31%
Albion Robert Stebbings	Vancouver City	956	3.82%
James Cameron Waters	Victoria City	697	5.45%

Their opponents were, in the main, Liberal and Conservative Party candidates, although there were three ‘autonomous’ Labour candidates, one of whom ran on a Liberal-Labour platform, and just one candidate representing the tiny Socialist Labor Party group. Hawthornthwaite and Williams were elected to the British Columbia Parliament, as was William Davidson (Slocan, 358, 44.67%), an independent ‘labor-socialist’ who associated himself with the SPBC representatives in the legislature. All the Socialist Party candidates, including Hawthornthwaite, stood on the revolutionary, anti-reform platform. But, as Ross MacCormack remarks, “Hawthornthwaite was really a reformist, but was elected on a revolutionary platform”.

Another prominent member of the SPBC, Bertha Merrill (Burns), who was the first woman executive committee member, in 1903, accepted the Party platform of common, collective, ownership of the means of production, the class struggle, and was opposed to religion (she said she was a freethinker); but, at the same time, she

supported demands for women's suffrage, which had been dropped from the original SPBC reformist platform.

The subject of reforms, as Milne notes, was much discussed among Canada's early socialists. Socialist Party of British Columbia members of the legislature were soon confronted with reform measures, introduced by Liberals, Conservatives and others, which, directly or indirectly, may have been to the benefit of workers, or sections of the working class in the Province. As we have previously noted, the platform of the SPBC rejected immediate demands, palliatives or reforms. Generally, the membership was of the view that the Party should have nothing to do with reforms; that it should oppose them at all times, as they would retard the achievement of socialism. Only the abolition of wage slavery could benefit the international, and British Columbian, working class.

Nevertheless, another view was that the Socialist Party should concentrate on socialist propaganda and 'educational work', but that members elected to parliament or Provincial legislatures should examine reforms, and support those approved by the Party. "The official attitude", writes Milne, "was a mixture of these in line with the Party platform affirming that the Party would support legislation advanced in the interests of the working class." In practice, this meant that, while opposing reformism of other political parties, the Socialist Party at public meetings, and in the legislature, could support "measures considered to be in the interests of the workers". The socialists did not advocate reforms and, then, like other so-called socialists, call them revolutionary.

The existence of reformers within the socialist movement in Canada would prove to be a problem for at least ten years, particularly with regard to the Socialist Party of Canada.

### **The Socialist Party of Canada**

In recounting the origins of the socialist movement in Canada, and particularly in the west of the country where the socialist movement originated, it is important to describe the conditions, and industries, in which most of the workers, many of whom became socialists, existed. It is the story of militant class conflicts. It is also the story of conflicts between American-controlled craft unions and emergent industrial and general unions.

J.M. Bumsted, in his monumental *The Peoples of Canada: A Post-Confederation History*, says that "on one subject Canadian businessmen large and small could agree. The organisation of labour was regarded as an illegitimate combination designed to erode the right of the individual to run his business as he saw fit". In Bumsted's view, early labour organisation was mainly successful in the more skilled trades; it was particularly hard to organise in the "resource industries". The growth of secondary manufacturing and a service sector created a working class, or proletariat, that clearly saw its interests as different from those of the bosses. Organising on the factory shop floor, he notes, was not an easy matter. Since one of the effects of increasing industrialisation was to reduce craft identification, which combined with mechanisation, produced considerable worker alienation.

Many of the late nineteenth-century labour organisations were "foreign" imports, chiefly from the United States. The railroad brotherhoods moved into Canada with the



expansion of the railways in the 1870s and 1880s. and the American Federation of Labor, led by Samuel Gompers, leader of the cigar-makers' union, concentrated solely on craft organisation in particular industries. Strikes and lockouts were the most common weapons of both the workers and employers. Bumsted notes that British Columbia was the leading Province for labour unrest although, after 1900, strikes became common everywhere in Canada.

In British Columbia, the Western Federation of Miners, a vigorous opponent of craft unionism, became powerful in the Provincial labour movement. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Western Federation of Miners launched a crusade against the American Federation of Labor (AFL). However, the mining companies, in both the United States and Canada, refused to recognise the miners' union. Indeed, the employers, particularly during the 1902 strikes, were ruthless. In 1903, the Western Federation of Miners founded the American Labor Union (ALU) in opposition to the AFL. Leading members of the ALU, including Socialist Party of British Columbia members, Cameron and Wrigley in Victoria, Ben Bakes in Vancouver, Charles O'Brian in the Kootenays, and James Pritchard and Samuel Mottishaw of the Vancouver Island miners, encouraged the miners to affiliate to the American Labor Union. However, the ALU was mainly dependent on the Western Federation of Miners for its funds and membership; and a majority of its members were unskilled workers. Many were bartenders, cooks, lumbermen and teamsters.

During 1903, the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees (UBRE), an American Labor Union affiliate, called a strike against the Canadian Pacific Railway. The UBRE was a general, industrial, union which organised all railway employees, skilled or unskilled, into one union as opposed to the various AFL-affiliated craft unions. The UBRE contained a considerable number of members of the Socialist Party of British Columbia. In January 1903, the Canadian Pacific Railway began efforts to break the UBRE Local in its Vancouver freight department. The union claimed that the railway employers forced their members to strike by intimidation, dismissals and the use of 'spies' at almost every meeting. Many workers supported the UBRE, contributing funds and refusing to handle freight. But the Canadian Pacific Railway brought in strike-breakers from the United States; and the police shot Frank Rogers, a socialist, while picketing. The American Federation of Labor refused to support the striking railworkers. And in the end, the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees was defeated.

The American Labor Union continued to expand its membership at the expense of the AFL-affiliated craft unions, at least for a while. But by the end of 1903, the craft unions, largely through the efforts of the employers, supported by the AFL, regained control of the various trades councils, including Victoria, where Socialist Party of British Columbia members were ousted from the executive. By the beginning of 1904, both the American Labor Union and the Western Federation of Miners had declined; and in the Vancouver Island coalfields, the Western Federation lost out to the United Mineworkers of America. Without the support of the Western Federation of Miners, the American Labor Union rapidly collapsed.

Bumsted correctly notes that "Socialists were to be found everywhere in Canada after 1900, and both their existence and their political successes in local and municipal elections are still among Canada's best-kept secrets." The most militant socialists, he continues, were in British Columbia, where socialism represented both a political and a labour movement. But he is not correct when he asserts that "the

Socialist Party of Canada was organised in 1904 in BC as the result of a merger of Marxists and the Canadian Socialist League". He is, however right when he adds that labour unrest in British Columbia was particularly strong among miners, "for whom the common categories of skilled and unskilled held little meaning". In such an environment, the 'Impossibilists' did very well.

During 1903, there was pressure, mainly from Manitoba and Ontario, but also from British Columbia, for the formation of an all-Dominion Socialist Party, incorporating the Socialist Parties of British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario. Despite the reform programmes of the Manitoba and Ontario parties, some felt that the three parties had much in common.

However, on 9 May 1903, the *Western Clarion* reported the Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of British Columbia as follows:

The matter of forming a national Socialist Party was discussed, and it was considered that no benefits would accrue to the Party in the meantime from affiliation with other Socialist organisations in the Dominion, as the expense of sending delegates to national conventions would be too heavy for the Party at the present stage, considering that we have more work in this Province than we are able, financially, to carry on. It was decided therefore to leave the matter to the next party convention.

At the third annual convention of the SPBC, it was decided that the time was still hardly ripe for a national party, but it was agreed that, at a later date, arrangements be made to send 'Organiser Kingsley' on tour to the eastern provinces in order to "educate the inhabitants thereof to the philosophy of real Socialism" (*Western Clarion*, 11 September 1903). As previously noted, the Socialist Party of British Columbia had been quite successful in that year's Provincial election. Unfortunately, however, the *Western Clarion* was forced to suspend publication at the end of the year, until June the following year, due to the parlous state of the Party's finances, caused in the main by the cost of the election campaign.

Nevertheless, the Socialist Parties of British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario carried on, through correspondence, negotiations throughout 1904. And the SPBC, in particular, continued to grow in numbers and influence. As Ross MacCormack comments: "British Columbia was the cradle of socialism in Canada". On Thanksgiving Day, the Socialist Party of Ontario, at its convention, passed a resolution adopting the non-reformist platform of the Socialist Party of British Columbia, and informed the SPBC that it was ready to affiliate with it. A resolution passed by the Socialist Party of Manitoba, on 11 December 1904, was sent to the Socialist Party of British Columbia, which held its fourth convention on 30 and 31 December of that year. It read:

Comrades: I am instructed by the Socialist Party of Manitoba to forward to you a copy of a resolution passed at today's meeting, as follows: 'We, the Socialist Party of Manitoba, endorse in its entirety the present platform, pledge and general construction of the constitution of the Socialist Party of British Columbia, and we pledge ourselves, in the event of the BC Party inaugurating a movement to organise a Socialist Party of Canada on the same lines, to join this party. Further, that this resolution be forwarded to the executive of the SPBC, the Ontario SP,

and that it be sent to the *Voice*, *Western Clarion* and Port Arthur *Standard* for publication.

At the Socialist Party of British Columbia convention the delegates were advised:

Owing to resolutions and representations made by the locals in Winnipeg, Toronto and Fredericton (New Brunswick), besides correspondence from comrades scattered throughout the Dominion, it will be necessary for this convention to consider the advisability of organising the nucleus of 'The Socialist Party of Canada', noting carefully the action already taken by eastern comrades and their acceptance of our platform and program as at present constituted.

A resolution was, therefore, submitted to the convention by J.G. Morgan, and seconded by E.T. Kingsley: "That the party name be changed to the Socialist Party of Canada, and that the party proceed with organisation". (*Western Clarion*, 28 January 1905). The resolution was adopted, and the membership was balloted. Acceptance was unanimous. A few weeks later, a group in Edmonton, Alberta, joined the merged parties, as did a recently-formed Socialist Party of the Yukon. The *Western Clarion* noted on 15 April that the application from the Yukon had 21 signatories; according to A. Douglas, the secretary of Socialist Party of the Yukon, it had 50 members in Dawson City, "but a greater number are out on the creeks".

Conditions in the Yukon Territory and the Klondike were even worse than in southern British Columbia, or in the mining communities on Vancouver Island. Recounting Jack London's descriptions and stories, Robert Barltrop in his *Jack London: The Man, the Writer, the Rebel*, writes that when the gold rush to the Klondike began, hundreds of thousands were attracted by the possibility, or hope, of 'striking it lucky'. A few did. London was attacked by scurvy for lack of fresh vegetables. Jack London notes, however, that the mining camps had a great deal of political consciousness. In cabins and in front of log fires, many of the men would argue all day over economics, philosophy and science. Groups would often discuss socialism. Jack first joined the Socialist Labor Party in Oakland, California, moving on to the Socialist Party of America soon after its formation. In 1916, Jack London resigned from the SPA; and in September, two months before he died, he welcomed the founding of the Workers' Socialist Party of the United States. Whilst in the Yukon and in Dawson City, London, like many others, may have heard Charles Lestor orating on socialism and the "socialist co-operative commonwealth" as London described it. Another writer, who also spent the same two years (1896-1898) in the Yukon as Jack London, was William C. Owen, who became a socialist in California in 1884; but who, after studying and translating into English some of the writings of the anarchist-communist, Peter Kropotkin, became a supporter of the Mexican revolutionary Magón brothers and, later, an individualist-anarchist, rejecting what he called 'state socialism', unionism and parliamentary activities.

The Socialist Party of Canada adopted the platform of the Socialist Party of British Columbia *in toto*. A Dominion Executive was elected, comprising John E. Dubberley (chair), Alf Leah, W.H. Flowers, G. Peters, A.J. Wilkinson, Charles O'Brian and R.P. Pettipiece. Kingsley and Pettipiece were elected organisers, and Wilkinson treasurer. There was as yet no general secretary. Its first meeting was held on 19 February 1905, according to the *Western Clarion* of 25 February 1905.

In the words of Jim Milne, “The Socialist Party of Canada was in business”. The platform of the Socialist Party of Canada was printed in the 4 February 1905 issue of the *Western Clarion*.

### **Progress and Problems and the Unions**

As Janice Newton observes, while the Socialist Party of Canada established locals across Canada, from Victoria and Vancouver Island in the west to Nova Scotia in the east, most of its activists came from British Columbia, where the party’s support “relied predominately on male trade unionists in the mining and logging towns, and in Vancouver and Victoria. The SPC relied on a Marxian brand of socialism, stressing the class struggle between workers and bosses, the need to educate the workers to their class interests, and demands for the collective ownership of the means of production”.

Like the Socialist Party of British Columbia before it, the SPC advocated no immediate demands. By refusing to demand reforms in its platform, says Ross McCormack, “the SPC became unique in North America”. The Socialist Party prided itself on being a ‘scientific socialist’ party. Indeed, “what made it highly unusual in the North American movement was its Impossibilism”. It argued that class-conscious political action was the only means by which the workers could destroy the wages system. Tinkering with capitalism was useless. Not only were reforms useless to the working class, but they were “poison to the revolution”. The official view of the SPC was that by strictly adhering to the platform, socialists would force the ruling class to grant short-term relief to the workers. “If you want palliatives, don’t go after them”, said D.G. McKenzie. And, declared Kingsley, “go after the earth, and the first thing you know you will have palliatives galore from the cowardly capitalist tribe fleeing for their lives from the wrath to come”.

Nevertheless, the issue of reform or revolution was, for a number of years, far from clear-cut within the Socialist Party of Canada. Moreover, there were many reformists within the organisation, particularly among former members of the Socialist Parties of Ontario and Manitoba. Furthermore, numbers of workers of German and Ukrainian origin, who joined the party as national groups between 1905 and 1907, often had a different, reformist, agenda. However, as Milne observes, “The subject was not in the early days regarded as vital, the members at best drawing a vague distinction between reforms and reformism, the deciding view being that it was permissible to further reforms so long as this was done by a revolutionary party”.

According to Ross MacCormack, in his *Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries*, the Socialist Party of Canada’s views on unions appeared to be monolithic, but in fact it contained a fairly broad range of views. The official policy of the SPC was that unions were products of capitalism, directing their efforts against the effects which were inevitable. All agreed that the Socialist Party, unlike the De Leonist SLP, should be kept separate from the unions. However, while some members considered unions, at best, to be largely useless, most insisted that the unions were the workers only defence under capitalism. The SPC never adopted a policy that its members could not become union officials. Indeed, almost all members of the SPC were also members of unions, generally industrial unions rather than craft unions where possible, and some became prominent union leaders.

Of the Socialist Party’s viewpoint, Milne, in his *History of the Socialist Party of Canada*, comments:

Labor unions were regarded as associations of workers to protect and improve wages and working conditions, their struggles forming no part of the class struggle, which was a conscious struggle to end capitalism and could only be fought on the political field. Unions took part in the buying and selling of labor power and were in much the same position as those who took part in the buying of other commodities, union activities often being referred to as commodity struggles. It was sometimes said that unions were engaged in a losing conflict, as indicated by the defeats they were at that time suffering in strike action.

Eugene Kingsley was probably the most critical of unions; Parmenter Pettipiece was the most pro-union. He argued that the unions were products of the wages system, but insisted that they were “the correct plan for defence under the present system”.

Early in 1903, before the Socialist Party of British Columbia became part of the Socialist Party of Canada, Kingsley wrote (in the *Western Clarion* of 7 February 1903):

A great mistake is made in considering labor strikes as parts of the class struggle. Strikes are battles between two sections of the workers, the unionists and the non-unionists, the job holders and the job hunters... Trade unions are products of the competitive system of industry and as the Socialist Party is organised to abolish this system, it is not concerned in the trade union question.

Two weeks later (*Western Clarion*, 21 February), W. Griffiths commented:

The struggle for existence is a part of, and included in, the class struggle. This economic struggle exists independent of the class consciousness or un-class consciousness of men. Because the rising bourgeoisie had no knowledge of Marxian concepts, and economic struggles, this did not prevent the overthrow of feudalism, and the existence of class struggles, even if unknown to the participants.

And the following week (*Western Clarion*, 28 February), Kingsley argued that:

Trades unions are purely economic organisations aiming to improve the economic conditions of the members here and now. As organisations they have no business in politics beyond teaching their members the necessity of voting for their class interests and the absurdity of the ‘community of interests’ between capital and labor.

Meeting in Chicago in 1905, shortly after the formation of the Socialist Party of Canada, 200 ‘socialists’ and trade unionists, including Daniel De Leon, the leader of the Socialist Labor Party of America, and Lucy Parsons, widow of the Haymarket Martyr Albert Parsons, founded the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Generally known as the “Wobblies”, the IWW sought to create “one big union”, an industrial organisation based on the class struggle and opposition to the AFL-affiliated craft unions. The preamble to the IWW constitution states, in its last paragraph:

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organised, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organising industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

This transformation of capitalist society would, according to the IWW, stem from a process of non-political action, such as the general strike and various “revolutionary tactics of direct action”. Although claiming to be Marxists, the Wobblies rejected the SPC’s claim that, in the words of one of its pamphlets on unionism, “...only by themselves conquering political power for the purpose of abolishing capitalist ownership of the means of production can the workers ever obtain any easement. To abolish the wages system the workers must gain control of the state, the citadel of capitalism.” Some years later, the Socialist Party of Canada argued that “By means of the state the workers are held in subjection, and by means of the state they shall be emancipated. The state it is that guarantees to the master class ownership of the means of production.” (*Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada*, p. 40).

Around 1906, a number of former members of the American Labor Union in Canada founded the Industrial Workers of the World of Canada. At first, the IWW had some success, and a number of Socialist Party members are known to have joined the organisation. The SPC, however, soon came into conflict with the IWW over its anti-political, syndicalist policies.

### **On the Prairies**

Between 1870 and 1890, thousands of largely poor farmers and would-be farmers, mainly from Ontario, poured into the Canadian West. Almost unpeopled until the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, more than 2.5 million settlers arrived by 1912. The land was ideal for wheat and barley, which became the traditional mainstays of the Prairies. Saskatchewan was to become the grain-producing centre of Canada. In Alberta, the wheat fields gave way to cattle ranching. The number of acres of occupied land increased from 2.5 million in 1880 to 6 million ten years later.

The government energetically encouraged homesteaders with incentives of cheap land and mortgages; indeed, some of the land was free for male settlers, except for small legal costs, but women were not permitted to apply for land. At first, settlers came from Britain and Western Europe. However, later most were not from Britain, which could not provide enough of the kind of people Canada required to establish farms. “Huge numbers of stalwarts came from the poverty-stricken plains of Eastern Europe: Ukrainians, Poles and Hungarians, including many Jews” (*Canada*, the editors of Time-Life). Prior to the arrival of these people, much of southern Alberta and Saskatchewan had been dominated by ranchers, who grazed thousands of head of cattle on land leased to them by the Federal Government.

Rural relationships were, at least at first, somewhat different from those in the towns and cities. The basic unit of production was the family farm. The farmer tended to run his farm as an individual entrepreneur, but with the assistance of his wife and children, particularly sons when old enough. Life was hard on the women who did not share in the ownership of the farm, and whose labour was seldom remunerated. Life

was especially difficult for the wives and daughters during harvest. Western farms always had a labour problem. Nevertheless, thousands of temporary workers were employed at harvest time. Some remained as permanent employees on the more prosperous farms, as wage-labour and capital relationships slowly developed. After 1900, many farmers increasingly employed young male immigrants brought to Canada by so-called charitable organisations. More than 50,000 were imported, mainly from British slums.

What, then, was the Socialist Party of Canada's view of farmers during the early years of the last century? Milne, in his *History of the Socialist Party of Canada*, describes their situation thus: to many socialists, the farmer was a capitalist, a small one, but trying to become a big one. He owned, or was buying, the means of production in land and machinery, and he employed some wage workers, paying the 'going wage', which, not surprisingly was the lowest wage possible. That many in the farming community were still desperately poor, proved that they were "far down in the ranks of the exploiters and could be readily shaken into the ranks of the wage working class". They were in the meantime, argued the socialists, a part of the exploiting class, inclined to think and behave as exploiters. Interestingly, Western farmers were generally quite hostile towards Eastern capitalists; they saw them as enemies.

The SPC believed that the farmers were destined to continue, with limited exceptions, an existence of poverty and that, to improve their lot in life, must abandon their class interests and work for the ending of capitalism. An alternative view, according to Milne, was that essentially the farmer's position under capitalism was the same as that of the worker – he was a wage-slave! As late as 1914, the party published a pamphlet by a Prairie farmer member, Alf Budden, under the title *The Slave of the Farm*. He argued that the farmer was a capitalist only in name. His supposed ownership was a "grim joke"; he obtained his land and machines by placing himself at the mercy of the mortgage companies. "The larger the machinery grows the longer he must toil to obtain it, until he reaches the point where the last vestige of independence drops off him, and he reaches the status of a wage slave or, at best, manager of a machine company".

There was, therefore, no escape for the farmer other than socialism, for the greater his production improved, the greater the tendency for prices of farm products meant an even greater hold by the capitalist class on his farm and home. Many farmers, although not wage-workers, were workers. The Socialist Party took this message to the rural communities of Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. In 1907, Ukrainian-speaking members of the SPC were active among Ukrainian farmers in North Manitoba, developing a "mass organisation"; and in April 1911, they decided to elect a Farmers' Organisational Committee for Manitoba, whose "responsibility would be the organisation of farmers", writes Peter Krawchuk in *The Ukrainian Socialist Movement in Canada (1907-1918)*.

The Socialist Party of Canada considered that the farmers should throw in their lot with the industrial workers to bring about socialism, otherwise they could be a stumbling block to the conquest of power.

### **The Socialist Party and the European émigré workers**

The second largest ethnic group of migrants to Canada, after the British and Irish, were the French, who mainly concentrated in Quebec, although since the latter part of

the eighteenth century, there has been virtually no further immigration from France. The Germans were early settlers in Canada. Indeed, many were actively recruited by the British colonial government as early as 1750. A century later, there were more than 150,000 Germans in Ontario alone; large numbers of them moved into the Prairie Provinces, and to such towns as Calgary, Regina and Winnipeg.

By the middle of the last century, the Ukrainians formed the fourth largest national grouping in Canada. Originally most of them came from Galicia, which was, at the time, part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. In 1900, there were just 7,800 Ukrainian homesteads in the country, according to Raymond A. Davies in his *This is our Land*. By 1906, there were more than 40,000. And within a few years, there were large communities in Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg. Jews fleeing from pogroms in Czarist Russia settled mainly in Montreal. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of these people were poor propertyless workers, looking for jobs, or former peasant-farmers looking for land.

From the late 1870s, Canadian industry developed rapidly, although inevitably this development was affected by world conditions and economic cycles. Moreover, industrial development within the country was uneven. Before 1914, Quebec remained steady at the national average, with Ontario above and the Maritimes in the east falling behind. Industrial development in the west of the country was relatively slow. Between 1880 and 1910, industrial growth in such areas as Montreal and Toronto expanded considerably while smaller communities, particularly in central Canada, fell behind.

In sum, between 1890 and 1910, Canada was transformed into an industrial capitalist power of “smoking metalworks, shoe factories and cotton mills”; of mines and lumber camps, and a network of railroads across the country. It had an emergent and ruthless class of “businessmen always agile in their unending quest for profit”. Moreover, “with the surging economic growth came a new urban working-class, many of them immigrants, working long, dangerous hours and living in rickety wooden tenements”. (*Canada*, by the editors of Time-Life Books, and *The Peoples of Canada – A Post-Federation History*, by J.M. Bumsted).

Many of these workers were attracted by social reform and socialist ideas and organisations, including, first the Canadian Socialist League and, after 1905, the Socialist Party of Canada. From its foundation, the Socialist Party of Canada attracted groups of east and central European members, including significant numbers of Germans, Finns and Ukrainians. The party was, however, somewhat slow in recruiting individual east and central European members, mainly because most of them, at that period, could not speak or understand English. Moreover, the Socialist Party did not translate any of its English-language literature, including its platform, into any of these languages until 1908. German members in Winnipeg, in 1907, translated the platform into German, and also held economics classes in German and English. According to Peter Campbell, in his *Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way*, when John Houston ran on a Socialist Party ticket, in Winnipeg, in the Federal Election of 1908, the meeting at which he was nominated was addressed by English, French, Finnish, German, Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish speakers. And Jack Leheney noted that a “campaign committee composed of one comrade from each nationality was elected with power to add to their number”.

By 1907, the Italian Toronto local had 300 members. The Finnish local in the city was said to be the largest. Finnish locals of the SPC discouraged smoking and drinking but, apparently, with little success, at least in Toronto. They were also hostile towards ‘Christian Socialism’.



Of all the east European workers within the ranks of the Socialist Party of Canada, during its early years, the Ukrainians were probably the most active and prominent. Peter Krawchuk, in *The Ukrainian Socialist Movement in Canada (1907-1918)*, describes it in some detail. It is not known if any individual Ukrainian-speaking workers joined the SPC in 1905; but by 1907, there was a Ukrainian branch in Nanaimo, the 'birthplace' of socialism in Canada. There were also Ukrainian locals in Portage la Prairie and Winnipeg. In other cities, such as Vancouver, where there were no separate Ukrainian branches, a number of Ukrainian workers joined general locals of the party. In the early years of the Socialist Party of Canada, it should be noted, both individuals and groups (mainly non-English-speaking) were permitted to join the party.

By the end of 1907, the Ukrainian branch in Nanaimo had 25 members, the Portage la Prairie 21, and the Winnipeg branch 55. In November of that year, the three branches began to publish their own newspaper, *Chervony Prapor* (Red Banner). It was edited and managed by Myroslav Stechyshyn and his wife. It claimed to be the first Ukrainian socialist newspaper in North America. Above its title, on the front page, was "Socialist Party of Canada" in English. The first issue carried the platform of the SPC. It stated that "it set itself the task of organising the Ukrainian proletariat, making it consciously enlightened in the ideas of socialism". It was responsible for publishing a Ukrainian translation of the platform of the Socialist Party of Canada, 8000 copies of which were distributed throughout the country, mainly through the Winnipeg branch.

At the same time, the Ukrainian branches took measures to organise a Ukrainian Socialist Alliance within the framework of the SPC. While accepting the program of the party, and stating that the Alliance was part of the organisation, it set itself the task of "organising the proletariat which spoke the Ukrainian language". On questions of organisation, propaganda and publishing, the Ukrainian Socialist Alliance proposed "full autonomy" within the party. The Alliance was discussed by the Dominion Executive Committee of the Socialist Party on 3 December 1907. The Alliance, however, was stillborn, and further issues of the *Chervony Prapor* do not mention it.

Nevertheless, Ukrainian branches of the party grew quickly. By January 1908, there were eleven. They conducted a lively programme of propaganda, almost exclusively in British Columbia and among farmers in Northern Manitoba. As there were few works of Marx and Engels available in the Ukrainian language, *Chervony Prapor* played an important part in raising the consciousness of Ukrainian workers in Canada. Krawchuk comments:

Its pages elucidated the class struggle in various countries, and in Canada in particular. Its pages exposed the cruel exploitation of the workers and poor farmers by capitalism. It included the Ukrainian workers and farmers in Canada in political action. It called on them to agitate and work in support of worker and Socialist candidates in both provincial and federal elections.

On 1 May 1908, a number of Ukrainian workers in Winnipeg joined the 10,000 strong demonstration organised by the Socialist Party of Canada; a year later, more than 2,000 Ukrainian workers took part in the May Day demonstration. More branches were formed during the year. Ukrainian workers, organised within the Socialist Party, took a lively interest in the activities and struggles of their kinsmen in Ukraine. They collected money among themselves, and sent it to Eastern Galicia and

to Ukraine, to help political prisoners and the radical press. And they held mass meetings in protest against “occupationist terror”.

All was not without its problems, however. After nine months, and 18 issues, *Chervony Prapor* ceased publication on 8 August 1908, due to shortage of funds. Furthermore, as with a number of other ‘national’ groups within the Socialist Party, the Ukrainians, through a new publication, *Robochy Narod*, complained:

Scattered as we are among organisations whose membership is predominately of other national groups, we feel ourselves stifled. Very often we don’t even have the courage to open our mouth due to embarrassment about our broken English. Because of the lack of intercommunication, between our Ukrainian branches and because of our lack of knowledge of English, we engage ourselves exclusively with local problems which usually have very little, or nothing whatever, in common with socialism. In this manner we constitute a superfluous community in the party, of no value to it or our own people.

It was not a good omen. In 1908, however, the Socialist Party initiated a major campaign among non-English-speaking European immigrant workers. The platform was translated into Finnish and Italian. The party added a Finnish journal, *Tyokansa*, as an official SPC organ. In the same year, it appointed Toma Tomashevsky as its Ukrainian organiser in Alberta, and Herman Slipchenko in Manitoba. Some gains were made among immigrant farmers; but, not surprisingly, a better response came from Slavic, Italian and German miners. Indeed, one activist, Frank Poch, had previously been a member of the Social Democratic Party in Germany since 1888.

### Note

Some of the workers from Germany, who had joined the Socialist Party of Canada in its early days, had been members or supporters of the German Social Democratic (Workers’) Party; the Finns of the Finnish Social Democratic Labour Party; those of Jewish origin were often previous members of the Polish Socialist Party, which, in 1892, had become the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and, in 1900, had merged with the Social Democrats of Lithuania. Others had also supported the Jewish Bund. A few of the Ukrainians in Canada, of whom before 1914 most had come from Galicia and Bukovina, had supported either the Revolutionary Party of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Social Democratic Labour Party, or even the Ukrainian section of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, which, prior to around 1920, was largely Menshevik. Most did not speak or understand English.

### **The Socialist Party and the ‘Orientals’**

As early as 1880, there were Asian workers (usually referred to as Orientals by both socialists and non-socialists at that time) in Canada, mainly in British Columbia and the west of the country. Generally, unlike those from Europe, they did not migrate to Canada by choice. They included Indians, Chinese, Koreans and Japanese. There were

a few thousand Indians, mostly Sikhs from the Punjab, mainly skilled workers, who initially worked in the sawmills and lumber industry of Vancouver and Victoria.

During the 1880s, more than 15,000 Chinese labourers were brought into the country, of whom between 6,500 and 7,000 were employed on construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Milne comments:

Oriental workers were entering the Province encouraged and assisted by the employing class, becoming established in the logging and fishing industries and partly in mining, moving from these into other industries.

Chinese women were also imported into the country, again mainly into British Columbia, as domestic servants. According to Janice Newton, employers preferred Chinese women servants because they were regarded as “sober, industrious and obliging”. Moreover, wealthy women apparently preferred them because their husbands were less likely to ‘fool around’ with Chinese maids!

Hostility towards Asian workers occurred almost immediately. There were riots against them in Vancouver from the 1880s. Indeed, as early as the 1870s some trade unionists clamoured against proposals by employers to import ‘Orientals’ into Canada. For decades, the Conservatives as well as the Liberals played the ‘race card’. Milne continues:

The Orientals worked for lower wages and longer hours than white workers, which tended to depress or prevent improvements in the general conditions of life. The white workers fought against this by trying to have Orientals excluded from the country. The Socialist Party became involved in this activity.

But how? Opinions were mixed. On 24 January 1903, the *Western Clarion*, which, at the time, reflected the views of the Socialist Party of British Columbia, argued:

The Chinese and Japanese have as much right to be here as we ‘civilised Christians’ have in Asia. The ‘cheap labour’ problem is a product of our competitive system of industry, and until the working class capture the reins of power and establish the cooperative commonwealth, there will be ‘profits’ for the capitalists by importing Chinese, Italians, etc. To prevent the lowering of the environment of the working class in Canada, and thus making the work of the Socialist educator harder, it would be well to secure restrictive immigration laws requiring a certain educational standard from all immigrants, but while the capitalist government might pass such legislation it would not be enforced unless the working class were showing their political power intelligently by ‘striking’ at the ballot box and vote for the world-wide working class Socialist Party.

In Winnipeg, *The Voice*, (28 April 1905) reported that “At the beginning of last week the cooking staff and some kitchen assistants at the General Hospital were dismissed and their places filled by Chinese...The dismissal of white help and the substitution of Chinese in a public institution is preposterous.”

In 1902, both Chinese and Japanese immigrant workers were declared unfit for full citizenship. Due to an influx of South Asians (mainly from India), writes Peter

Campbell in his essay, "East Meets Left: South Asian Militants and the Socialist Party of Canada in British Columbia, 1904-1914" (*International Journal of Canadian Studies*, 20, Fall 1999), the British Columbia legislature passed by unanimous vote, on 27 March 1907, a bill to disenfranchise all South Asians. This presumably included Hawthornthwaite, a member of the SPC. In April the same year, South Asians were denied the vote in Vancouver municipal elections, thereby excluding them from serving as school trustees, serving on juries, being employed by the public services, or getting jobs on public works contracts.

In August 1907, a proto-fascist organisation called the Asiatic Exclusion League was formed in British Columbia. It was aided, and directed, by a similar organisation in the United States, where, on 5 September, over 500 white lumber workers in Bellingham, Washington State, attacked South Asian mill workers, evicted them from their lodgings and destroyed their possessions. "Some of the instigators of this attack", writes Campbell, "then proceeded to Vancouver, where their presence and inflammatory rhetoric helped produce the anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese riots that took place on September 7."

Following the Vancouver riots, the *Western Clarion* of 14 September wrote:

The working class mind is being inflamed with the idea that the Japanese, Hindu or Chinese workingman coming to Canada, comes as an enemy to the white worker. As racial prejudice is one of the meanest in the category and least founded upon reason, it is one of the easiest to stir up. When stirred up it is virulent and bestial in the extreme and capable of being used to carry out the purpose, however vile, of those who know how to manipulate it and turn it to account.

A week later (21 September), the *Western Clarion* further commented on the riots, stating:

The Japanese are coming into this Province in large numbers. They will keep on coming so long as it may be of interest to Japanese capital to send them, or white capital to bring them in. That they are not coming here with the intention of remaining a subject people is to their credit. If they are coming with the avowed purpose of seizing the country and enslaving its inhabitants the whites should in all decency refrain from making a fuss over it, for the little brown man would be only following the precedent set by the white man through all history. The white man, however, is chiefly remarkable for the ability to preserve his equanimity when he is a winner and squeal like a stuck pig when a loser.

Nevertheless, a few prominent members of the Socialist Party of Canada, in the words of Campbell, "evinced the same fear of Asian workers that characterised the labour movement as a whole". In a speech given by Hawthornthwaite at the Dominion Theatre, Vancouver, on 13 October 1907, he defended the exclusion of Asian workers from Canada on the grounds that Asian civilisation would one day swamp "every white market" and "threaten western civilisation". W.J. Curry, writing an article entitled "The Asiatic Invasion: Its Causes and Outcome", in the *Western Clarion* of 5 December 1907, excluded Asians from his definition of the working class, arguing that once the workers (presumably 'white' workers) had established a society based on production for use, not profit, they would not need the assistance of Asians. He

declared: “Go ye back across the ocean, join the party of revolt in your country, and do as we have done”. But Donald McKenzie, a member of the Socialist Party’s Executive Committee and *Western Clarion* editor, in an editorial on 13 February 1909, welcomed the decision of the United Mine Workers to admit Chinese and Japanese workers to the union’s membership. The title of his article was “All Slaves Together”. Nevertheless, two years later, in April 1911, the *Socialist Standard* states:

The Socialist Party of Great Britain is not identical with the Socialist Party of Canada. We are not sufficiently informed to be in a position to discuss in detail the action of their members on local governing bodies, but remembering that the interests of the workers are the same the world over, we do not hesitate to condemn such action as the advocacy, by members of the Socialist Party of Canada, of the exclusion of our Asiatic fellow-workers from British Columbia.

Many of the anti-Asiatic members of the SPC, generally reformist social-democrats, had resigned, or had been expelled from, the Socialist Party by 1914. The party was then able to declare unequivocally that it looked upon all workers equally, irrespective of their origins.

Except for a very few, the Asian workers did not become socialists; the Indians, and particularly the Sikhs, became anti-British nationalists. It is also true that, in Canada and elsewhere, even the most ‘advanced’ Marxist socialists had difficulty in shedding racist ideas and attitudes. But they did concern members of the British ruling class. In 1909, John Morley, who had become Secretary of State for India in 1905, gave his reasons for opposing Indian emigration to Canada the fact that “there is socialist propaganda in Vancouver, and the consequent danger of East Indians being imbued with socialist doctrines”.

### **The Socialist Party and Women Workers**

Life was hard for both working men and women. The majority of working-class women, in Canada as elsewhere at the beginning of the twentieth century, were not engaged in paid labour outside the home; they were not, in socialist parlance, wage slaves. And even those who were, comments Janice Newton, “by and large believed themselves to be destined for a life as wife and homemaker”. Nevertheless, the proportion of women wage workers did increase considerably during the first decade, particularly in the larger cities.

In 1900, probably about 12% of Canadian women were employed. By 1920, it was around 20%. Women workers, outside the home, tended to be employed in jobs considered, by the men and themselves, to be suitable for their sex. “Thus, women who entered the paid labour force were predominantly employed in a limited range of occupations: domestic service, teaching, nursing, clerical work, and light engineering”.

Invariably, women workers were paid less than men workers, even when they did identical jobs. Moreover, most employers refused to employ married women. Most female workers were under 25 years of age, and were expected to get married and leave full-time employment. Farmers’ wives, who often undertook various jobs on the farm, were not considered to be employees. Newton writes:

All workers at this time faced enormous difficulties maintaining acceptable working conditions and wages. The Trade Union movement was beleaguered by uncertain business cycles, dramatic increases in the cost of living, hostile employers, and pro-management governments. By 1911, only 5% of the entire Canadian labour force was unionised, and by 1921, this had increased to only 10%. Women workers faced additional barriers. Since they assumed that their employment in the labour force was temporary, and since they received low wages and had to endure long, arduous hours of labour both at work and at home, few women had the resources, energy or will to devote to the improvement of their wages and working conditions.

Yet, according to Newton, some women workers did unionise in some sectors. As early as the 1880s and 1890s, the Knights of Labor supported women's strike actions, set up day nurseries for wage-earning women with children, and advocated equal pay for men and women. In 1889, the Trades and Labor Congress voted, in its platform, the abolition of child labour and female labour in mines, workshops and factories. Some trade unions supported equal pay for equal work, for both men and women; others did not. More often than not, they could not force the employers to pay equal wages.

What then was the Socialist Party's view, or views, on women in general and working women in particular?

Writing in the *Western Socialist* of 3 January 1903, Dorothy Drew (the pen name of Bertha Merrill) argued that socialism would give every mother the right to bear her children (four or more!) in love. It would abolish profit; with no idle rich to support, the burden of labour would be distributed equitably among the entire population; no one would live off the labour of others. Socialism meant that all women would have to do their share of domestic labour, and this would reduce the labour of each. Socialism, she argued, would abolish the isolated housewife. Women will work cooperatively. Under socialism, work would be managed collectively and scientifically. Finally, socialised domestic labour would emancipate women from their dependence on men. Women would control their labour.

Peter Campbell, in an unpublished paper, "The Socialist Party of Canada: 'Impossibilism' revisited", says that the SPC's views on women revealed a progressive attitude, combined with its relegation of the 'Women Question' to a minor status. Women, he claims, never became prominent in the party, and the ones who did, appear to have been the wives of party members. The situation was much the same, or worse, in other parties. Some parties had special women's branches or sections. The Socialist Party of Canada was against them. The Dominion Executive Committee was against them. Despite this, in Toronto a Socialist Women's Study Club met weekly in 1908, to study Engel's *Origin of the Family* and Unterman's *Marxian Economics*.

Campbell, in his essay, also notes that in Vancouver in 1911, there were 2.3 working-age men for every working-age woman, and only 9.6% of its manufacturing workforce was female. In the mining towns and lumber camps, where the SPC drew much of its support, there were very few women of any age or class. Campbell concludes his section on the Socialist Party's attitude thus:

As with western society as a whole, the party's progressive position on women tended to be espoused by a small number of men and women

who were not powerful influences in the SPC as a whole. Men in the SPC were not significantly different from men in Canadian society generally. They could, and did, take very 'progressive' positions on women's issues. There is, however, little evidence to suggest that women's issues were of any significance in the party's platform or election campaigns. The SPC did not ignore women or fail to develop a position on issues affecting women. The party did fail, however, to integrate women's issues within its overall critique of capitalism.

Nevertheless, the few members who did tackle the subject made a number of important observations, which are worth recording.

Ruth and Charles Lestor joined the Socialist Party of Canada in 1908. Little is known about Ruth Lestor prior to her joining the party, other than that she was born in Manchester, England, and that she had been a nurse in mental institutions. She generally embraced the Socialist Party platform, although she was not consistent regarding women's suffrage. She came to prominence during speaking tours for the SPC from 1909 to 1911. Linda Keeling, in *Enlisting Women for the Cause: Women, Labor and the Left in Canada, 1890-1920*, writes that Ruth Lestor accompanied her organiser husband on his travels and spoke to women comrades, a not uncommon role for the female half of couples who organised for the party. In the summer of 1909, speaking on the "woman's place", Ruth Lestor argued that a woman's class position was of paramount concern, because sex was not the chief factor determining women's industrial position. The capitalist hired the cheapest and most effective worker, regardless of sex, she argued. Reiterating the position of other Socialist Party speakers, Ruth Lestor observed that socialist women had to pay special attention to the housewife who had a narrower outlook than her working sister. Private property, she claimed, was the source of female oppression, and women need socialism even more than men because they suffered more under the capitalist system.

Campbell says that Ruth Lestor insisted that a woman had to be a socialist first, and having committed herself would then be treated as "a comrade and equal" in the Socialist Party. Quoting the *Western Clarion* of July 1911, Campbell quotes Ruth Lestor as saying that men should be "merciless" towards women who supported capitalism. She also said that "A woman is a man – that's all". According to Kealey, Ruth had, by 1911, become quite critical of SPC women, and was pessimistic about women in general, pointing to their cruelty, superstition, and intellectual backwardness. "I rarely found one of my own sex worth talking to", she complained. Shortly after, her own speaking and organising career was curtailed by illness and the birth of two children.

In the 10 December 1910, issue of the *Western Clarion*, Alf Budden wrote an article entitled "The Woman's Place: From a Proletarian rather than a Sex Standpoint", in which he noted that working conditions were worse for women. Women who applied for jobs were subjected to the "horrid attentions" of men. Budden observed that "the boss can exploit you (women) in a double sense, and forever destroy any self-respect you may have had". For women, he said, the escape to marriage was only an illusion, because it condemned them to a life of "household drudgery". He maintained that "the woman question" had nothing to do with socialism. The Socialist Party had few women members because women lacked the "necessary knowledge of their true position" as wage-workers, or as people dependent on wages. "For the she worker there is one issue, the destruction of the wages system". There is only one question for you to solve: "the slave question, and it galls

men and women alike". There is no "woman question". The woman and the man of the working class have interests in common; both are slaves to the rulers of capital, concluded Budden.

In the *Western Clarion* of 20 December 1913, a Mrs Stott of Victoria argued that the labour of both women and men "had been commodified", and that men and women could not occupy different places vis-à-vis the mode of production. There was only an "apparent sex struggle", which upon analysis resolved itself into the class struggle.

An important subject which put the Socialist Party at odds with social reformers was the suffragist movement. As in England and elsewhere at this period, Canadian women did not have the vote. Unlike the British suffragettes, the Canadian suffragists were not particularly militant. The Conservatives opposed universal adult suffrage, although the Canadian suffragist movement, and such organisations as the Political Equality League, were largely dominated by upper-class women, of whom many were hostile to socialism and trade unionism. Some suffragists were merely patronising towards working class women; others were also involved in prohibition campaigns.

In a rather short chapter, Janice Newton, in her book, *The Feminist Challenge to the Canadian Left, 1900-1918*, deliberately or otherwise, tends to distort the Socialist Party's attitude to adult suffrage in general and women in particular. She claims that the Socialist Party's "hostility to women reflected the masculine ethos of the SPC". Yet in some sections, she quotes the opposite viewpoint.

At its formation, the Socialist Party of British Columbia included in its list of "immediate demands" adult suffrage, although it did not mention women as such. When, in 1903, it amalgamated with the Revolutionary Socialist Party, the SPBC dropped its reform platform in favour of the RSP's revolutionary objective of socialism. When the Socialist Party of Canada was formed at the beginning of 1905, it adopted the SPBC's anti-reformist platform. As mentioned previously, the SPC did not oppose individual reforms, including adult suffrage: it just did not advocate them as its official platform. Indeed, Newton confirms this when she writes:

The party had a concerted focus on educating the working class for socialism...If the working class was educated to its class interests, a simple majority vote by its members could bring in the era of socialism. Control of the state would lead to control of wealth production. In those early years, socialists had absolute faith in the democratic process.

Newton, however, confuses the Socialist Party's opposition to the Political Equality League to "opposition to women's suffrage". The reverse was true.

In December 1913, Mrs Scott, representing the Socialist Party of Canada, debated Dorothy Davis of the Political Equality League on the question: "Will Woman Suffrage Solve the Economic Problem?". Mrs Scott argued that women would not necessarily be more intelligent in the use of their vote than men. She objected to suffragists who exhibited their class bias, by demanding property rights for women. "But although she took the negative side in the debate, she did not argue against the right of women to vote; she objected only to the suffragists claims that the enfranchisement of women would change the economic problems of the day", says Janice Newton. She also notes that James Hawthornthwaite, a Socialist Party of Canada member of the British Columbia legislature, actually introduced suffrage bills in 1906 and 1909, although, like Mrs Scott, he accepted that women's suffrage would



not mean economic freedom. Both of his bills were voted down by the Conservatives and Liberals.

### **The Socialist Party Consolidates**

There does not seem to be any official statistics as to the number of members the Socialist Party of Canada had, at its formation in 1905, or later. Numbers generally cited for 1905 are between 2,000 and 3,000. According to Ross McCormack, membership between 1908 and 1910 was approximately 3,000. In his essay, "East Meets Left", Peter Campbell states that the membership of the SPC, organised in 1904-1905, did not exceed 3,000 to 4,000 members. He adds: "Their small numbers notwithstanding, Socialist Party members were Canada's foremost advocates of scientific socialism". And McCormack writes: "However, the SPC exercised a much greater influence than their numbers would suggest". (At that period, the population of Canada was less than a quarter of that of the United Kingdom. In 1903, the British Social-Democratic Federation had a membership of approximately 9,000, which had declined to around 6,000 in 1908; and in 1905, the Socialist Party of Great Britain had about 200 members). McCormack writes that up to 1910, the SPC was a vital and expanding party, with the support of many workers in Western Canada.

Because the SPC considered that socialists' basic function was to educate the workers", continues McCormack, "the SPC insisted that members be well-schooled in Marxist theory. The revolution would only be achieved by a thorough understanding of the wages system. To ensure this most locals required applicants for membership to sit for an oral examination.

He then quotes the *Western Clarion* of 18 March 1905, as claiming that "the proletarian revolution must be the work of the working class alone". Most members of the Socialist Party of Canada were not prepared to speculate on the socialist future. Unlike William Morris or Edward Bellamy, they were not prepared to create a detailed blueprint. History would be the arbiter. The SPC was never guilty of inaction; it claimed right from its formation that, within the limits set by the conditions of their time, men and women made their own history.

According to Ross McCormack, the Socialist Party's interpretation of Marx was largely the work of theoreticians in the Vancouver locals, and on the Dominion executive which was also located in that city. He mentions Wallis Lefaux, John Harrington, Donald George McKenzie, Eugene Kingsley and J.G. Morgan, who was a former member of the British Social-Democratic Federation. Morgan organised study groups and conducted classes in Marxist theory. At the centre, claims McCormack, was Kingsley, who was the link between the Socialist Party and the pre-1900 Socialist Labor Party. He was the "inspiration and life force" of the SPC "which sprang from Nanaimo". Indeed, "Thanks to Kingsley", wrote Lefaux, "the platform of the Socialist Party of Canada is the most clear-cut and revolutionary, of any Socialist Party, of any country in the world". And Harrington argued that Kingsley was "the real founder" of the SPC. Alex Paterson stated that, in the early years of the party's ascendancy, "Kingsley pretty well ran the *Western Clarion* and the party". Until 1908, he edited the *Clarion*; and up to 1912, he largely financed the paper, only discontinuing when it put him deeply in debt. He was an extraordinary and effective speaker and propagandist – the SPC's most popular at that time. "He inspired and delighted

audiences across the West". Opponents as well as supporters of the Socialist Party testified to Kingsley's pre-eminence. Campbell comments: "Once upon a time there were Marxists on the street corners, and crowds at Vancouver's Empress Theatre on Sunday nights, eager to hear the socialist message. Once upon a time they came in their hundreds to experience the fire E.T. Kingsley..."

Campbell also writes of Wallis Lefaux speaking in the Empress Theatre; of John Harrington discussing the ideas of Joseph Dietzgen and Georg Hegel; of the Finn, Abe Karne, who was one of the SPC's 1908 Dominion Executive Committee members, and the Indian, Husain Rahim, who was also on the Dominion Executive and was an expert on Freudian psychology. He adds that contrary to popular belief, prominent members of the SPC were "not all white, male, and Anglo-Saxon". Another SPC speaker of "passion", of whom hundreds came to hear speak, was Sophie Mushkat of Eastern European Jewish origin. And then there was James Pritchard, a founder member of the Revolutionary Socialist Party, who was also on the Dominion Executive in 1908.

In a talk, which he taped in 1974, William "Bill" Pritchard speaks of his father, James, who had been a miner on Vancouver Island, but had been blacklisted, and who had various jobs in Vancouver. Of Eugene Kingsley, Bill Pritchard recounts that he was a powerful platform speaker "with lightning repartee", who also "wielded a trenchant pen". Pritchard remembered Wallis Lefaux and his brother, Frank, and Henry M. Fitzgerald, "a red-headed orator of orators, shining particularly on the soap-box at the corner of Hastings and Columbia". In Pritchard's view, Donald McKenzie, one-time editor of the *Western Clarion*, was a man of few words, no speaker though a brilliant writer. George Morgan was, according to Pritchard, "also a man of few words, but most of them of substance", who held economics classes on Sunday afternoons. "He was accredited in many circles as being the best informed economist on the North American continent", says Pritchard. Abe Karne had been involved, in 1893, in organising the Fishermen's Union of Finland, of having been a member of its Executive Board, and, some time later, of assisting in the foundation of the Social Democratic Labour Party of Finland. He joined the Socialist Party of British Columbia in 1902.

Were such men and women leaders? Both Janice Newton and Peter Campbell often refer to them as such. They were certainly prominent at that time, particularly in Western Canada. And many, largely non-socialist, workers, including those who held office in various unions, would have considered them as leaders. Yet they thought of themselves, not as leaders who needed followers, but as educators and teachers of Marxian economics and socialism. Time after time, they would say and write, that the working class, not them or even the Socialist Party of Canada, must emancipate themselves. Milne, in his *History of the Socialist Party of Canada*, writes: "The SPC from its earliest days could never manage to enthuse over leaders, and today wouldn't change a word in the comment of D.G. McKenzie in 1908:

The poor Scotchman is willing to trot alongside of any old plug that is going his way, but must decline with thanks to be led anywhere by anybody, lead be ever so wisely, and absolutely refuses to be saved by a savior, any savior, economic, industrial, ethical, moral or spiritual. It is a case of welcome, earth-born comrade, but to hell with the Heaven-sent.

*Western Clarion*, 8 February 1908

The early members of the Socialist Party were neither Labour leaders nor Leninists although, sadly, a few of them became such as the days, weeks, months and years went by.

### **Propaganda**

The Socialist Party had many enemies, not least the government, and the various Provincial authorities, as well as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP – the famous ‘Mounties’). The SPC did not advocate violence. But its members were not pacifists; they defended themselves as best they could, at outdoor, street corner meetings and, where necessary, in their indoor meeting halls.

The socialists only had two means of spreading their ideas: the written word in the form of journals and newspapers, and books by Marx, Engels and other radical writers, as well as by early scientific writers such as Charles Darwin; and face-to-face meetings in union halls, and sometimes in theatres, and on street corners and open spaces, weather permitting. The main publication, serving the Socialist Party, was the *Western Clarion*. At its founding, it was published three times a week. When the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees’ strike ended a few weeks later, it became a weekly. In the years to follow, it was published twice a month, often once a month, and, when funds were low, not at all. Its circulation fluctuated generally between 4,000 and 6,000, reaching as high as 10,000 during a Socialist Party election campaign. The *Western Clarion* was not, however, owned by the party for many years, at least in the way that the *Socialist Standard* is owned by the Socialist Party in Britain. Nevertheless, it was largely controlled by the Dominion Executive Committee. The editor was usually a committee member.

Throughout the first two decades of the last century, the Socialist Party ‘employed’ travelling speakers and organisers.

Mainly they ‘lived off the land’, fed and helped in their travels by locals, groups and individuals, workers and farmers, a dearth of plutocrats, anxious to help in spreading the socialist message. They did not live luxuriously. Life was abundant only in ideas and poverty. But they were a sturdy breed, stimulated by the interest around them and a conviction that a new day was dawning. (Milne)

Following its foundation, the Socialist Party of Canada sent ‘soapbox’ orators, lecturers and organisers throughout the country. Others travelled widely within their own provinces. There were locals in all the provinces except Prince Edward Island. As previously noted, the vast majority of the members of the SPC were ordinary wage-earning members of the working class. An interesting minute book of the Squamish (a small settlement north of Vancouver) branch of the Socialist League, dating from 1906, wherein its members applied for a charter and for membership of the SPC, and at which “Provincial organiser Kingsley” was present, gives a good idea of the occupations of the Socialist Party membership. The minutes read thus:

#### **Roll of Members of Local 28 Squamish SPC**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Citizen</u>
-------------	----------------	-------------------	------------	----------------

William Lewis	Squamish, B.C.	Farmer	36	Yes
Chas Kilby	Do.	Laborer	34	Yes
Mrs Chas. Kilby	Do.	House-keeper	36	Yes
Kittredge	Do.	Laborer		No
Ronayne	Do.	Rancher		Yes
H. Judd	Do.	Farmer	36	Yes
A. Stephen	Do.	Teacher	23	Yes

All the above became members of the Socialist Party of Canada on 19 February 1906. On Sunday 22 January a propaganda meeting was held to commemorate 'Bloody Sunday'. A further propaganda meeting was held on 3 March, at which "comrades Kilby, Mrs Kilby, Lewis, Judd, Ronayne, Stephen and several non-members were present". Members in turn answered the question: "Why am I a Socialist?" One dozen *Clarions* were sold.

Eugene T. Kingsley, who visited Squamish, was based in Vancouver but, despite his disability, having lost both his legs, travelled widely as a speaker, debater and organiser. He printed and edited the *Western Clarion* for a number of years.

Sophie Mushkat, briefly mentioned previously, was an active Socialist Party member, speaker and organiser for about eight years. According to Janice Newton, Mushkat was a Russian-Jewish immigrant of Polish descent, who came to Canada with her father in 1905, and settled in the Maritimes. She and her father joined the SPC around 1908. According to Roscoe Fillmore, SPC organiser in the Maritimes, she spoke, on occasion, to crowds of 1,200, sometimes facing hostility and violence from opponents or the police, intent on disrupting the meetings. Sometimes, she was arrested. The topics on which she spoke included the class struggle, socialism and the trade unions, and the materialist conception of history. She was no genteel speaker: "Miss Mushkat, her sleeves rolled up to her elbows, vigorously pummelled the various bogeys created by the capitalist papers to frighten people from taking part (in socialist activities)", wrote *Cotton's Weekly*, of 24 March 1910.

On one occasion in Moncton, New Brunswick, following a fracas involving the police, Mushkat was called to give evidence in court. On taking the stand, she refused to swear on the bible. She said that she did not believe in an afterlife; and she confirmed her commitment to socialism, saying that she was proud to be a member of the SPC. Her replies drew applause from the public benches, and a reprimand from the judge, who dismissed her testimony because she had refused to swear on the bible. Late in 1910, Sophie Mushkat travelled west to Calgary, where she continued speaking on behalf of the Socialist Party. "While on tour", says Newton, "she made use of her language skills in English, Russian and Polish, even providing a translation for the party press of the experiences of a Russian serf who had moved from Russia to Canada and tried to establish himself as a farmer."

Another active female member of the Socialist Party of Canada, mentioned by Linda Kealey in her *Enlisting Women for the Cause*, was Sanna Kallio; born in the Vasa province of Finland in 1878, she was one of seven children of a poor farming family, who immigrated first to the United States in 1899, and shortly after to Port Arthur. She joined the Socialist Party, soon after its formation, in 1905. In June 1907, she was elected SPC organiser for the eastern section. Based in Port Arthur, she spent the next 16 months touring eastern Canada, and into the United States, organising mostly Finnish workers and establishing locals. She was a delegate to the Ontario provincial convention in September 1908. Working under the direction of the Toronto

and Port Arthur locals of the party, Sanna Kallio continued to speak to, and organise, immigrant Finnish workers on behalf of the Socialist Party. Like Ruth Lestor, about the same time, around 1910, Kallio became ill and was hospitalised. After returning to Port Arthur, she continued to speak until 1913; she later married and had one child. Like Sophie Mushkat, she became sympathetic towards the Communist Party later in life, at least for a while.

Charles R. Lestor began speaking on behalf of the Socialist Party of Canada in 1909. In his book, *The Monument*, Robert Barltrop paints a colourful picture of 'Charlie', as he was generally called. "He talked of the Yukon, of cattle-drives and fist-fights, of men who came straight from the pages of Robert Service and Jack London...he had spoken at strikers' meetings with guns trained all around him." Lestor was born in Bradford, England, in 1876, coming to Canada around 1900. Barltrop states that Lestor had been a member of the Industrial Workers of the World prior to joining the SPC. Of Charles and Ruth Lestor, *Cotton's Weekly* of 5 January 1911, under the heading "Comrade Lestor Coming East", writes:

Comrade Chas. R. Lestor and Mrs Lestor have been campaigning in Saskatchewan. These comrades are coming East. All locals throughout Ontario and Quebec who desire to arrange dates can make arrangements by addressing Comrade Lestor at Regina, General Delivery, Post Office. Mrs Lestor cannot be depended on to speak owing to her recent illness. Comrade Lestor is well fitted for the role of lecturer, and is a good propagandist.

The *Regina Morning Leader* speaks as follows of Comrade Lestor:

'Charles Lestor, the young Socialist from the coast, who is at present doing propagandist work in Regina was born in Bradford, Yorkshire, England, some thirty-five years ago, and during that span of time he has pretty well run the whole gamut of human activity. Originally a blacksmith, he has been at different times a solicitor, laborer, showman and waterworks manager, with also other lines thrown in between them. More or less cradled in the labor movement, Mr Lestor has always taken considerable interest in social problems of all kinds; a student of history and political economy, he had contributed largely to magazines on these subjects.

About three years ago, Mr Lestor joined the Socialist Party of Canada, and since then has become well known on the Pacific Coast as a speaker on Socialist subjects. Two years ago, together with his wife, he toured the Dominion, speaking at all the principle points between Vancouver and Quebec.

Mrs Lestor, who accompanies her husband on the present trip, is generally looked upon as one of the best lady speakers of the Socialist Party of Canada, though at the present time owing to ill health following a serious operation, she is doing but little platform work.

Mr Lestor says that the social problem is an educational problem; the workers have nothing to fight but their own ignorance.'

*Cotton's Weekly*, although privately owned, was, at that period, very sympathetic towards the Socialist Party of Canada.

### **The International Socialist Bureau**

In his *Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way*, Peter Campbell refers to such people as William Pritchard and Robert Russell, both one-time members of the Socialist Party of Canada, as well as the SPC generally, as “Marxists of the Third Way”. He then adds, in the following paragraph: “The description requires explanation, because these socialists might more accurately be called Marxists of the first way. Their guiding philosophy is to be found in the provisional rules of the International Workingmen’s Association...”

The International Workingmen’s Association, or First International as it is usually called, was formed in London in 1864. The impetus came largely from the London Trades Council. Although Karl Marx had not taken an active part in the movement and preparations which founded the International, he was co-opted onto its 50 strong committee. He was also elected to a sub-committee to draw up a programme and statutes. After a number of drafts were submitted and rejected, Marx proposed that he prepare a manifesto. The sub-committee accepted his draft, but demanded a few additional phrases about “right, truth, morality and justice”, which Marx told Engels he had succeeded in inserting in such a way as to do no harm. The full committee unanimously adopted the statement as *The Inaugural Address and Provisional Rules of the International*.

Franz Mehring sums up the *Address* thus:

The emancipation of the working-class must be the task of the working-class itself. The struggle for emancipation is not a struggle for the establishment of new class privileges, but the abolition of class rule altogether. The economic subjugation of the worker to those who appropriated the tools of labour, i.e. the source of life, results in servitude in all its forms: social misery, intellectual atrophy and political dependence. The economic emancipation of the working-class is, therefore, the great aim for which all political movement must serve as a means. Up to the present, all attempts to realise this great aim have been unsuccessful owing to the lack of unity between the workers of various countries. The emancipation of the workers is neither a local nor national task, but a social one. It is a task which embraces all countries in which modern society exists, and it can be achieved only by the systematic cooperation between all these countries. (*Karl Marx: The Story of his Life*)

The aim of the International was to unite workers of Europe and North America “into one great army”, and give it a programme which, hopefully, would leave the door open for English trade unions as well as such political groups as the French Proudhonists and the German Lassalleans. Inevitably, there were differences and conflicts within the International. The French Proudhonists opposed trade unions and strikes, which the International supported; they also proposed ‘People’s Banks’ and mutual insurance associations. The supporters of Ferdinand Lassalle, who had

founded the General Association of German Workers, accepted the class struggle, but advocated state credits for producers' cooperatives. Lassalle was also in favour of cooperation with the Prussian Junker state. But the disputes which would ultimately destroy the International Workingmen's Association were between Marx and his supporters and the anarchist, Mikhail Bakunin, who advocated the destruction, or smashing, of the state and the Marxists, who argued that the workers must, first, get control of the state.

Not only was the International rent by conflict, but it was in decline. At its Hague Congress in 1872, Engels proposed that the General Council should be moved from London to New York, for at least a year. It was carried by a small majority. The General Council then moved to New York, where according to Mehring, dissensions between the various sections in North America soon emerged. Meanwhile, in May 1875, the German 'Marxists' and Lassalleans came together in Gotha to form the Social Democratic Party of Germany. In the United States, in April 1876, expatriate German Lassalleans and internationalist supporters of Marx met in Pittsburgh, and issued a call for a "Unity Conference" to meet in Philadelphia the following July, to form a workers' party. Prior to the conference, writes Frank Girard and Ben Perry in their *The Socialist Labor Party, 1876-1991*, delegates from the remaining sections of the International Workingmen's Association met in Philadelphia, and disbanded the organisation. On 19 July, the "Unity Conference" met, and founded the Workingmen's Party of the United States, which, in December 1877, changed its name to the Socialist Labor Party.

Karl Marx, in a letter to Wilhelm Brake on 5 May 1875, was highly critical of the German Social Democratic Party's Gotha Programme (which was first published in English in 1900, in North America, by the *Daily People* as *Criticism of the Gotha Programme*), wherein Marx claims that the German party, in part, "improves" upon, but actually distorts, the statutes of the International Workingmen's Association. He is particularly critical of the Lassalleans' advocacy of a so-called "Free State", as well as universal suffrage, direct legislation, and "arming the nation".

In 1879, Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue met Karl Marx and Frederick Engels to get their assistance in drawing up a programme and principles for the formation of a workers' party in France. Later that year, in Marseille, a congress of various organisations founded the Fédération du Parti des Travailleurs Socialistes de France (FPTSF). In June 1880, in anticipation of its participation in the legislative elections the following October, the FPTSF adopted a declaration of principles and proposals which, influenced by Marx and Engels, included the "emancipation of the productive class" and "all humans regardless of race or sex" as its "maximum programme" and, in addition, under the influence of Paul Brousse and Benoit Malon, a list of reforms which included the "separation of the Church and State", a minimum wage, and pensions for the elderly, as its "minimum programme". The FPTSF received 60,000 votes out of a total of seven million cast.

By 1882, the party had split, with the group around Brousse and Malon, dubbed the 'Possibilists', advocating a purely pragmatic, reformist, gradualist policy, and the group around Guesde and Lafargue, dubbed the 'Impossibleists', founding the Parti Ouvrier Français, which, despite being called Impossibleist, contained both revolutionary and reformist elements. In 1905, with the help of the International Socialist Bureau (the Second International, founded in 1889), the various French factions and parties founded the openly reformist Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière, the SFIO.

The conflict between 'Possibilists' and 'Impossibilists' had only just begun. Moreover, while the 'Possibilists' were to become respectable and, of course, practical, 'Impossibilists' were supposed to be impractical, dogmatic, sectarian and utopian, charges levelled against the Socialist Party of Canada. In his essay, "The Socialist Party of Canada: 'Impossibilism' Revisited", Peter Campbell likens the Parti Ouvrier Français to the Socialist Party of Canada. They shared many characteristics, he asserts. Like the SPC, the POF was largely regionally-based, with its main strength among industrial workers of northern France, although unlike the SPC, the POF was not strong in large-scale mining. The Guesdists, continues Campbell, tended to use Marxism, like the SPC, as a polemical weapon rather than using it to develop a proper analytical theory. The POF considered the trade union movement to be "inherently reformist", but argued that unions could serve as vehicles for the development of class consciousness, as of course did the majority in the SPC. And in 1898, the Parti Ouvrier Français declared that the only road to socialism was through the democratic electoral process, as did the Socialist Party of Canada, despite its increasing support for industrial action a decade or so later.

In Britain, in 1881, a wealthy 'Tory Capitalist', Henry Myers Hyndman, together with, in the words of David A. Perrin in his *The Socialist Party of Great Britain*, "a disparate collection of radicals, freethinkers, single-taxers and socialists" founded the Democratic Federation, which, in 1884, renamed itself the Social-Democratic Federation (SDF). It claimed to be a socialist organisation. It was not. Its 'Programme and Rules' included an object, its 'maximum programme', of "The Socialisation of the Means of Production, Distribution and Exchange, to be controlled by a Democratic State...", which, in fact, was not socialism but state capitalism; and a 'minimum programme' of eight various demands, which included "the Abolition of a Standing Army, and the Establishment of a National Citizen Force", and "the People to decide on Peace or War".

Not surprisingly, William Morris and Karl Marx's daughter Eleanor, who had both joined the SDF in 1883, together with a number of other members resigned in December 1884, and founded the Socialist League, whose manifesto had much in common with the Provisional Rules of the Workingmen's Association, and did not include a list of palliatives or reforms. Unlike the Social-Democratic Federation, the Socialist League was an 'Impossibilist' organisation. Unfortunately, however, the League was infiltrated by a number of 'bomb-happy' anarchists, noted by Engels in April 1886; and, following a number of other disputes regarding whether socialists should use Parliament as a means of emancipation, the Socialist League disintegrated by 1891. Some of its members, including Eleanor Marx, rejoined the SDF, hoping to move it in a socialist direction. It was not to be. Nevertheless, from the turn of the century, a number of members of the SDF began to rebel against the autocratic and increasingly nationalistic leadership of Hyndman. The first group to go were in Scotland, who, under the influence of the Socialist Labor Party of America, formed a Socialist Labour Party in Britain, in 1903. The following year, another group, this time in London, founded the Socialist Party of Great Britain, which had a clear socialist, 'Impossibilist', objective and no reform programme. Later, the Socialist Party of Great Britain and the Socialist Party of Canada became increasingly associated with each other.

Meanwhile, supposedly socialist, social democratic and labour parties were being formed in numerous countries, such as Italy, Finland, Poland, Russia, Portugal, Ukraine and elsewhere. All had both 'maximum' and 'minimum' programmes; all were 'Possibilist' parties. Most of them affiliated to the International Socialist Bureau.



In the United States, both the Socialist Labor Party and the Socialist Party of America, which had been founded in 1901 as a breakaway from the SLP, also associated with the Bureau. But what of the Socialist Party of Canada?

### Note

Discussions as to what tactics a Socialist Party should take regarding revolution versus reform, the class struggle, opportunism, palliatives, Impossibilism, the ballot, or even violent insurrection, were 'in the air' within what was broadly accepted as the socialist movement in both Europe and North America at the time that the Socialist Party of Canada was founded. An example are the comments and observations made, in August 1906, by Ernest Untermann at the end of his essay, "Antonio Labriola and Joseph Dietzgen: A comparison of Historical Materialism and Monist Materialism", published in *Socialism and Philosophy*, a collection of essays and articles by Antonio Labriola, written in 1897 and 1899, and later published by Charles H. Kerr & Co. of Chicago.

Untermann says socialists want to insist on a full understanding of scientific socialism, "and keep the proletarian movement on the safe path of revolutionary tactics and aims". Yet we (that is socialists) also want to realise that all sorts of "eclectic socialism, such as sentimental, Christian, revisionist, Impossibilist socialism, are natural products of proletarian evolution, which we should educate and assimilate, if possible, instead of straightway combating or isolating them".

In Ernest Untermann's view, a Socialist Party must remain revolutionary; indeed, it must become more revolutionary to the extent that capitalism approaches the critical period into socialism. But it must also be a conservative party in the sense that it must preserve the historical progress of the bourgeoisie against the reactionary aims of the bourgeoisie itself. A Socialist Party must know how to reconcile its revolutionary class-struggle tactics with the opportunist requirements of everyday activity under capitalism, he asserts. "We must not carry opportunism to the point of abandoning our class-struggle position for the sake of insignificant palliatives or a handful of doubtful votes. But neither must we distort the class-struggle into meaningless catchwords or a sterile isolation from all present-day activity". In a footnote, Untermann writes:

Impossibilism and revisionism may, as a rule, exist within the Socialist Party, and co-operate with Marxism on the same basis for their common ends. Whether these tendencies shall be tolerated in the party or excluded from it, depends on considerations, which must be analyzed in each particular case.

Untermann says that he wants to insist on the intelligent use of the ballot, and wants to extend the electoral franchise to both sexes, and free it from "all reactionary interference". But he does not want to make a fetish of the ballot, nor exaggerate veneration for it into the belief that it is the only effective weapon. Indeed, he asserts that "all weapons are good which accomplish our aim, and if the ballot should prove a failure we shall not hesitate to resort to other weapons, even to powder, lead, and dynamite".

Ernest Untermann was one of the 'founding fathers' of the Industrial Workers of the World, the IWW. He was the translator, into English, of the first volume of

*Capital* by Karl Marx and *The Origin of the Family* by Engels, and a member of the Socialist Party of America.

### **The Bureau and the Socialist Party**

As early as 1904, some members of the Socialist Party of British Columbia proposed that the party affiliate to the International Socialist Bureau. Following objections mainly by Kingsley, the SPBC did not affiliate. With the formation of the Socialist Party of Canada, the subject would inevitably come to the fore again, particularly among non-English-speaking groups in the east of the country. Some of these members of the SPC had, before migrating to Canada, been members or sympathisers of social democratic and social reform parties in Germany, Poland, Russia or Ukraine. And a few of the English-speaking members had previously supported, or been members of, the British Independent Labour Party.

Officially, the Socialist Party of Canada considered itself to be part of an international movement. Indeed, it celebrated each year the anniversary of the Paris Commune of 1871, although the party did not regard the Commune as a truly revolutionary event. Nevertheless, after its formation in 1906, the British Labour Party, “with its Liberal connections”, was dismissed as useless to the working class by the SPC, as was the ILP. According to Ross McCormack, “The SPC had no higher opinion of the Socialist Party of America, because it was dominated by ‘intellectuals and opportunists’, and was moving in the direction of greater confusion”. And, continues McCormack, “The (Second) International was considered to be a reformist organisation, which contained non-socialist bodies, particularly the British Independent Labour Party”. Milne adds:

The International Socialist Bureau was made up of organisations avowing support for socialism, but insisting on the ‘urgent need’ for something less in the meantime, or for working for something less all the time, and sometimes calling this socialism. The British Labor Party was one of the latter type. The SPC had a substantial number of members who favoured the ISB kind of organisation. They were in the SPC because they had no place else to go.

J.A. McDonald, who joined the Socialist Party in 1909, said that such members, at meetings of locals, and particularly at party conferences, were most articulate in supporting and proposing motions in favour of reformist organisations such as the ISB. “They campaigned strongly in favour of affiliation, but without success”, concludes Milne.

Among those favouring affiliation was the Toronto Local. This was not surprising. The local consisted of several branches, including “an English branch with 80 members, a Jewish branch with 50 members, a Finnish branch with 180 members and an Italian branch with 10 members” (*Western Clarion*, 7 and 28 August, and 4 September 1909).

Because of the International Socialist Bureau affiliation, or non-affiliation, and other issues within the SPC, the Ukrainian-language groups called a convention for 12 November 1909. The convention was, according to Peter Krawchuk in his *The Ukrainian Socialist Movement in Canada (1907-1918)*, sharply critical of the Dominion Executive Committee because, at its meeting of 2 August 1909, it

“categorically came out against uniting with the International Socialist Bureau”. The Dominion Executive Committee’s resolution reads as follows:

Whereas, the International Socialist Bureau has seen fit to admit to membership and representation certain non-socialist bodies, particularly the British Labor Party.

And whereas, such parties are not only ignorant of the principles of socialism, but practice openly the most shameless policy of fusion and compromise with capitalist parties, advocating at most a number of petty and in most cases reactionary reforms;

And whereas, such endorsement by the ISB can only result in the encouragement and fostering of ‘fake’ Labor and pseudo-socialist parties to the detriment of the Socialist Party proper, and the misleading and betrayal of the working class;

And such action also affords encouragement and justification for that element, existing to a greater or less extent in all Socialist Parties which is in favour of opportunistic methods and compromise;

And whereas, this committee considers that the Party funds can be expended more usefully for the purpose of propaganda and organisation than in a way which has little more than sentimental value, if any;

For these reasons, this committee declines to consider any affiliation which entails the slightest suspicion of fusion or compromise. Such action would, moreover, be a direct violation of the Constitution of the Party, which expressly forbids such action.

This resolution, in the above terms, to be forwarded to the International Socialist Bureau, to the affiliated Socialist Parties, and to the Provincial Executive Committees. In point of fact, to be given the widest possible publicity.

*(Western Clarion, 7 August 1909)*

The Socialist Party of Canada never affiliated to the Second International. In 1914, at the commencement of the First World War, the International collapsed, with the majority of the members of each of the affiliated parties supporting their own capitalist class and government.

### **Free Speech Fights and Elections**

Not surprisingly, the Canadian government did not look sympathetically upon those whose intention was a society in which it did not continue to exist. It was, therefore, prepared to use the power of the state against those whom it considered to be agitators.

As early as September 1903, the police prevented members of the Socialist Party of Manitoba from holding meetings in Saint-Boniface, a French-speaking suburb of Winnipeg. In June 1908, a Socialist Party delegation presented to the Toronto police commission a resolution condemning police use of clubs “in brutal Russian Cossack style” to break up a street meeting, and declaring the party’s “determination to fight for the right of free speech on the Toronto streets”. Also in 1908, two outdoor meetings, one with 1,000 attending, addressed by Eugene Kingsley, were broken up

by the police. In April 1909, a member of the SPC, together with members of the IWW, appeared before a Vancouver judge, charged with criticising “the master class and not acceding to the lawful demands of the police”, according to the *Western Clarion* of 10 April. In July, arising from a ban on street meetings in Vancouver, two members of the SPC, Mathews and Hemmings, were jailed for seven days rather than pay a one dollar fine. And in August, in Regina, the local party organiser, C.M. O’Brien, was arrested for speaking on the street and refusing to move. He refused to pay a fine or be bound over for twelve months, to “keep the peace”, and was jailed for seven days. The *Western Clarion* reported a number of incidents, particularly in Vancouver during 1912. On the last Sunday in January, a Socialist Party of Canada meeting was held on Powell Street grounds, addressed by several members including Pettipiece and Lestor. The meeting was broken up by the police “Cossacks running wild”, even through surroundings as far away as the luxury Vancouver Hotel, where “two capitalists” were also beaten up, according to the 3 February *Western Clarion*. Twenty-five arrests were made, including several members of the SPC, and several members of the IWW who were present. Indeed, three IWW members were charged with obstructing the police, and were sent to jail for three months for refusing to swear on the Bible. Further attempts were made early in February to hold a meeting on the Powell Street grounds, with as many as 5,00 to 6,000 present. This was also broken up, and the soap-boxers clubbed off the stand. “Five arrests were made, and a couple of dozen got broken heads”

(*Western Clarion*, 10 February 1912)

There were many more such incidents. The Salvation Army was not subject to such harassment. Not surprisingly, according to *Tom Mann’s Memoirs*, the early Socialist Party in Australia was subject to the same state harassment in Melbourne between 1906 and 1910. Again the Salvation Army was exempt from prosecution.

Nevertheless, the Socialist Party of Canada contested various Provincial and other elections.

At the 11th Provincial General Election in British Columbia in 1907, the Socialist Party of Canada nominated twenty candidates on its non-reformist platform. They were:

<b>candidate</b>	<b>constituency</b>	<b>votes</b>	<b>% of total</b>
James Cartwright	Alberni	43	8.90%
William Harrison Moore	Fernie	285	40.66%
John McInnis	Grand Forks	232	43.77%
William Edgar Dynes	Greenwood	176	30.19%
William John Ledingham	The Islands	11	3.03%
James Hurst Hawthornthwaite	Nanaimo City	455	50.22%
Francis Edward Phillips	Nelson City	96	13.35%
Parker Williams	Newcastle	259	46.67%
John William Stalker Logie	Okanagan	92	5.65%
Archibald Francis Berry	Rossland City	98	18.67%
Wallis Walter Lefeaux	Revelstoke	94	11.71%
Charles Edward Kilby	Richmond	48	5.53%
George Edgar Winkler	Similameen	29	5.50%
William Davidson	Slocan	119	30.28%
John Edward Dubberley	Vancouver City	599	1.99%

Eugene Thornton Kingsley	Vancouver City	618	2.04%
Richard Parmenter Pettipiece	Vancouver City	602	1.99%
James Hackett McVety	Vancouver City	616	2.04%
Robert Stebbings	Vancouver City	598	1.98%
James Cameron Watters	Victoria City	443	3.53%

The Socialist Party's opponents were almost exclusively Conservatives and Liberals. McInnis was elected at Grand Forks, Hawthornthwaite again for Nanaimo City and Parker Williams for Newcastle. The result of this election was 26 Conservatives, 13 Liberals and 3 Socialist members of the British Columbia Legislature. William Davidson, who had been elected as an independent "Labor-Socialist" in the 1903 election, was not re-elected in 1907 as an official SPC candidate. At a by-election in Vancouver in August the same year, Eugene Kingsley contested the seat with a Conservative, John Bowser, at which Bowser was elected with 2,364 votes (81.94%). Kingsley on behalf of the SPC obtained 521 votes (18.06%). At a further by-election in Nanaimo, in January 1909, Hawthornthwaite was again re-elected with 686 votes (62.88%); his Liberal opponent, Charles Howard polling 405 votes (27.12%). There was also another by-election in January 1909, at Revelstoke, at which Henry Noble Coursier, on behalf of the Socialist Party polled 132 votes (18.94%) against the Conservative, Thomas Taylor, who polled 565 votes (81.06%).

A further general election was held in British Columbia in November 1909, in which the Socialist Party of Canada again nominated twenty candidates. These were:

<b>candidate</b>	<b>constituency</b>	<b>votes</b>	<b>% of total</b>
James Cartwright	Comox	206	20.96%
John William Fitch	Cranbrook	143	10.18%
John David Harrington	Fernie	649	30.10%
John McInnis	Grand Forks	334	33.40%
George Heatherton	Greenwood	204	33.01%
James Hurst Hawthornthwaite	Nanaimo City	786	62.88%
John Henry Matheson	Nelson City	148	31.81%
Parker Williams	Newcastle	379	52.64%
James Foulds Johnson	Okanagan	188	7.62%
Henry Kempster	Revelstoke	121	9.93%
George Bernard Casey	Rossland City	160	26.06%
Thomas Y. McKay	Skeena	163	11.97%
John William Bennett	Slocan	172	31.97%
Peter Garvie	Vancouver City	1,227	2.39%
Eugene Thornton Kingsley	Vancouver City	1,883	3.67%
Moses McGregor	Vancouver City	1,218	2.37%
William Murray MacKenzie	Vancouver City	1,231	2.40%
Richard Parmenter Pettipiece	Vancouver City	1,428	2.78%
George Oliver	Victoria City	659	3.41%
Alexander M. Oliver	Ymir	366	34.37%

Again, the Socialist Party's opponents were mainly Conservatives and Liberals. Hawthornthwaite was re-elected for Nanaimo City, and Williams for Newcastle; McInnis was not, however, re-elected for Grand Forks, although he increased his vote

by 102. The result of the 1909 election was: 39 Conservatives, one Liberal and two Socialist members of the British Columbia legislature, a Conservative walkover. At a by-election in Fernie in October, William Bennett, on behalf of the SPC, contested the seat with a Conservative, William Ross. Ross was elected with 860 votes (58.46%), with Bennett polling 611 votes (41.54%).

Within the legislature, there was little that two or three Socialist Party members could do other than propagate socialist ideas, vote for or against, or abstain on, measures introduced by other parties, or introduce their own measures, which, hopefully, might benefit some sections of the working class locally; and this is what they did. More often than not, however, when such measures were passed, as occasionally they were, employers, particularly in lumbering and the mining industry, merely ignored or circumvented such legislation, or the authorities did not enforce them.

## *Chapter Two*

### **CONTROVERSIES, SCHISMS AND DEFECTIONS**

It was inevitable that, sooner or later, the Socialist Party of Canada would tear itself apart. It had been formed in 1905 by a disparate amalgamation of parties, of which the Socialist Party of British Columbia had a revolutionary, anti-reformist platform; and this had only been adopted shortly before. Nevertheless, the anti-reformist ‘Impossibilist’ group was both vocal and influential. It tended to dominate the party, controlling the *Western Clarion* and supplying most of the members of the Dominion Executive Committee, based in Vancouver, British Columbia. Many of the SPC’s ‘star’ theoreticians and speakers also came from British Columbia. And it was in Vancouver, in 1910, that the Dominion Executive Committee published the Socialist Party’s first comprehensive statement – the *Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada*, written by Donald G. McKenzie.

#### **The Socialist Manifesto**

The *Manifesto* is divided into three main sections: “History”, “Economics” and “Politics”. The text is in clear, simple, almost brutal language. There are no frills, ambiguities or waffle. It is Marxism of the ‘First Way’, pure and simple. There are no immediate demands or palliatives.

The history section traces the development of human society from primitive savagery to industrial capitalism, and beyond. The characteristic of savagery is the non-existence of property in the true sense of the word. The primitive savage has such personal possessions as weapons, but the resources of the earth, being free of access to all are, in fact, the property of none. Furthermore:

Production under savagery differs from that of today in being hand production instead of social production. That is to say, each article produced is completed by one individual instead of being, as it is today, the result of the toil of a whole army of workers, each doing a little to it. Under savagery, articles are produced for use; under capitalism, for profit.

The primitive savage’s method of life is predatory, says the *Manifesto*. He lives by hunting and fishing, and upon wild fruits and roots. Such a method of life is precarious, and becomes more so with the increase of population. As time goes by, the savage is driven to domesticate animals and, later, to cultivate the soil in order that the means of life may become more certain. Once this becomes general, the way to slavery is open. With the cultivation of the soil it becomes possible for an individual to produce more than is necessary for his keep. It then becomes worthwhile to make slaves of captives, rather than just killing them. “They can be compelled to toil in the fields and produce for their masters; their escape can be prevented by armed guards. So property, the slave and the soldier make their advent upon the scene of events together, never to leave it till they leave it together – when the slaves shall emancipate themselves.”

When the agricultural stage was reached, and it became possible for an individual to live upon the fruits of another's labour, continues the *Manifesto*, society began to be divided into two classes, the slaves and their masters. The master class then had leisure to turn its attention to other things besides its immediate necessities. Upon this basis, the civilisations of the ancient world were built. Indeed:

Upon the labor of slaves Babylon upraised her temples and gardens, Egypt her pyramids and tombs, Greece her colonnades and statuary; the armies of Xerxes and Hannibal, the mighty empire of Rome, were all maintained out of the surplus product of vast armies of chattel slaves.

Built upon the backs of toiling millions, empire after empire arose, attained its zenith and crumbled to decay, some of them leaving scarce a trace to mark their place in history. The course of each one was in many respects similar, for the reason that they were slave civilisations.

The fall of the last of these, the decadent Roman empire, marked the dawn of a new era. The drying out of Asia displaced the populations of that continent. Goth, Frank, Vandal and Hun swept wave on wave across Europe. Rome collapsed, pushed over by the barbarians from the east.

Gradually, a new system, feudalism, evolved in Europe and elsewhere in the world. The new slave was attached to the land. He became a serf. His master and lord owned the land or, at least, much of it; and the serf toiled on the lord's land, producing wealth for him, in return for which the serf was permitted to work upon a small amount of land set apart for that purpose. Such in simple terms, in the words of the *Manifesto*, was the basis of feudalism.

It took several thousand years of chattel slavery to prepare the way for serfdom; and it took several centuries of feudalism to prepare the way for a new form of society – capitalism – the kernel of which already existed in feudalism. As the wealth and power of the merchants and townsmen increased, that of the lords and noblemen decreased. "The nobleman became a mere parasite upon society; feudalism ran its course as other forms of society had done." The town worker was a craftsman. His tools of production were, as yet, still primitive:

The hand tool grew step by step into the gigantic set of machines we know today. Ownership of the tools of production became more and more an impossibility for the worker. The master workman left the bench for the office; the foreman took his place. The factory called for more labor – cheaper labor. The capitalist turned profit-hungry eyes on the brawn of the agricultural districts. Serfdom stood in the way, so serfdom was abolished. The serf was freed from his bondage to the land that he might take on a heavier yoke, that of the factory. The factory needed not brains, but 'hands'...The serf was not only freed from the land, he was driven off it by the closing of the commons and by other measures. The freeing of the serfs was no humanitarian measure. Greed – and greed alone – was its inspiring motive.

But, says the *Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada*, the capitalist class had humble origins. The bourgeoisie, the townsmen of the Middle Ages, were part of feudal society, yet apart from it. They were neither nobles nor serfs. And as trade and commerce increased, they found such a society less and less tolerable. They rebelled



and, in time, crushed feudalism and the power of the nobles and monarchy, all in the name of freedom – capitalist freedom. In the words of the *Manifesto*,

Once freed from the fetters of feudalism the onward rush of capitalism became a mad, headlong rush. Everywhere mills, factories and furnaces sprang up. Their smoke and fumes turned fields once fertile and populous into desolate, uninhabitable wastes; their refuse poisoned and polluted the rivers until they stank to Heaven. Earth's bowels were riven for her mineral hoards. Green flourishing forests became mere acres of charred and hideous stumps. Commerce pierced all mountains, fathomed all seas, explored all lands, disturbed the age-long sleep of hermit peoples that they might buy her wares. Capital spread its tentacles over all the world. Everywhere its voice was heard, crying "work, work, work", to all the workers; "Buy, buy, buy", to all the peoples.

Capitalism did not bring freedom, at least to the majority, but a new form of slavery, wage-slavery. The modern master has no particular interest in his slaves. "He neither purchases nor owns them. He merely buys so much labor-power – physical energy – just as he buys electric power for his plant." Nevertheless, capitalism has achieved much. It found the workers, for the most part, "an ignorant, voiceless peasant horde". It leaves them "an organised proletarian army, industrially intelligent, and becoming politically intelligent". In short, it has unified them. It has brought the ends of the world within speaking distance of one another. It has largely broken down all boundaries, except on maps. It has given us "an international capitalist class with interests in all lands on the one hand, and, on the other, an international working class with a common interest the world over".

Everywhere where capitalism rules there is famine where food exists in plenty. Society cannot feed itself. When the societies of old could no longer feed themselves they perished. Somewhat optimistically, the Socialist *Manifesto* proclaims: "And capitalist society is about to perish. A revolution is at hand. Another leap in the process of evolution. Society has grown too big for its shell. It must burst that shell and step forth a new society". The history section concludes that the workers must take over the means of production and free themselves from eons of bondage. "Speed the day!"

### **Economics and Politics**

The *Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada*, under its section on economics, analyses capitalism, the "capitalist mode of production", strictly from a Marxist viewpoint. Economics, it argues, is the scientific study of the means whereby society procures its food, clothing and shelter, and all that goes to make up its living.

The sum total of all that is produced by human labour is the wealth of the world. It is only when natural resources are, by the hand of labour, worked up into useful things that wealth comes into being. The *Manifesto* gives as an example gold, which is extracted from gold-bearing quartz. By the exercise of his physical labour, his power to labour, man produces gold or wealth. This power is called, for short, labour-power. It should not be confused with labour, though it is frequently done. Briefly, "It is the act of applying labour-power to natural resources in order to produce wealth. The wealth thus produced is the embodiment of the labour performed...The sum total of

the world's wealth, therefore, represents the sum total of labour performed." Without labour no value is possible.

The wealth of capitalist society "presents itself", in the words of Marx, "as an immense accumulation of commodities". A commodity is, in the first place, a product of labour. It is, in the second place, a use value; it will satisfy some want or desire. Thirdly, a commodity is produced for sale, for exchange. And in the act of exchange, the value conferred by labour will manifest itself as exchange value. Exchange value is comparative. An article by itself can have no exchange value. Moreover, exchange value comes into play only when it is proposed to exchange two or more dissimilar commodities. There is, therefore, one factor that is embodied in all commodities – labour. But not just any labour. Commodities exchange one with another according to the necessary labour involved in the production of each. The production of a commodity, for example a shoe, is no longer the labour of one individual, but of many. Individual production has disappeared; social production has taken its place. Today, no individual produces anything. Shoes are the product of "many hands", many operatives. Moreover, they have to be transported and handled by the labour of many others before they reach the consumer. Thus, the exchange value of a commodity is determined by the socially necessary labour embodied in it.

Commodities, therefore, exchange one with the other at cost. Then, asks the *Manifesto*: "If everything is sold at cost, where does profit come in?", for buying and selling is really nothing more than the exchange of one commodity for another with money as the medium through which the exchange is made.

The generally accepted idea of profit is that it is buying cheap and selling dear. But, unless our reasoning up to this point can be proved fallacious, buying cheap and selling dear are out of the operation, as the relative values of commodities are predetermined by the socially necessary labour involved in their production.

It is true that a certain amount of fluctuation in the price of commodities, above and below their exchange value, actually takes place according to supply and demand for them in the market. But these fluctuations are almost negligible...and cancel one another in the average. Moreover, they offer no solution of our problem as to the source of profit.

The solution to "this mystery" is that buying and selling have nothing to do with making a profit. It is not in the process of exchange, but in production that profit is made. The wealth of the world is produced by the workers of the world. Its wealth is determined by the labour they have put into it. But it belongs to their masters, the owners of the means of production, the natural resources, and the mines, mills, factories, etc. A portion of this wealth goes to feed, clothe and house the workers through the medium of wages. The remainder accrues to the masters, the capitalist class. Its value is surplus value. The wealth they thus obtain by virtue of their ownership is clear gain – profit.

The workers, therefore, have little more than their "power to labour". In order to procure food, clothing and shelter they must sell their labour-power. That is what working for wages amounts to; labour-power, being bought and sold on the market, just like so much flour or potatoes, is also a commodity. And the exchange value of labour-power is determined by the socially necessary labour involved in the production of those things that go to make up the worker's living from day to day.

What most workers get, on average, is their living according to the prevailing standard. Some, it is true, get more than is actually necessary to exist on from day to day, but, on the other hand, millions get less and are actually dying of slow starvation.

Wages, being the price of the commodity labour-power, are subject to the same fluctuations as any other commodities. During a boom, wages tend to rise. When that period of “capitalist prosperity” is over, the industrial depression following it immeasurably swells the ranks of the unemployed, thus increasing the disproportion between supply and demand in the labour market, resulting in the lowering of real wages, of the workers’ living standards.

In the third section, “Politics”, the *Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada* argues that the politics of the working class are comprised within the confines of the class struggle. And, conversely, the class struggle is necessarily waged on the political field. This statement does not imply that the political action of the working class must be limited within the bounds of constitutional convention or of parliamentary procedure, nor that the means employed in waging the class struggle must everywhere be the same. Indeed:

Political action we define as any action taken by the slave class against the master class to obtain control of the powers of the state, or by the master class to retain control, using these powers to secure them in the means of life.

For one country it may be the ballot, in another the mass strike, in a third insurrection. These matters will be determined and dictated by the exigencies of time and place.

It should be noted that in a ‘civilised’ country, such as Canada, where at least a majority of the (male) population, including the working class, have the vote, the conquest of political power could be through parliament, according to the Socialist Party. Under the caption, “The Policy of the Socialist Party of Canada”, the *Manifesto* concludes:

Its policy is to educate the slaves of Canada to an understanding of their position and organise them for a concerted political action, to the end that they may wrest the powers of the state from the hands of capital, and use them to strip the master class of its property rights in the means of production, and to establish a system based upon the collective control and administration of the forces of production and distribution.

Since all political parties must be the expression of certain class interests, the Socialist Party of Canada enters the political field determined to wage war on all other political parties, whether openly capitalistic or so-called labour. Understanding the futility of reform and the dangers of compromise, it stands square with science and practical experience, wasting not its time and energy on mere effects, but dealing only with root causes. Realising, furthermore, that no ‘step-at-a-time’ policy, no remedial legislation or political quackery, can be substituted for working class knowledge, its propaganda, therefore, is one of enlightenment and education.

Workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains; a world to gain.

The outcome of this struggle between the capitalist class and the working class will be the social revolution. By political force, the working class must wrest from the capitalist class the reins of government, and use such powers of the state to legislate in its own interests. "By that stroke, classes will be overthrown and labour-power will cease to be a commodity; production will be for use and not for profit; government of persons will die out and be replaced by an administration of things".

Such was the message of the *Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada*. It has been worth spending some time on it, and quoting from it at length, as it proved to be the party's most popular and successful publication. Between 1910 and 1944, it went through six editions, selling 30,000 copies in all. It is, therefore, more than just an historic document. Indeed, the present writer was influenced by it many years ago.

### **Socialism and Unionism**

We have previously noted that, in the early days of the socialist movement in Canada in general, and the Socialist Party of Canada in particular, there was not unanimity regarding the unions and trade unionism. Moreover, until the formation of the Industrial Workers of the World in the United States, and the founding of a Canadian IWW, almost all the unions in Canada were merely branches of American craft unions, usually affiliated to the American Federation of the Labor, the AFL. In 1911, however, Donald G. McKenzie, who wrote the Socialist Party Manifesto, authored, and the SPC published, an important pamphlet entitled *Socialism and Unionism*, which generally represented the views of the party at that time. He reiterates some of what he outlined regarding capitalism in the *Manifesto*, which is not necessary to repeat in detail here.

It is frequently asserted, writes McKenzie, that socialism is inimical to unionism, taking that term to mean Trades and Labour unionism; on the other hand, it is asserted that socialism and unionism have aims and objects in common. The objects of a labour, he observes are to raise wages, shorten hours and better the conditions generally of its members. Labour unions arise as associations of workers seeking by combination to achieve these ends. "Their success or failure is determined by the difficulty or ease with which their places can be filled if they strike." McKenzie considers what he calls the non-success of labour unions as the inevitable consequences of the wage system of production. "The incentive to cutting or keeping down wages, to replace hand labour with machine labour, to increase his (the capitalist's) capital and enlarge his plant is irresistible." He must do these things or be driven from the field of production by his rivals. The efforts of labour unions are, therefore, directed not only against effects, but against effects which are absolutely inevitable. "What measure of success can be expected?" asks McKenzie.

Knowing these things, the socialist can see the wastefulness of these efforts. Instead of devoting his energies along these lines, the socialist attempts to search out the economic laws governing this system, and to learn from them the underlying cause which renders these conditions inevitable. "The fruits of that search and the logical deductions drawn therefrom constitute the socialist theory and practice."

The cause of "our enslavement" is found in the ownership of the means of production by the masters; owning these they, as a class, command our labour. The answer, argues McKenzie, is the collective ownership of the means of production and

transportation. However, he continues, “between the workers and the ownership of the means of production stands the state...the state giveth, the state can take away. It is now the instrument of the masters to preserve their property. It can become the instrument of the workers to turn that property into their hands”...”So to the conquest of the state, we the working class, have set ourselves.” The greatest obstacle, says the pamphlet *Socialism and Unionism*, “is the ignorance of our fellow slaves of their enslaved condition”. But that ignorance is being steadily dispelled. The wage slave’s salvation lies in emancipation and nothing less. That is the aim of the Socialist Party. “With unionism we have nothing in common but a working class membership.” Between the unions and the Socialist Party, working on a different plane, there is little likelihood of conflict, except for the allegiance of the working class. Their interests lie within the wages system, ours without it, concludes McKenzie.

By 1918, with increasing inflation and conflicts between the workers and their masters, the employers, members of the Socialist Party inevitably became more and more involved within the unions, culminating in the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, and the formation of the One Big Union.

### **Religion**

To many early radicals and ‘socialists’ in Canada, as in the United Kingdom, religion and socialism were not incompatible. There were ‘Christian Socialists’ everywhere! In the first few years of the socialist movement in Canada, socialism and religion, particularly Christianity, were considered to have much in common. And Socialist Party meetings were often addressed by travelling preachers lecturing on ‘Christian Socialism’. Some members, who were not actually religious, regarded religion as a private matter, and believed that socialists should leave it alone; others had little or no quarrel with religion, but a serious one with the Church. A number of socialists who were to become quite prominent in the Socialist Party of Canada, came from religious backgrounds.

Nevertheless, the predominant view within the SPC was a materialist one, in which members argued that religion was opposed to science, as well as to the working class. The theory of evolution was all-important to many early socialists, who embraced Marxist ideas. From around 1900 onwards, for at least fifteen years, various views found their way into such journals as the *Western Clarion*. Of the situation, Janice Newton claims:

Reflecting a similar trend in British socialism, the SPC criticised Christian socialism and sometimes expressed overt hostility to specific groups, notably Roman Catholics, Methodists and the Salvation Army. In its most extreme form, it argued that a Christian who believed in individual salvation could never be a socialist, and a socialist who believed in the collective power of the working class could never be a Christian. This attitude exposed the efforts of the SPC to distinguish itself as much as possible from the intellectual heritage of Christian socialism by rejecting any Christian justification for social change, including the evangelical emphasis on individual redemption. The SPC ridiculed the reform efforts of the Salvation Army, the Roman Catholic Church and the Methodists. Some of this antagonism can be attributed to

the direct competition that organisations such as the Salvation Army posed in their propaganda efforts directed towards the working class.

The religious controversy within the Socialist Party of Canada came to a head in 1910, when copies of a pamphlet, *Socialism and Religion*, published earlier in the year by the Socialist Party of Great Britain, began to circulate among members of the SPC.

*Socialism and Religion* asks the question: What is religion? Citing Herbert Spencer and Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God*, the pamphlet says that it is generally accepted that the earliest form of religion is ancestor worship, together with animism or a belief in spirits. Interestingly, the author, F.C. Watts, a founder member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, cites Spencer's *Principles of Sociology* as a 'master-key' to the understanding of religion; interesting because of the influence Herbert Spencer had, one way or another, on early members of the socialist movement in Canada. For some, Spencer rather than Darwin was something of a prophet. According to Ian McKay, in his *For a Working-Class Culture in Canada*, Spencerian Marxists saw his views on evolution as a universal principle that was both the scientific explanation of change, and the process of change. On the other hand, others were very critical of Spencer's individualism. Grant Allen, however, was considered to be less controversial. He was the son of a protestant minister, born in Toronto, who became an agnostic and radical, and had taught at a college in Jamaica for a number of years.

Watts, in *Socialism and Religion*, defined religion thus: "The fundamental idea of religion is a belief in the persistence of life after death. Originally, and in essence throughout, religion is a belief in the existence of supernatural beings, and the observance of rites and ceremonies in order to avert their anger or gain their goodwill". Religious legends are of earthly origin. Religious beliefs were due to the limitations of primitive man's knowledge and experience. "Religion, therefore, has a natural not a supernatural genesis." It was the outcome of ignorance of Nature's working, while as rites and ceremonies it reflected the forms, customs, and unchanging nature of primitive society.

Well-disciplined legions and magnificent roads of the Roman Empire played a most important part in disrupting tribal religion throughout Western Europe, says *Socialism and Religion*. Local gods were absorbed, and then honoured, within Roman temples. By this means the religious exclusiveness of the conquered peoples was determined, and the Empire bound more firmly together. The pamphlet quotes Edward Gibbons' *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which argues that "The Greek, the Roman, and the Barbarian, as they met before their respective altars, easily persuaded themselves that, under various names and with various ceremonies, they adored the same deities." So, the soil was prepared for a universal, propagandist religion, more in harmony with the needs of the political, aggressive and expanding state. Christianity was one such religion. Christianity, with its ethic of submission, was pre-eminently suitable, and was a most useful ally to the despot. "Recognised by the state", continues Watts, "the progress of Christianity became very rapid, and the Church assumed more clearly the monarchical tendencies that had been developing within it." Because of this, the Church became an instrument of government in the hands of kings.

From its origins in the early political or feudal state, the unreformed Roman Catholic Church remained the religious counterpart of the feudal system. Indeed, it became a feudal power itself, owning one-third of the land of Christendom. But

economic forces began to undermine feudal society. It was the development of the economic factors of trade, industry and capitalist farming that “threw burgher and yeoman into conflict with the feudal class, and led them to question in the world of religion all that they found incompatible with their advance in secular matters”, writes Watts. As their real social world changed, so its religious reflex had to follow. The availability of the Bible, as almost the only form of popular literature, undermined the Papacy and assisted in the Protestant Reformation, and in England, the Puritan movement. Puritanism was the religion of the small manufacturer and capitalist, and the shopkeeper.

Religion, says the SPGB pamphlet, has evolved continuously under pressure of natural causes. In an important passage, it comments:

From the dawn of civilisation, indeed, religious change has always been more remarkable for what was abandoned, rather than for what was added or retained. From being inextricably bound up with the whole social life of a people, it becomes a more and more insignificant reflex of the remaining corners of that social life. This is illustrated in the passing of its dogmas and beliefs. The vividness of hell-fire and the unending terrors of eternal damnation are considered mere allegories by many a modern Christian, and his views on miracles, the casting out of devils, and the creation of the world, would have been the cause of an *auto-da-fe* if adopted a few centuries ago. This fading of religious beliefs is unmistakably due to the accumulation of experience and the advance of industry and science, for these have shown that Nature is not moved by the caprice of spirits, but works according to an ascertainable and regular order...Fundamentally, indeed, the supernatural is totally excluded from the whole universe by the logical modern concept of an interminable warp and woof of cause and effect.

The pamphlet asserts that most workers are indifferent towards religion. Moreover, this indifference is fostered, when put to the test, by religion found to be on the side of their oppressors. Generally, workers find no basis for divine interference, “and little reason for doubting that the inevitable sequence that we call cause and effect, as in all industrial processes, extends unremittingly over all the world”. The concept of a god, or gods, is becoming untenable in this age of scientific enquiry.

### **...and Socialism**

*Socialism and Religion*, therefore, argues that socialism is the natural enemy of religion; and that socialism, as a system of society, will mean the end of all supernatural beliefs. All religious teaching is directly opposed to scientific materialism. The pamphlet quotes Dr. Shadwell, speaking at the 1909 Church Congress in Swansea, as saying: “The purely materialistic view on which socialism is based is absolutely opposed to Christian teaching.” Watts also asserts that the term Christian Socialist is a contradiction, as the Christian Socialist is inevitably antagonistic to working class interests and the waging of the class struggle. A Christian Socialist is, in fact, an anti-socialist. The basis of socialist philosophy is incompatible with religious ideas.

Watts quotes from Karl Marx’s *Critique de la Philosophie du Droit de Hegel*, in which Marx states that “Religion is the opium of the people. The suppression of

religion as the happiness of the people is the revindication of its real happiness. The invitation to abandon a situation which has need of illusions. Criticism of religion is, therefore, the germ of criticism of the vale of tears, of which religion is the holy aspect.” However, to abolish religion is not to abolish exploitation, “because only one gun of the enemy’s guns will have been silenced”. Nevertheless, the decay of religion is, indeed, a measure of the advance of humanity.

The pamphlet, *Socialism and Religion*, was favourably reviewed in the *Western Clarion* of 1 October 1910, although the writer claimed that “We cannot agree that one cannot be a Christian and a Socialist”. Furthermore, the Maritimes Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Canada passed a resolution banning Moses Baritz, a member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain at the time resident in Toronto, from speaking on religion at SPC meetings in the area, because of his hostility to religion in general and Christianity in particular. On the other hand, the Toronto Local of the party refused to distribute the *Clarion* in which the review appeared, because of “its utter confusion on the religious questions” – and doubled the Toronto Local’s order for copies of the *Socialist Standard*.

Because of the success of *Socialism and Religion*, both in Britain and North America, the Socialist Party of Great Britain reprinted it, with a new preface, in 1911. This time it was also reprinted by the *Western Clarion* (21 September 1911), with the additional comment: “This is the second edition of this pamphlet, and should be read by every socialist as it gives the only correct stand any socialist can take on the subject of religion”. Nevertheless, arguments and debates for and against religion continued in the *Western Clarion* and in the SPC, but generally in the east of the country where religious beliefs were strongest, until the middle of 1915, when W.A. Pritchard proposed and J.A. MacDonald seconded, as members of the Dominion Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Canada, the following resolution to the Dominion Executive:

### **SOCIALISM and RELIGION**

#### The Official Stand of the Socialist Party

WHEREAS, The Socialist Party of Canada has been organised since the year 1905, and,

WHEREAS, during that time the Dominion Executive Committee of the Party has never taken a definite official stand with regard to the very important question of religion, and,

WHEREAS, in the opinion of the PERSONNEL of the present Dominion Executive Committee, the time has come when laxity in matters of importance affecting working-class philosophy cannot longer be tolerated, and,

WHEREAS, the stand, or lack of stand, taken by the Party heretofore has, undoubtedly, been responsible for the evasive replies of organisers officially representing the Party,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that this Executive Committee places itself on record as favouring a definite stand with respect to this question, and,

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that, since the financial status of this committee is such that an extensive pronouncement in pamphlet form cannot now be given, that the position taken by the S.P.G.B., in its pamphlet, “Socialism and Religion”,



be the position adopted by this Party officially, for the time being, and that all organisers, speakers, and others professing to prosecute the propaganda of this Party take the stand herein set forth.

The resolution was adopted unanimously; and the Socialist Party of Canada officially rejected religion. The resolution was printed prominently on the front page of the *Western Clarion* in June 1915. Speakers who had previously been critical of religion, and had given a purely materialistic interpretation of history and society, were now aware that they were propagating Socialist Party of Canada policy.

The passing of the resolution must have given Bill Pritchard particular satisfaction, although, unlike Watts, he did not think that socialism would necessarily destroy religious beliefs entirely. Nevertheless, Pritchard was an atheist, believing that religion was irrational. Indeed, according to Peter Campbell in his *Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way*, Pritchard was vitriolic in his condemnation of “religious freaks” and the “freaks of the Orange Order”. He despised the inculcation of religion in schools, an instruction he dismissed as “mental chloroform”. In Pritchard’s view, religion in the classroom had to be opposed, as well as the capitalist class who supported it. On the other hand, he stressed that socialists defended people’s freedom to believe and practice religion “in the private realm”. As a Marxist and historical materialist, “he recognised that it did not make sense to attack personal religious beliefs, no matter how irrational and reactionary, before socialism had removed the causes of workers turning to religion”.

### **Along the trail**

William Arthur “Bill” Pritchard was born in Salford, near Manchester, in April 1888; he was apprenticed to a lumber business at the age of thirteen or fourteen. He attended both the Manchester School of Technology and the Royal Institute of Technology at evening classes, where he learnt shorthand, typing and German. His mother, Priscilla, was a Plymouth Brethren, although his father, James, was not religious. In early life, Bill Pritchard was more influenced by his mother than his father. Later, as has been noted above, he rejected religion as irrational. He first read Marx’s *Capital* when still quite young. He was already a socialist, who had read much of Marx and Engels’s writings before he emigrated to Canada. He responded to the Socialist Party’s objective and ideas immediately.

Although Bill Pritchard did not arrive in Canada until May 1911, he gives (in his recorded talks in 1974) a graphic description of socialist activities during the early years of the last century, although his chronology is not always that accurate. Indeed, he admits to being vague regarding the dates of some of his propaganda tours.

Pritchard’s first tour was to Enderby and Armstrong, where he held several meetings, including one in a lumber camp. This was his first visit to a lumber camp. It was winter and there was plenty of snow on the ground. He addressed the loggers in the bunkhouse, “shrouded in a steaming fog produced by the wet clothing of the loggers hanging from a line which ran the length of the bunk house”. Shortly after, he was invited to give a series of lectures at mining camps, during a bitter strike, in and around Cumberland, halfway up the east side of Vancouver Island. It was not, in those days, an easy journey. He travelled from Vancouver to Union Bay, a coaling station, in an old shallow draft boat; then by coal train from Union Bay on a long, meandering journey to Cumberland, where he was met by a large group of miners. From

Cumberland, Pritchard went south to Nanaimo, at the time the largest mining centre on Vancouver Island. There was no road from Cumberland to Nanaimo, the only way being by steamship. Pritchard arrived two hours late due to a violent storm. "I shall never forget that trip", he commented. The meeting was held in the old Athletic Hall, which had been stormed by the military the previous evening while the striking miners were holding a meeting. Yet they opened up the hall for Bill Pritchard, who spoke for two hours "although wobbly from the stormy trip".

Towards the end of 1915, the Alberta Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Canada asked the Dominion Executive Committee to send Pritchard on a three-month propaganda tour of Alberta. The DEC agreed, urging him to accept which, after discussing it with his wife, he did (they had two sons, the youngest being only three months old). Bill Pritchard caught a train on the newly-opened line to Hanna. It was mid-winter, with the temperature -40°F, and no heating on the train. He sat in it for many miles and hours, cold and shivering. After holding a meeting in Hanna, he visited many towns in Alberta, including Calgary and Edmonton. All the meetings, except those in Calgary, Edmonton and Castor, were held in halls owned by the United Farmers of Alberta or, in the evenings, in local schoolhouses. Invariably, the farmer's house where Pritchard stayed would be some miles from the schoolhouse meeting. More often than not, the journey was by sleigh driven by horses; and more often than not, by the time he arrived at the meeting, he was frozen stiff. Generally, however, there would be refreshments and, after the meeting, a social. But sometimes the meeting had to wait until later and, on one occasion recounted by Pritchard, much later.

He arrived early in the evening at Castor, where he was informed by two members who had met him, that the meeting would be held in the local picture theatre; but that they had only been able to rent it on the understanding that the picture show would be held first, and that the meeting would commence at about 11.00 pm. This pleased Bill Pritchard, as he had not been in bed for two nights, and could do with some sleep. After having a rest, he arrived at the theatre just before 11.00 pm. Waiting outside in the cold, was a large crowd anxious to start the meeting. As the picture finished, the owner, noting the large crowd outside, and with an eye to business, decided to re-run the picture! Not surprisingly, the majority went inside to watch the film. Pritchard had to wait, the meeting finally beginning at 1.00 am. He spoke for quite some time to an interested and enthusiastic packed house, with questions and discussion following. The meeting finished at 2.30 am, and Bill Pritchard caught a train at 5.30 am. Another night without going to bed.

After visiting, and speaking at, a small town on the Saskatchewan border, Pritchard arrived at the railway depot, and enquired as to the time of the next train to Hanna. It would be two hours late, he was informed. He waited, and waited, and waited, only to be told that it would arrive in two hours. Finally the train arrived – not two hours, but two days late. The members were expecting Pritchard to address a meeting. When he, at last, did arrive, they informed him that it had been cancelled, and that he must leave immediately for the next meeting. So, again without going to bed, he was taken by sleigh some 40 miles, only to find on arrival that the meeting had been scheduled for the previous evening. Fortunately, a few members had by then acquired telephones and, one way and another, a meeting was arranged for that afternoon. "A big and attentive gathering resulted, at the end of which I was put to bed, slept soundly and next morning off for my next appointment," he noted. This was at another place further north. It is worth recounting in Pritchard's own words:

I was deposited by my last contact, after a 40-mile trip, at a farm house. Made welcome by the whole family, given a hearty supper, I was then told to get ready to go to the meeting. This was to be in a school some three miles or so away. They were a big family, and were all going: several grownup boys and girls down to a baby not more by much than a year old. The packing of the vast amount of gear, coffee, etc., took time and left little space on their sleigh. The farmer and his wife – and I assumed one or two of the younger children – were up front; the others right behind. But I knew where the baby was: on top of the load, warm and so well clothed she resembled a cocoon. I was to ride on the runners at the back – one foot on each runner – holding on to the sleigh. Off we went, running smoothly to the sound of the sleigh-bells.

Approximately a mile from the school – I could see the lights as I peered over the top of the load – the horses suddenly hit a drift – anyone who has undergone this experience knows how frantic horses can become – started plunging and rearing. The farmer had quite a little trouble in coaxing, and talking to his team to get them settled, pulled out of the draft and set off again. But...! No sooner were we hitting a good pace when, suddenly, the horses began to rear and plunge again. It was only momentary and the sleigh was soon righted, and off again. But during that brief time, the sleigh heaved and rocked like a boat in a stormy sea, during which time something shot over my head and out into the snow to my rear...

I dropped off the runners and went back to investigate. And there was the cocoon-like baby, warm, serene and still asleep! I picked up the little bundle, could see the sleigh fast disappearing into the distance, could still hear the sleigh-bells and, perhaps, three-quarters of a mile away see the lights of the schoolhouse. The farmer and the rest of the family were at first evidently unaware of what had happened. Back I trudged with the baby and, finally exhausted, arrived at the schoolhouse where, by then, a big crowd of people were rushing about. They were frantic, wondering where was the baby and the lecturer. Greeted with jubilation, I was taken inside and warmed up, and given a warm coffee. And then the meeting got under way.

Bill Pritchard completed his three-month tour with a couple of meetings in Edmonton. On arriving home in Vancouver, Pritchard saw his baby son, his other son and his wife, who informed him that the baby was unwell. The doctor, however, told her that there was no cause for alarm. He just had a cold. Early the following morning, the baby was dead.

Bill Pritchard, like other Socialist Party speakers and organisers, was to make many more tours under similar, or even worse, conditions. He received few or no expenses. The party was always short of money. Speakers generally relied on the hospitality of members and sympathisers, who provided them with food and a bed to sleep in; and for travelling and other expenses, they had to rely on collections taken at meetings. A few of them sold pills or patent medicines on street corners, in cities such as Vancouver, when not speaking on behalf of the party. It was not surprising, therefore,

that the families of such members as Pritchard and Charlie Lestor suffered the consequences.

When visiting farming districts, far from towns and cities, Pritchard was often surprised to see libraries in many farmhouses where he stayed; often they were quite extensive, containing socialist classics and many scientific works. In one house, among a collection of such books, he saw a copy of *Six Centuries of Work and Wages* by James E. Thorold Rogers. One farmer's wife admitted to a degree of loneliness, but said that her duties, the company of her husband in the evenings and, importantly, reading the books in the well-stocked bookcase, was compensation. "Such is the typical life of a prairies farm wife, though I met many who lived close enough to a school house or community hall that they could allay their loneliness by going to a dance or meeting", remarked Pritchard.

However, all was not well with the Socialist Party of Canada. It had problems aplenty. Dissent was never far from the surface.

### **Dissent**

Right from the formation of the Socialist Party of Canada, many members in Western Canada had reservations about the "doctrinal orthodoxy" of the easterners, according to Ross McCormack. At first, they accepted 'Impossibilism'. The Ontario locals had always demanded the inclusion of immediate demands in the Platform; and, moreover, they were reluctant to accept party discipline. As has already been noted, one of the main reasons for dissent was that many of the members in central and eastern Canada, who originally came from Continental Europe, had formed part of the reformist social democratic tradition. Allegedly Marxist, they were pragmatists. This was particularly so among the German-speaking members who had been affected by the revisionism of Ferdinand Lassalle and, later, Eduard Bernstein, both of whom rejected Marx's analysis of capitalism, and argued that society must be transformed gradually. As time went by, many of these members began to realise that there were significant differences between their social democracy and the revolutionary objectives of the Socialist Party of Canada. Also included were the Finns and the Ukrainians, who were often nationalistic and anti-Russian. They were not, however, alone. Some members in Alberta, Manitoba and even British Columbia had similar tendencies, although they were affected, to some extent by British labourism.

Winnipeg was the centre of labourism in Canada; it was also the centre of British-style trade unionism. Both Keir Hardie and John Burns had a large following in the city. The man who stood out above all was Robert Blatchford, author of *Merrie England*. Most early radicals and reformers were inspired by Non-Conformist Sunday Schools and chapels – Methodism rather than Marxism. As early as 1895, the trade unions in Winnipeg formed an Independent Labour Party, which a year later renamed itself the Winnipeg Labor Party. It was a completely reformist party, modelled on the British Independent Labour Party. It even refused to use the word 'socialist' for fear of alienating potential support among conservative trade unionists. The Socialist Party of Canada found it difficult to organise in Winnipeg. The north of the city was a centre of Eastern European social democracy.

Two early dissidents within the SPC, who did not come from Winnipeg, were Ernest Burns and Bertha Merrill, who married Ernest in December 1903 and subsequently called herself Bertha Merrill Burns, like many other socialist women at the time who married socialist men. Ernest Burns was born in Birmingham, England, in 1885. He was a founder-member, in 1885, of the Birmingham branch of the Social-

Democratic Federation; but in 1899, he left England for Washington State in the United States, where he became active in the Knights of Labor. Shortly after, he went to British Columbia, working in logging and fishing. He was almost immediately elected President of the Fisherman's Union, and was prominent in its strikes of 1900 and 1901. By 1902, Burns was actively involved in the Socialist Party of British Columbia. In 1903, he became treasurer of the party. He was, however, a supporter of women's suffrage and, later, an advocate of reforms. In 1907, Ernest Burns was suspended from membership of the Socialist Party of Canada until "he could conscientiously support the Platform of the SPC". He refused. Shortly after, he was expelled and formed the nucleus of a Social Democratic Party, of which more later.

Bertha Merrill Burns emigrated to British Columbia in 1900, first settling in Nelson and then moving to Vancouver in 1903, where she became the first female Executive Committee member of the Socialist Party of British Columbia and a member of the editorial board of the *Western Clarion*, writing a column on women's matters. She was also involved in the founding convention of the Socialist Party of Canada, and was elected to the Dominion Executive of the party. Nevertheless, like her husband, Bertha soon came into conflict with the SPC's anti-reformist Platform and Objective. She supported the suffragist movement, as well as prohibition and the temperance movement. As early as 1906, she began correspondence with Mrs Ramsay MacDonald, wife of the British Labour Party leader, advising her that the Socialist Party of Canada was "fully controlled by the Impossibilists". In further correspondence with Mrs MacDonald, Merrill Burns informed her of the founding of "their new protest party, the Social Democratic Party", which she admitted was still small. Unlike Ernest, she does not seem to have been expelled from the SPC, but merely resigned following the expulsion of her husband.

The move towards social democracy, reformism and dissension was, not surprisingly, spearheaded by the non-English-speaking groups generally, and the Ukrainians in particular.

At the Ukrainian members' convention in Winnipeg, in November 1909, not only did they call on the Socialist Party of Canada to affiliate to the Second International, but they stated that it was "vitaly necessary that the Ukrainian branches of the Party unite into one autonomous, centralised organisation...and suggests that this organisation be called the Federation of Ukrainian Social Democrats of Canada". This was followed by a resolution, which declared that if the Dominion Executive Committee of the party did not recognise the autonomy of the Federation of Ukrainian Social Democrats, then the Federation

Would be fully justified if it would begin completely independent organisational activity, disregarding the official party; would begin to take measures to form a new party worthy of its socialist name, together with other dissatisfied groups unhappy with the state of affairs in the present party.

Further resolutions at the convention declared it the Ukrainians' "moral duty" to unite with Ukrainian social democrats in Europe, and "maintain the closest ties with them"; to call on all Ukrainian workers in Canada to join the Industrial (which they called "International") Workers of the World, and to form "cooperative unions" among Ukrainian farmers in Canada. A commission was elected to work out details for the Federation of Ukrainian Social Democrats in Canada. Early in 1910, the Federation was founded.

On 24 July, four branches of the Socialist Party of Canada in Winnipeg – the German, Jewish, Latvian and Ukrainian – met and decided to withdraw from the SPC. In a manifesto, they accused the Dominion Executive Committee of taking a negative stance to a “minimal program”, of not building up the trade union movement, of being undemocratic in not permitting the Ukrainians to form a social democratic federation within the party (the DEC actually ignored their request) and of “throwing mud at other parties”. Their manifesto concluded by notifying “everyone who may be interested that we are breaking our relations with the SPC, and that we will try to form a new party under the title of the Canadian Social Democratic Party”. At a convention in August, 26 delegates representing ten branches of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Federation decided they would join a Canadian Social Democratic Party, and pledged to “aid the Ukrainian liberation movement in Austria and Russia”.

In 1909, the Socialist Party of Canada removed the word “international” from the first sentence of the party’s Platform. This seemed an odd move, as the SPC continued to call on the workers of the world to unite for socialism. The removal seems, however, to have been made to emphasise that it, in no way, supported the International Socialist Bureau, that is the reformist social democratic and labourite Second International.

### **The Social Democratic Party of Canada**

Milne notes, in his *History of the Socialist Party of Canada*, that the months ahead brought increasing pressure within the party in favour of a programme of reforms. The Provincial Executive Committee of Ontario found its position untenable and resigned, asking the Dominion Executive Committee to administer the Province’s affairs “until such a time as the locals in Ontario shall have demonstrated by useful effort, and sound progress, to the satisfaction of the SPC as a whole their fitness for organisation provincially” (*Western Clarion*, 9 April 1910). A Winnipeg member, “WHS”, writing in the *Western Clarion* of 4 June 1910, commented:

Not only was it necessary that a fight be carried on against our common enemy, but also against the reactionaries inside the party who were bent on a plan of making the movement attractive and, above all, respectable. The same guerrilla warfare is being carried on now, in Ontario and Manitoba, and spasmodically in every other province. It is nothing more or less than an attempt to create a ‘perfumed slavery’, aping the morals of respectable bourgeois society, or trying to compete with capitalist politicians in election buffoonery.

There is only one way out of the difficulty as far as the opportunists are concerned, and that is to form a party of their own and embody the reforms in their platform which they think necessary to catch the workers’ votes.

And this is what they did. In October 1910, the Manitoba Ukrainian locals formed their Social Democratic Party, adopting a programme of reforms. They were, however, deeply divided. At a convention of the Federation of Ukrainian Social Democrats in Edmonton, in May 1911, a number of branches decided to rejoin the Socialist Party of Canada, and to rename themselves the Federation of Ukrainian Socialists. At its meeting on 12 June, the Dominion Executive Committee of the SPC agreed to accept the renamed Federation of Ukrainian Socialists back into the ranks of

the party. The Ukrainians were largely split between the FUS, based in Vancouver in the west of the country, and the FUSD, based in the east in Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto. The Ukrainian farmers in Northern Manitoba generally supported the social democrats.

Most of the Finnish members joined the social democrats, as did a Russian branch of the SPC, the former in Alberta, the latter in Winnipeg. Even in Nanaimo, on Vancouver Island, a Finnish branch of the SPC joined the social democrats. In Ontario, in April 1911, the Finnish branches convened a meeting in Toronto, broke away from the Socialist Party and formed the Canadian Socialist Federation. Later in the year, the Manitoba social democrats, together with the Ontario Canadian Federation, various other non-English-speaking groups and the tiny Social Democratic Party of Ernest Burns in Vancouver, officially established themselves as the all-Dominion Social Democratic Party of Canada. It had become a national party. By 1913, the SDP claimed a membership of more than 3,500. This was obviously an exaggeration, as all its members were former members of the SPC which, at that time, had fewer than 3,500. Moreover, not all the foreign language members deserted the Socialist Party of Canada and, as noted above, some rejoined the party.

Nevertheless, by 1910, the SPC in Winnipeg had largely disintegrated. The Social Democratic Party's platform, which was drafted in Winnipeg by former SPCers, Dick Rigg, Jacob Penner and Herman Saltzman, contained a list of ten reforms and immediate demands, ranging from the eight-hour day to the abolition of the Senate. The SDP was far stronger in Winnipeg than in any other centre, with about 20% of its national membership being in that city. Unlike the SPC, its membership was almost entirely of Eastern European origin; it was little more than a loose federation of national groups. It collaborated with the British-style Labourites, but was forcefully harassed and opposed by members of the SPC in Winnipeg, particularly George Armstrong and Bill Hoop. The Socialist Party lost the support of *Cotton's Weekly*, which became the official journal of the Social Democratic Party.

Bill Pritchard joined the Socialist Party of Canada on 23 May 1911; and in the words of Peter Campbell, "he joined the party at the low point of its existence". In October 1911, a Provincial Convention was held in Vancouver at which, as elsewhere, the party Platform, principles and attitude towards reforms came under heavy attack. Although only a member of a few months, Bill Pritchard, together with his father, James, was elected by the Vancouver Local as a delegate. James Pritchard was elected chair. A number of delegates criticised the editor of the *Western Clarion*, D.G. McKenzie, and some party officials, for being "too narrow". Pritchard felt, and he was correct, that they wanted the Socialist Party of Canada to be more like Hyndman's Social-Democratic Federation in Britain. Criticism was also directed at Hawthornthwaite and Parker Williams as members of the British Columbia legislature. Shortly after, Hawthornthwaite resigned from the SPC, as did Williams who joined the SDP.

The *Western Clarion* of 2 December 1911, announced the resignation of McKenzie as editor and as party secretary. In the 16 December issue, he gave as the reason for his resignation the "utter vapidness and futility of the Convention". Owing to the negligence of a number of "real SPC locals", the majority of the Convention had been members "out of sympathy with the Platform and principles of the SPC". And of this majority he wrote, "a number of them are ostentatiously leaving the party, the wisest thing they have yet done, and certainly the best thing they have ever done for the party". The Dominion Executive Committee, taking office on 1 January 1912,

rejected the right of the Provincial Convention to make changes regarding the whole party and, insisting on past practices continuing, rejected the Convention's decisions.

Meanwhile, the Social Democratic Party was establishing itself across the country more solidly than had been possible by parties of a similar kind previously. It issued appeals for unity with the Socialist Party, all of which were rejected by the SPC. Indeed, a number of prominent members of the SDP, such as Ernest Winch, pressurised the SPC to dissolve and become part of the SDP. "The SPC's outward display of bravado notwithstanding, the offer must have been attractive to many members of the party", writes Peter Campbell. The Social Democratic Party, however, appealed to members of the Socialist Party who objected to its hostility to religion, although many looked upon themselves as freethinkers, as did Ernest Burns and Bertha Merrill Burns. The SDP, moreover, allied itself with the temperance movement, thus advocating prohibition. The SDP also demanded that the government give women the vote. It is not surprising, therefore, that it soon gained considerable support and increasing membership. But it was not to last.

In 1915, however, the Socialist Party lost two of its most able propagandists and organisers. Despite her popularity, the expenses of some of Sophie Mushkat's tours often amounted to more than she was able to collect. On one tour, for example, she reported expenses of \$200, which exceeded the \$108 that she raised. When she finally collected a surplus on another tour, she was criticised for mishandling funds. She was then accused by the Alberta Executive Committee of supporting a prohibition campaign in the Province. The Dominion Executive Committee of the party endorsed the Alberta Committee and, after reviewing her activities, expelled her from the SPC. Years later, she was said to have become sympathetic towards the Communist Party, at least for a while. Around the same time, Charles Lestor resigned from the Socialist Party of Canada and joined the Social Democratic Party.

### **The Socialist Party of North America**

Previously, early in 1911, the entire Toronto Local seceded from the Socialist Party, and formed the Socialist Party of North America.

As noted, the Socialist Party of Canada had been losing, and ridding itself of, many social democrats and reformers, and had strengthened its anti-reformist policy and platform; but it was considered, particularly in the east of the country, not to be moving away from reformism fast enough for some of its members in Toronto. Furthermore, around this time, Moses Baritz, a member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, had arrived in the city. He strongly influenced many of the Toronto members. Milne comments that Baritz "was an aggressive, tail-twisting exponent of SPGB views". Of him, Robert Barltrop in *The Monument*, writes:

Baritz, originally a Conservative, became known half round the world as a socialist agitator, a man without political or personal inhibitions. Short and squat, with thick glasses and a terrifying voice, he exuded vitality and passion; among other things, he had wrestled with Georges Hackenschmidt.

The Socialist Party of North America decided to adopt an Object and Declaration of Principles similar to that of the Socialist Party of Great Britain. As we shall need to refer to them again in this narrative, it will not come amiss to quote them in full. They were, however, preceded by the *Manifesto of the Socialist Party of North America*



(1911), "*Emancipation not Palliation*" and headlined *Socialism vs. Capitalism*. The headquarters of the SPNA was at 185½ Queen Street West, Toronto, Ontario.

The SPNA *Manifesto* unsurprisingly commences by stating that to understand socialism, one must necessarily understand the present social system, capitalism. It reiterates much that the Socialist Party of Canada says in its own *Manifesto*, again unsurprising as all its members had recently been members of the SPC before resigning. The *Manifesto of the Socialist Party of North America* asserts that capitalist society is divided into hostile classes, the owning capitalist class and the working class "whose members possess nothing but their labor-power". In return the workers, in order to live, receive wages, while the capitalists receive profits created by the workers. "Here we see laid bare the secret and mysterious source of the wealth of those who, without producing themselves, obtain possession of the wealth of society". This contradiction must be abolished, and a new society inaugurated. Therefore to accomplish their "universal freedom", the workers must be organised into a political party of their own class, with the object of establishing a new order of society based upon the ownership of the means of wealth production, by and in the interests of the whole community. The *Manifesto* ends with the slogan first proclaimed by Marx and Engels, and popularised by the Socialist Party of Canada: "Workers of the world, unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains, a world to gain."

The Declaration of Principles then follows:

The Socialist Party of North America has for its object:

The emancipation of the workers from slavery and the establishment of a new order of society based on the ownership of wealth production, by and in the interest of the whole community.

We hold:

That society as at present constituted is divided into two classes, the capitalist class and the working class.

The capitalist class are the owners of property in the means of wealth production: land, factories, transportation, etc.

The working class in this respect are the propertyless class, and are, therefore, dependent upon the capitalist class for their existence.

That this ownership of the machinery of production tends, with the development of industry, to greater accumulation of wealth to the capitalist class and a more precarious subsistence for the worker.

This creates an antagonism of interest between owners and non-owners, capitalist and wage worker, resulting in a constant struggle over the division of wealth produced. The basis of the class struggle, therefore, lies in the economic foundations of society.

The title of capitalist ownership is vested in the state, and all the powers of government are used by the ruling class to protect their interests and legalize their encroachments.

All class struggles are, therefore, political struggles, and the workers must organize consciously and politically to gain control of the machinery of government (including the legal, civil and armed forces) in order to abolish the capitalist form of private property in the means of production and convert it into the common property of the community, with democratic control. This is the revolutionary proposition.

Therefore, the first step in the revolution of the working class is to raise itself to the position of the ruling class, that it may lay hold of the

ready-made state machinery, convert this instrument of oppression and domination into an agent for the emancipation of all mankind from wage slavery for ever.

The Socialist Party of North America, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give rise to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

Whilst much of the SPNA's Object and Declaration of Principles was based upon that of the SPGB, it was not identical in all its sentences and phrases, except for the ultimate paragraph. Nevertheless, the Socialist Party of North America decided that its statement was clearer than that of the Socialist Party of Canada's Platform. It was, moreover, the first group outside the United Kingdom to use the SPGB's Object and Declaration of Principles as its own (see note below). The SPNA did not, however, grow and it dissolved after a few years. Moses Baritz moved on to the United States and its members, or at least some of them, rejoined the Socialist Party of Canada, feeling that their original differences with the SPC did not justify a separate existence any longer.

#### **NOTE**

On 21 October 1912, "a number of Marxian students" met in Petone, New Zealand, and formed the Petone Marxian Club. At its fifth meeting, it adopted the Object and Declaration of Principles of the Socialist Party of Great Britain *in toto*. It did not last long, holding only 61 meetings. On 28 December 1918, a conference was held in Christchurch at which a New Zealand Marxian Association was formed. It too adopted the Object and Principles of the SPGB. The New Zealand Marxian Association lasted until 1922. In 1930, former members of the Petone Marxian Club and the New Zealand Marxian Association, formed the Socialist Party of New Zealand, also adopting the same Object and Principles. As the World Socialist Party of New Zealand, it continues today.

In 1916, a group of socialists in Detroit, Michigan, came together to form the Socialist Party of the United States, which shortly after changed its name to the Workers' Socialist Party of the United States. The party was short-lived being wound up in 1919. The Workers' Socialist Party was re-founded in 1930. Renamed the World Socialist Party of the United States in 1947, it continues its activities.

A similar party, the Socialist Party of Australia, was formed in 1924. Since then, a number of small parties and groups have been formed (and in some instances gone out of existence) in Asia, Africa and Europe, all based upon the same SPGB Object and Declaration of Principles.

#### **Revival**

Despite continuing resignations and expulsions, and more to come, by 1910 there were signs of a revival in the fortunes of the Socialist Party of Canada.

On 22 March 1909, Charles M. O'Brien was elected to the Alberta Legislature. He stood for Rocky Mountain and polled 555 votes, against 520 for an Independent and 392 for the Conservative candidate. 'Charlie' "had been associated with the Socialist Party from 1903", according to Milne, and spent much of his time as an organiser in the mining camps of Alberta and British Columbia and, some time later, in towns and cities east of Winnipeg. Following his election, he addressed scores of meetings, often with police interference, and sometimes spending days in jail. In the Legislature, he was accused by the Liberals of not speaking to the question of the debates, but of giving lengthy lectures, which was true. For example, during the great debate over the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway Company's deal with the government on 1 March 1910, O'Brien commenced his address by outlining the development of society from primitive communism. At that point, a Liberal, J.W. Woolf, rose on a point of order claiming that O'Brien was not speaking on the question, but giving a lecture on socialism; but the Attorney General allowed him to continue, saying it was natural he should wish to define his position as a member of the House. Following further interjections by other members, O'Brien continued to define capitalism, the "slave" position of the workers, and advocate "the co-operative commonwealth", adding that he was proud to be the first representative of the Socialist Party of Canada in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. He was, he said, here to voice the interests of those who are "slaves to the rule of capital", and not the employers. He was, he continued one of the national organisers of the Socialist Party of Canada whose mission was a society "where production shall be for use instead of profit", and he was authorised and empowered to speak on its behalf.

O'Brien did, however, support legislation forbidding women to work underground in coalmines, but pointed out also that women in Edmonton suffered even worse conditions. When a resolution of sympathy for King Edward VII's widow was introduced in 1910, "Charlie" O'Brien moved an amendment extending condolences to all the widows of all the miners killed in a recent local mine disaster. When he refused to withdraw his amendment, the Legislature was reduced to chaos. O'Brien did not merely consider himself a propagandist for socialism, but worked tirelessly on behalf of his constituents; for example, at the beginning of the 1912 session, he put down 24 questions relating to mining on the order paper. He was looked upon as the United Mine Workers' representative in the Alberta Legislature. In 1913, he was narrowly defeated, receiving 1,018 votes, with the Conservative candidate polling 1,099 and the Independent 516. Some time later, he moved to the United States and subsequently joined the Proletarian Party, formed by John Keracher and Dennis Batt in June 1920. Charles O'Brien was twice charged under the criminal syndicalism laws, and was once arrested for attacking Woodrow Wilson. During the 1920s, he defended Bolshevism, and in the 1930s became involved in polemics in the *Western Socialist*, where he continued to defend Soviet policies.<sup>1</sup>

In 1910, George Armstrong stood on behalf of the SPC, in Winnipeg, and polled 246 votes against 2,538 for the Conservative candidate and 2,578 for the Liberal. In 1914, again in the Provincial election in Winnipeg, he polled 928 against 6,692 for the Conservative and 8,205 for the victorious Independent. At a Provincial by-election in 1915, Armstrong received 804 votes against 2,048 for a Conservative and 6,443 for the Independent.

---

<sup>1</sup> In 1971, the National Secretary of the Proletarian Party, Al Wysocki, died after a long illness. None of the surviving members were prepared to fill the breach. By the end of the year, the party, in the words of Franklin Rosemont (*Encyclopedia of the American Left*), "just faded away". It was an anti-reformist 'Impossibilist' party which, nevertheless, defended Bolshevism.

The Socialist Party of Canada in 1910 was still a vital and expanding party in Western Canada. Many workers elected socialists to leading positions in the unions. The SPC had emerged as a force in working class politics in British Columbia and Alberta. The party also had some influence in Calgary and in the Edmonton Trades Council. But its power base in Alberta was among the coalminers of the Crow's Nest Pass. Prominent executive officers of the United Mine Workers' District 18, such as Frank Sherman and Clem Stubbs, were also members of the Socialist Party. There was a close association between the UMW and the SPC at the level of locals in most of the mining camps; and the SPC frequently held its economics classes in miners' halls. In 1909, the UMW's district convention endorsed the party's Platform. In British Columbia, in certain unions such as the Machinists and Longshoremen, support for the SPC was quite strong. It was also very influential in the Vancouver Trades Council at that period. And the hard-rock miners of the Kootenays continued to support the SPC despite the Western Federation of Mineworkers' brief connection with the Industrial Workers of the World. Indeed, the party was able to rely on the Mineworkers' union for financial support. The Socialist Party of Canada enjoyed its most solid support among the coalminers of Vancouver Island.

At the beginning of the autumn of 1911, the *Western Clarion* staggered through irregular publishing schedules, and in 1912 failed to appear for a number of months. However, the previous splits, expulsions and the formation of the reformist Social Democratic Party, made the SPC more determined. Ross McCormack notes that "the SPC remained the revolutionary socialist party in the West" and adds:

Because it had been disrupted by the split, and a new group of young activists became influential, the party made significant revisions in tactics after 1912. These changes allowed the SPC to gain much ground, and a crucially important place, towards the end of the Great War.

From 1905, the Industrial Workers of the World had increased its influence and numbers in Canada, and by 1912, it had about 5,000 members in the country. In general the Wobblies opposed political action. The IWW was committed to the General Strike as the means of working class emancipation. It was against voting for parliamentary candidates. Nevertheless, the IWW was committed to free speech campaigns. By 1912, however, the Wobblies, in Canada as elsewhere, were involved in industrial sabotage, which the SPC opposed. Because of the IWW's anarcho-syndicalism, the SPC "waged all-out war" on it. And because of the IWW's obsession with the General Strike, the Socialist Party considered it was totally ignorant of the class struggle. The SPC admired the Wobblies' courage, but was convinced that their activities were essentially futile. The IWW repaid the SPC in kind. There was, however, some cooperation between members of the IWW and the SPC in several western cities. Socialists joined in the fight against government repression of the Wobblies. Anarcho-syndicalist and Bakuninist ideas did circulate in north Winnipeg, particularly among Italian, Jewish and Russian workers. In 1912, there was even a small Syndicalist League in Vancouver.

The IWW was not alone in promoting the growth of militant industrial unionism in Canada. Despite its attacks on the IWW, the SPC played an increasingly prominent role. From its inception, the party had a strong tendency supporting industrial unionism, particularly in the Kootenays. By 1912, young members, such as Bill Pritchard and Jack Kavanagh in Vancouver, Joe Knight in Edmonton, and Bob Russell in Winnipeg, were actively supporting industrial unionism. But they also

continued to argue that, in a relatively liberal bourgeois state with a parliamentary franchise, the ballot was the means of getting rid of capitalism, and introducing socialism. And by the beginning of the First World War, the IWW was on the decline in Canada, with its membership falling and its locals disintegrating. This was partly due to government repression, employer opposition and economic depression. It was also due to the end of railway construction, where the Wobblies earlier had some influence.

In 1914, a pamphlet, *The Vancouver Island Strike* by Jack Kavanagh, based on a 16-page article in the *B.C.Federationist*, written on behalf of the British Columbia Miners' Liberation League, details the 1912-13 Vancouver Island miners' strike. Apparently, a miner named Mottishaw was discriminated against by the owners, Canadian Collieries (Dunsmuir) Ltd, for complying with the law laid down in the Coal Mines Regulation Act. On 17 September 1912, the miners at Cumberland were 'locked out' by the company for taking a one-day 'holiday' in which to consider the matter. Similar action followed at the mines at Extension two days later. By 24 September, Special Police were sent into the camps to force the Asian workers to resume work on the Company's terms. In October, more police were sent to harass the miners who, by then, were on a general strike. The Provincial Premier and Minister of Mines, McBride, refused to interfere, although the company continued to ignore the Coal Mines Regulation Act.

On 3 May 1913, the Western Fuel Co. was given permission to use the courthouse in Nanaimo for the purpose of taking a ballot on the question of returning to work. Shortly after, members of the Miners' Union, while holding a meeting in order to ballot on a similar question, were surrounded by troops, marched out of the hall in groups of ten and subject to considerable harassment. A number of strikers were arrested following a fracas with 16 strike-breakers brought in by the mine owners. On 9 August, a striker living in Ladysmith was stabbed by a strike-breaker. And, at the same time, the militia in Vancouver and Victoria received orders to hold themselves in readiness for service. When the miners of Nanaimo notified the Attorney-General of their ability to preserve peace "if he withdrew the Special Police", he replied by ordering out the militia. A number of the strikers were later sent to jail; and, some time after, the strike collapsed with the miners returning to work. Many of the miners were, at that time, members or sympathisers of the Socialist Party of Canada.

One setback for the Socialist Party was the departure of Parker Williams, allegedly the world's first revolutionary socialist parliamentary candidate, to the Social Democratic Party, his candidature for the SDP in the British Columbia Legislature in 1912, and his subsequent election to that body. Another former SPCer, John Place, was also elected on the reformist SDP platform to the BC Legislature. On the other hand, Ernest Winch, who had been an early member of the SDP, rejoined the Socialist Party in 1913. (In 1917, Winch returned to reformist politics by joining the newly founded Canadian Labor Party: we shall meet him again, years later!).

According to the *Electoral History of British Columbia, 1871-1986*, some of the information regarding the British Columbia 13th General Election of 1912 is, at best, vague and, at worst, non-existent. Amendment 2 of the 1912 election report states:

No official printed results appear to exist although, according to the *Vancouver Province* 29 October 1912, p.21, the Provincial Secretary had prepared a document for the Legislature which was described as a 'table of figures showing votes cast in each constituency and each polling subdivision'. There is no record, however, of any such compilation being

tabled during the 1913 session. The figures quoted by the *Province* correspond almost exactly to the results printed in the 1913 *Canadian Parliamentary Guide* (CPG)...Party affiliation is given in the CPG, but varies from newspaper results in a few instances which have been noted. The CPG uses 'Socialist' for both the Socialist Party of Canada and the Social Democratic Party of Canada. The *Western Clarion*, 23 March 1912, p.1, makes the affiliation clear. Since 9 Conservatives were elected by acclamation, i.e. without any polling of votes, the total for the Conservative Party, and the overall total, as well as the popular vote is somewhat misleading. A potential 14,086 voters did not have the opportunity to exercise their franchise. Given the voter turnout of almost 50% in other Districts, the total number of votes could have been about 7,000 more.

The *Electoral History of British Columbia, 1871-1986* gives the number of Socialist Party of Canada candidates as 17, and the Social Democratic Party only one. The SPC is reported as receiving 9,366 votes (11.08%), and with only one member of the Legislature. The situation was, however, somewhat more complicated than it seemed. John Place won Nanaimo, not on the SPC's revolutionary platform, but on an SDP ticket supported, it would seem, by the *Western Clarion*. And Parker Williams ran, and was elected, in Newcastle on the SPC platform, but his local switched to the SDP just prior to the election. As noted previously, Williams joined the SDP, but also remained a member of the SPC. After the election, he was expelled from the Socialist Party for holding dual membership. In Comox, Wallis Lefaux received 355 votes (33.84%) for the SPC; in Fernie, William Davidson received 763 (41.69%), but in Esquimalt George Oliver only got 25 votes (2.92%).

The Socialist Party also stood candidates in Alberta, where in 1912, Joseph R. Knight stood in a by-election for Edmonton. He received 183 votes against 1,802 for the Liberal candidate and 1,733 for the Conservative. In 1913, he was the Socialist Party candidate at Lethbridge, polling 282 votes against 1,371 for the Conservative candidate and 1,033 for the Liberal.

Bill Pritchard was appointed editor of the *Western Clarion* in 1914, although he had been a contributor as early as 1911, soon after he had joined the Socialist Party of Canada. His main function was getting the journal back on its feet following its interrupted appearance during 1912 and the beginning of 1913. He assisted the editor, John Burrough, until his appointment as editor. The *Western Clarion* was only published monthly instead of weekly; but under Pritchard the quality of the articles improved considerably. It became a clear-cut revolutionary 'Impossibilist' journal again.

Bumsted, in his *The Peoples of Canada*, says that 1914 was not a good year for Canada. In the west of the country, the wheat economy was virtually dead; and unemployment rates in central Canada had reached 25% before seasonal adjustments, with per-capita income nationally shrinking 10% over the year. The coming war was, for the government and most Canadian industrialists, heaven-sent!

## *Chapter Three*

### **WAR, REVOLUTION AND BOLSHEVISM**

On 24 July 1914, the British government received the text of an ultimatum sent from the Austro-Hungarian government to Serbia. Almost a month previously, the Austrian Archduke, Franz Ferdinand, had been assassinated by Serbian nationalists in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo. The Austro-Hungarian ultimatum contained demands which the Serbian government would, or could, not accept. Russia, as “the champion of the Slav people”, according to Denis Judd in *The Life and Times of George V*, “would be obliged to move against Austria”. Germany would support her Austrian ally. France would not allow Germany to proceed unhindered, and Britain was the ally of France. Germany invaded Belgium; and, finally, Britain sent an ultimatum to Germany demanding an end to the violation of neutral Belgian territory. Germany declared war on Russia on 1 August, and the British government’s ultimatum to Germany expired on 4 August. Britain declared war on Germany the same day. World War One had commenced.

Stripped of the rhetoric, what were the main causes?

Europe was divided into two rival imperialistic camps, heavily armed and seeking to expand at the expense of the other. Germany was late arriving in the scramble for markets and spheres of profitable investment. Inevitably, the trade rivalry between Britain and Germany took the form of British attempts to shut Germany out of colonial and semi-colonial areas; and counter attempts by Germany to break through the British control by a thrust to the southeast, through the Balkans, across the Dardenelles, on to Baghdad and the oil-rich Persian Gulf, and towards British India. The Germans planned to construct a railway from Berlin to Baghdad. Other factors included a Franco-German struggle over coal and iron deposits in Eastern France and Western Germany; France had large deposits of iron, but little coal; Germany had a lot of coal, but little iron. Furthermore, Russia intended to control the Straits connecting the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, which was in direct conflict with Germany’s attempt to drive eastwards, and to destabilise the Austro-Hungarian Empire with its large Slav and Romanian populations.

Canada was a long way from Europe. But Canada was part of the British Empire, and it had a Conservative Party government, headed by Robert Borden, an imperialist from Nova Scotia. His defence minister, Sir Sam Hughes, quickly and enthusiastically raised a large expeditionary force to send to France. According to Robert Bothwell in his *A Traveller’s History of Canada*, the force was dispatched “overseas in scenes of utmost confusion”. Moreover, the Canadian soldiers were equipped with Canadian-made hunting rifles which proved useless.

At home, the government did its best to provide volunteers, but when these recruits dried up in 1917, introduced conscription. This, however, proved extremely unpopular in Canada. “Appeals to the French Canadians fell on deaf ears, as they increasingly felt that the war was not their war”, says Robert Bothwell. “France was nothing more than a distant memory and, to a Catholic population, a country lamentably afflicted by atheism – worse than the English Canadians, who were after all Protestants”. Borden was, therefore, forced to call an election. The Liberal Party was split over conscription, with most English Liberals, led by the French Canadian, Sir Wilfred Laurier, supporting Robert Borden. Sir Robert formed a coalition government without a single elected French Canadian member. Conscription was passed, but enforcing it

proved increasingly difficult. In some parts of the country the authorities exempted practically everyone, particularly in rural Quebec.

The Canadian government found it necessary to introduce income tax, and appeal for funds through the issue of bonds, called Victory Bonds, which to its surprise were oversubscribed. Mostly, however, the government paid for the war through debt. Crude economic policies, including printing money, resulted in rapid inflation and, not surprisingly, inflation led to labour militancy and strikes. All told, the Canadian government sent 620,000 men to France, of whom 60,000 were killed. Women's status, however, changed during the war. In 1916, they were given the vote in Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and in 1917 in Ontario, but not in British Columbia. Nationally, the government gave the wives and sisters of serving soldiers the vote, conveniently just in time for Parliament to vote on conscription. All Canadian women were given the vote in 1918.

### **Anti-War Manifesto**

On 6 August 1914, two days after Britain declared war on Germany, the Dominion Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Canada met, and agreed on a *Manifesto to the Workers of Canada*, hastily drawn up earlier in the day. It read:

In view of the European situation, and the efforts of the capitalist press and politicians to stir up a war fever in Canada, to the end that Canadian workingmen will be induced to take up arms in defence of the interests of their masters, the Socialist Party of Canada, instead of passing futile resolutions of protest, would call your attention to the following facts:

(1) Inasmuch as all modern wars have their origin in the disputes of the international capitalist class for markets in which to dispose of the stolen products of labour, or to protect themselves in the possession of markets they already have, the motive of the anticipated struggle in Europe is of no real interest to the international working class.

(2) Further, as the struggle, if materialised, will claim as its victims countless thousands of members of our class in a quarrel that is not theirs, it behoves the workers not to be carried away by the frenzied clamourings of the blare of martial music. In no conceivable manner, shape or form could the interests of the workers of any of the nationalities involved be furthered or protected by their participation in the conflict.

(3) Since the international working class produces all the wealth of the world, and still possesses nothing, receiving in the shape of wages but sufficient to maintain a slavish existence, and since the international capitalist class occupies the position of a social parasite, producing nothing and possessing everything, which position it is able to maintain by virtue of its control of the powers of the State – the only struggle that can be of vital interest to the working class of all nations, is that which has for its object the wresting of this power from the hands of the master class, and using it to remove all forms of exploitation and servitude. To this struggle the Socialist Party of Canada calls you. The only barrier standing in our way is ignorance in the ranks of our own class. As an



International Working Class we have but one enemy – the International Capitalist Class.

WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE! YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR CHAINS: YOU HAVE A WORLD TO GAIN.

Issued by the Dominion Executive Committee, Socialist Party of Canada, Vancouver, 6 August 1914

(The *Western Clarion*, 15 August 1914)

The only other political party in the world which, independently of the Socialist Party of Canada, immediately issued a similar anti-war statement was the Socialist Party of Great Britain, whose manifesto was published by its Executive Committee on 25 August 1914, and printed in the September issue of the *Socialist Standard*.

Shortly after issuing its anti-war statement, the SPC published the fourth edition of its *Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada*, with a new preface, also written by the author of the *Manifesto*, Donald McKenzie, and which has often been quoted since. McKenzie says that the war is not being waged because an Archduke was assassinated in Bosnia, or because a treaty was violated in Belgium. It is a war for the world markets. The ‘place in the sun’ the Germans seek is a place to sell their wares. The British outcry against the peril of Prussian militarism is inspired by the fear of German commercial competition. As a war for world markets, he writes, it is a matter of concern only for the various capitalist interests involved. Yet the workers of each country have flung themselves into the conflict, regardless of the consequences to themselves.

McKenzie states that the SPC was justified in its long time resistance to any movement to join the International Socialist Bureau, on the grounds that it was neither international nor socialist. “If the working class is to be internationalised, it is the capitalist system, not Social-Democratic statesmanship, that will do it”, he continues. The social democrats have sacrificed sound principles for immediate success. Indeed,

They have numbered their adherents by the million, and have educated them not at all. They have sown the wind – they are reaping the whirlwind. In conflict with them for a generation are those who would sacrifice immediate success to sound principles, who have been content to be fewer in numbers if clearer in understanding, who have given transient political issues the ‘go-by’ and have harped upon social revolution, who have expounded economics and the class struggle, when the others were shouting against taxes and tariffs, who have earned for themselves the name of Impossibleist, and have been content therewith. The war has justified them. Where there are any ‘impossibleists’ or ‘near-impossibleists’ in Europe, they have stood firm. The ‘practical socialists’ are cutting one another’s throats in the trenches.

“And the outcome?”, asks McKenzie. None can say, he answers. Only one thing is certain: forward to the social revolution. “How far forward one cannot see. But the signs are most promising”. He argues that, on the face of it, “uprisings of a more or less revolutionary character seem not unlikely. Whether they will be successful or not is problematical”. And he concludes the preface with these words:

One more illusion, indeed, we may put from our minds, if we ever had it – that of a peaceful revolution. A master class capable of sending millions to slaughter in the field for the extension of its profits is capable of making a shambles of an industrial city for the retention of its property in the means of production. To expect them to give up their rule with any good grace is to credit them with grace beyond reason. It is only when a social system is about to pass that resistance of its parasites seems to collapse.

The slaughter, of which McKenzie writes, was to continue for four more years, only to be followed by a revolution unforeseen by socialists as well as non-socialists and, after that, the misery of mass unemployment for many of the world's working class.

### **Repression at Home**

As Jim Milne notes in his *History of the Socialist Party of Canada*, officialdom wasted little time prosecuting the war at home. As early as 12 September 1914, the *Western Clarion* reported on the situation in Winnipeg:

The Winnipeg Police Commission, according to the *Free Press*, has prohibited 'the holding of public meetings in the streets, or the use of incendiary or inflammatory language in any place'. Controller Midwinter expressed the belief that the 'indiscriminate speech-making on the Market Square was an abuse of the privilege of free speech, so universally enjoyed in the British Empire'

In 1911, the Calgary Trades and Labor Council had declared that "the capitalists of the world cause all war". In 1914, the British Columbia Federation of Labour took a strong anti-war line. The Industrial Workers of the World announced that "only suckers support the war effort", and their Edmonton and Vancouver locals expelled those members who enlisted. A number of unions took an anti-war position, although craft unions, particularly in Manitoba and the east of the country supported the war. In 1915, the convention of the United Mine Workers' Union, District 18, declared that "the workers of the world have no quarrel whatsoever with one another", according to the *British Columbia Federationist* of 26 February 1915.

Unlike the majority of social democrats worldwide, the Ukrainian social democrats in Canada came out against the war in Europe, and Canada's participation in the war. On 11 April 1915, the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party of Canada held an "extraordinary conference" at which it characterised the conflict as "an imperialist war" and stated that the USDPC stood by the principles of international socialism, and censured "all socialists who support the war". They called on the proletariat of the world to "establish a Third Revolutionary International on the ruins of the Second International".

The Socialist Party of Canada opposed the war from day one. Not surprisingly, it was subjected to a certain amount of repression, although it was far from alone in this respect. Indeed, some others fared worse. The holding of outdoor street-corner meetings, which had always been the SPC's main propaganda outlet, became increasingly difficult, if not impossible in parts of the country. Police interference was

frequent. Members such as Wilf Gribble were jailed for 'sedition'. In May 1916, all street meetings in Vancouver were discontinued due to "opposition of a violent and vicious character, apparently engineered from higher up", according to the local organiser.

The year 1915 witnessed an extreme economic crisis in Canada. There was a growing army of unemployed, particularly among 'foreign', that is Central and Eastern European, workers. The unemployed organised mass meetings and demonstrations, demanding food. "Give us bread and work!" was the understandable, but futile, demand. The situation in Winnipeg became so desperate that, on 14 May 1915, about 1,000 unemployed workers with their wives and children began a march, carrying hand luggage, towards the United States border, hoping that the US government "would save them from dying of starvation". Their hopes were not realised, because as soon as they reached the city limits, a number of them were arrested, while another 200 men were stopped when they reached the border town of Emerson. The Ukrainian language paper *Robochy Narod*, of 19 May, reported that all the fugitives would be inspected "and those among them who came under the category of enemies of the British Empire will be sent to the Brandon concentration camp" as prisoners of war; Canadian citizens among them were to be returned to Winnipeg "where they will have the right to die of starvation".

Immediately after Canada had entered the war, the government began mass arrests of 'enemy aliens', especially Germans and those who had come from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1915, there was a further wave of arrests, during which 'alien' workers were incarcerated in various camps at Brandon, Kapuskasing, Lethbridge, Spirit Lake and Vernon. More than 800 Ukrainians were imprisoned in the camp at Spirit Lake, Quebec. Many European workers, including coal miners from Nanaimo, were fired and then sent to camps. However, by 1916, the economic situation had dramatically changed. There was now a shortage of workers, because a large number of physically healthy young men were in the armed forces. Thousands of internees were released from the camps.

### **The SDP and the War**

The Social Democratic Party of Canada's attitude to the war was not unlike that of the Independent Labour Party in Britain. Initially, the leadership opposed the war, stating that it was a capitalist and imperialist conflict. But within a few weeks, divisions soon appeared within its ranks. The fortunes of the SDP changed for the worse. The party was far less successful than the Socialist Party in maintaining discipline against a hostile pro-war patriotic environment. Many members abandoned their so-called socialist and anti-capitalist principles. Others, with craft union links, supported, and worked for, the war effort. A few SDP members opposed the war on pacifist grounds, maintaining that war was un-Christian and immoral. The party also split on ethnic grounds, with some of its German members supporting their country of origin, and many of the East Europeans hostile towards Canada's Czarist Russian ally.

In mid-October 1914, the Social Democratic Party had 675 members in British Columbia; a month later, only 450. By the end of 1916, the party reported a mere 2,000 members (the Socialist Party of Canada, despite its many problems, probably had more members at this time), and membership was declining rapidly. Members of German background were, inevitably, subjected to public hostility and government repression, as were non-social democratic Germans. At the beginning of 1917, the

majority of members of the SDP were of Finnish origin. “Small numbers of Jewish, Finnish and Ukrainian members reported themselves still active in 1917, and the party complained that there were not enough English comrades to carry on the struggle”, says Janice Newton. Even before the end of 1914, the SDP was bankrupt. No English-language journal or paper was published by the party until 1916, when the *Canadian Forward* was issued, but then only as a bi-monthly. Because the members of the party’s German and East European locals were regarded as ‘enemy aliens’, they were ruthlessly targeted by the state. By the end of 1917, the Social Democratic Party of Canada was virtually finished, although some of its members managed to campaign against conscription. The editor of the *Canadian Forward*, Isaac Bainbridge, who was of German origin, was charged, convicted and served a jail sentence for sedition in 1917.

In September 1918, the government issued an order-in-council which effectively outlawed what was left of the Social Democratic Party of Canada, outlawing all its meetings, closing its remaining offices and raiding its members’ homes. Rejecting social revolution, and embracing reformism, was of no help to Canada’s social democrats when the chips were down! By the end of the war, many former SDPers were returning to the Socialist Party. By 1920, the SDP had finally collapsed.

### **Conscription**

Early in 1916, the Borden government passed an order-in-council authorising the appointment of a National Service Board, “with a general power of supervision over recruiting as it affected industries and labour”. Late in November, the Board announced its intention to “determine the manner in which men can better serve the Nation at this time, whether in a military or industrial capacity”. The subsequent programme became known as Registration. Such developments alarmed socialists and many trade unionists, as they regarded it, quite correctly, as a prelude to conscription, which they had opposed since the beginning of the war. By the middle of 1916, the supply of volunteers for the armed forces had largely dried up. Most French Canadians were against conscription.

The Winnipeg Trades Council established an Anti-Registration League. The Victoria Trades Council denounced Registration. The Vancouver Trades Council, on 4 January 1917, advised workers not to support conscription. And the Regina Trades Council urged workers to join the fight against Registration. The Machinists’ Union was very active in the anti-conscription campaign. In eastern Canada, however, most English-speaking workers supported Registration. The culmination of the campaign against Registration was the convention of the British Columbia Federation of Labour, held between 29 January and 1 February, 1917. The delegates officially supported the anti-conscription movement. The Women’s Social Democratic League also organised rallies, in Montreal, Winnipeg and across Ontario, against Registration and conscription. In Vancouver, the Socialist Party of Canada and the Trades Council co-operated in the fight against conscription in a vigorous campaign. One particular reason why the trade unions opposed conscription was because they considered that it would destroy the movement. It was, they argued, according to Ross McCormack, a conspiracy between the state and the employers to kill the trade union movement. In Winnipeg, the Trades Council, together with the Anti-Conscription League, was attacked by veterans returning from Europe.

Of the situation, Bill Pritchard, in his recorded memoirs, recalls:

The war had dragged on more than two years, the 'Hun' proving to be more formidable than expected. The country was now propagandised in preparation for conscription. This was almost immediately opposed by the labour movement generally and the Socialist Party in particular. Meetings of various groups, including the labour unions, worked together, and the Socialist Party supported them in all the public meetings, although its speakers stressed the socialist position in its opposition to war as a last political resort of rival capitalist powers to grab a greater proportion of the surplus-values rung from the workers' toil.

The gallant body of 'Jimmy Higgins' in the party at once organised a bodyguard for the speakers, and laid well-organised plans for preventing disturbances at meetings or exhibitions of violence from misguided persons who were inclined to so act. Of all the major cities outside Quebec, Vancouver was the only city which did not experience any real trouble, did not have the party headquarters invaded and its effects thrown into the street, as happened in Winnipeg. All our meetings were carried out in perfect peace and order.

The campaign against registration and conscription made little impact on the Federal government, however. On 18 May 1917, the Prime Minister informed the House of Commons that his government would institute conscription; and in June, the Military Service Act was passed. At the same time, the Royal North West Mounted Police (RNWMP), Military Intelligence, and the bourgeois press, began a systematic surveillance on radical organisations, trade unionists and Socialist Party activists. The Regina police headquarters functioned as a clearinghouse where dossiers on hundreds of unionists and socialists were prepared. *The Federationist* and, later, in November 1918, the *Western Clarion*, were banned.

Many active and prominent members of the Socialist Party went on the run rather than be conscripted into the armed forces. Milne recounts how Tom Cassidy went to the Quebec woods where the police could get no assistance in locating him. Sid Rose disappeared in Manitoba, but was caught and, refusing to put on a uniform, was jailed. Dave Aitken and Joe Naylor were arrested and charged with assisting draft evaders. Roy Devore went to Alberta, in a hideaway used by other evaders known as the 'defaulters' camp'. Some members of the SPC went to the United States, Alaska and even to Mexico, but this was not helpful in all cases, as America was by then at war. Alex Sheperd walked over the US border only to be arrested in Seattle a few months later. Moses Baritz was also arrested in Seattle, and charged with being "an anarchist and IWW member", which he was not. Charlie Lestor, who, like a number of other former members of the SPC who had joined the SDP, rejoined the Socialist Party and went up to Alaska. The *Western Clarion* in September 1917 reported that he had been arrested in Fairbanks, charged with "seditious utterances", sent down for one year and fined \$1,000. The report continues: "As his wife and two children are dependent on the movement, and the charges for legal service are especially high in the Northern Country, a committee has been formed for the purpose of raising funds to conduct his defence". It was to no avail; he went to prison in Fairbanks for one year.

The case of Albert "Ginger" Goodwin was the most tragic.

Ginger Goodwin had been a coalminer, first in Yorkshire, England, and then in Canada, an active member of the United Mineworkers of America in Cumberland, on

Vancouver Island, prominent in the 1913 Island coal strike, and was involved in the work of the British Columbia Federation of Labour. According to Bill Pritchard, Goodwin was admired throughout the local labour movement. During the war, he had become a smelter for the Consolidated Company at Trail on the Island. At the time, it was the world's largest smelting corporation. By 1916, Ginger Goodwin had become the organiser of the Smeltermen's Union. This did not suit the company, particularly after he was categorised 4F – unfit for military service – due to having tuberculosis. Goodwin was a member of the Cumberland Local of the Socialist Party of Canada; indeed, he had been a founder member of the local, and was considered to be a knowledgeable socialist and a good speaker. The company was not pleased that Goodwin had been exempted, and would remain as union organiser at Trail. The management, therefore, contacted the draft board, who called him for a further medical examination, and reclassified him as fit for military service.

Like many other socialists, Ginger Goodwin hurried back to Cumberland, and went out into the almost impenetrable woods high in the mountains behind Lake Comox, where he stayed for quite a while. Shortly after, on 26 July, he went down onto a narrow trail, carrying his hunting rifle, looking for a bird or game for food. As he moved along the trail, he was shot by Constable Daniel Campbell higher above the trail, who was searching the area for draft evaders. The police report accepted that Goodwin had not fired his gun, and had been shot from above. Constable Campbell was exonerated from blame. The killing of Ginger Goodwin shocked the British Columbia labour and socialist movement; and at a meeting of the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council, the delegates passed a resolution calling on all affiliated bodies to stage a general strike on 2 August 1918, which they did. Bill Pritchard and Wallis Lefaux represented the Socialist Party at the funeral in Cumberland, attended by hundreds of mourners who marched to the cemetery two miles away in Happy Valley.

Meanwhile in Vancouver, chaos reigned. Some 300 returned soldiers, filled with booze, and encouraged by “over zealous ladies of the better class”, attacked the Labor Temple, smashing the windows and doors, and destroying books and furniture. Victor Midgley, the secretary, was forced by the rioters to kneel and kiss the flag; and George Thomas, a little but wiry longshoreman, was caught in a nearby alley, and had to be rescued by a policeman. The Chamber of Commerce and Mayor Gale ordered Pritchard, Kavanagh, Midgely, Joe Taylor and three others to leave Vancouver until the war finished.

In October 1918, a government order-in-council made strikes illegal in a large number of industries; violators of the law would be drafted into the army. Protests were often violent, comments McCormack. Loggers rioted at Big River, Saskatchewan, when military authorities arrived to collect draftees. Vancouver dockworkers walked off the job and went on strike, when an army policeman challenged a stevedore who was not carrying his registration papers. And whole colonies of draft evaders grew up on Vancouver Island and on Indian reservations in southeast Manitoba.

### **Inflation and Industrial Unrest**

Conscription was not the only cause of unrest in Canada between 1917 and 1919. Far from it. The main cause was inflation, and with it the dramatic increase in the cost of living. Between 1914 and 1918, the cost of living rose 60%. Some groups of workers, such as machinists and skilled workers in the Winnipeg railway shops, managed,

often through industrial pressure and action, to keep pace with inflation. In contrast, the wages of carpenters increased by a mere 10%. David Bercuson, in his *Confrontation at Winnipeg*, observes “that the greatest increases went to the very group who usually led the most militant strikes and provided the most radical leadership – the contract and railway shop machinists”. Nevertheless, by 1918 and the early months of 1919, most workers were profoundly worried by inflation and the continuing deterioration of their real wages; and, after November 1918, by the reality of increasing unemployment. However, membership of unions increased in 1918 by more than 20%. Workers fought back for higher wages. Militancy increased, as did the number of strikes, despite most of them being declared illegal by the government. Revolutionary socialists became more influential.

Of the situation, Professor Kenneth McNaught, in his *Penguin History of Canada*, comments:

...more than purely economic balances were disturbed by the war. Most important was the imbalance of sacrifices and a complex, yet widespread, feeling that the government was unconcerned with any interest save that of a purely military victory. Farmers and urban workers felt the pinch of an uncontrolled inflation that increased the cost-of-living by two-thirds between 1914 and 1918. Neither wages nor farm produce prices kept pace with the spectacular profits of business, and by the end of the war a cumulative mood of disillusionment broke out in massive labour strikes and independent farmer politics...

While socialism, and to some extent syndicalism, inspired many union members, there is no doubt that most, including the leaders, fought for immediate and non-revolutionary goals. They genuinely feared the effects on the labour market of returning soldiers, and had no need to propagandise the suffering resulting from inflation. Business leaders, and their colleagues in government, feared that unionisation would get out of hand and kill the prospects of profit in a country newly equipped with industrial capacity. Their reaction to union demands was similar to that of government and business in the United States during the Red Scare of 1919. Wartime censorship and repressive legislation were continued, and more of the same called for. And when the general strike broke out in Winnipeg in May, it was portrayed across the country as being led by Bolsheviks who aimed at nothing less than the establishment in Canada of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Indeed revolution was in the air. But not in Canada. It was in Russia. Again, a brief digression is necessary.

### **The Russian Revolution**

On 28 July 1914, Austria declared war on Serbia and bombarded the capital, Belgrade, the following day. Russia began partial mobilisation of its four military districts on the Austrian border the same day, and ordered general mobilisation of its armed forces the next day. The Czar said he wanted peace, but Germany declared war on Russia three days later. “There can be no doubt that the German challenge...raised a great wave of genuine patriotism all over Russia”, comments Bernard Pares in his

*The Fall of the Russian Monarchy*. But it was not to last. Moreover, the Russian Empire would prove too weak economically, politically and socially to defeat Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Despite rapid changes, and economic advances, during the previous 20 years, Czarist Russia was still predominantly feudal.

Despite his Stalinist sympathies, Maurice Dobb, in his *Soviet Economic Development since 1917*, provides an accurate account of the Russian economy prior to the war. This is supplemented to a lesser extent by *A History of the USSR*, by Andrew Rothstein, an even more fanatical Stalinist, and by the French bourgeois historian, Anatole de Monzie, in his *Petit Manuel de la Russie Nouvelle*, from which the following brief account is taken.

Dobb notes that in its economic development, Russia in the first decade of the twentieth century was intermediate between the undeveloped lands of Asia and the industrially developed regions of Western and Central Europe. In some regions, there had been quite a remarkable degree of industrial development, particularly in the Donetz and around St. Petersburg. Much of it was fairly modern, and was marked by a high level of concentration of both production and control. For example, according to Dobb, the proportion of all workers in factories who were employed in enterprises with more than 500 workers was 53% in 1914. By 1914, almost 50,000 miles of railways had been constructed, two-thirds of which were state-operated; but, despite these achievements, Russia's railway development in relation to area, or to population, was the lowest of any European country. Road development, however, was strikingly primitive with less than 20,000 miles of roads, of which only 3,000 miles were surfaced. According to Anatole de Monzie, "the wretched proletariat, worn out by long working-hours and living in dreadful surroundings" only represented between seven and 8% of the total population as late as 1917.

Nevertheless, in the words of Rothstein, "the Russian economy was extremely backward" or, as Dobb remarks: "In general it can be said that industrialisation had as yet touched little more than the hem of Russia's economic system." The patches of factory industry in St. Petersburg, Moscow and in parts of the south were no more than industrial 'islands' in a vast agricultural sea. Fewer than 15% of the population lived in towns, and less than 10% derived their livelihood from industry. The total numbers employed in factory industry, says Dobb, lay between two and three million, to which was added two million railwaymen and 750,000 miners. The output of coal, in proportion to the population, was five times less than that of France, 15 less than that of Germany, and 30 times less than that of Britain, notes Rothstein. Russian output of iron per head of population was three times less than that of France. Of a population of 170 million, only eight million children had any schooling. Approximately 28% could read, and fewer than three million daily papers were produced throughout the Russian Empire.

Farming was at a very low, primitive, level. According to Rothstein, Russian agriculture on the eve of the war showed the lowest yields in Europe. Its peasants still used ten million wooden ploughs; and 30% of them had no working animals, and had to hire a horse, often at an extortionate rate, from a *kulak* farmer, of whom there were about one million. The feudal three-field system continued to predominate in much of the country, which necessitated one-third of the arable area lying fallow each year. Many village communes practised periodic redistribution of their land among their members. And sometimes the peasants' strips were very numerous. To these factors in low productivity was added the chronic deficiency of capital among all the peasants except a thin upper stratum of *kulaks*. An important result was an increasing tendency for the poorer peasants to seek additional earnings, either by working for wages or by



undertaking domestic handicraft industry. For example, in the Black Earth belt, by 1900, a quarter of the males of working age took employment as agricultural labourers for some period of the year. Thus, says Maurice Dobb, “in addition to the industrial proletariat proper, there existed a large rural semi-proletariat drawn from families who were unable to support themselves from their holdings of land”, since they lacked the animal-power and equipment to work it.

Of the situation, Andrew Rothstein comments:

The fact was that the survivals of feudalism in the Russian countryside, with the paramount domination of the Russian landowners in political life which they perpetuated, hung like a crushing millstone round the neck of Russia’s economy long after 1861. They prevented her full *capitalist* development and the growth of a large home market, retarding the accumulation of capital and its free flow into industrial productive enterprise.

Such was the state of the Russian Empire in 1914, when Germany attacked the country.

The war placed a grave strain on the resources of the Russian Empire, notes Dobb. By 1915, Russia had lost Poland, and the occupation meant that much of the country’s industrial potential had also been lost. By the winter of 1916, economic disorganisation had already reached an advanced stage. The army was short of guns and ammunition. Both iron and steel production was well below the already low levels of 1914. Moreover, agricultural production had declined by more than one third. Growing food shortages increased distress among workers in the towns and cities during the winter of 1916-17 to the point of desperation. And it was soon to get worse. The extreme cold of that winter did not help either. In March 1917, a number of factories closed down due to a scarcity of fuel; and by mid-March, more than 100,000 workers, a third of the workforce, were on strike in Moscow. On 11 March, the President of the State Duma (parliament) telegraphed the Czar: “Transport and fuel absolutely disorganised; anarchy in the capital; general dissatisfaction growing; riots in the streets”. The following day, the Czar abdicated and a Provisional Government formed, which attempted to stem the tide of economic decline. It was to no avail. Bread prices, where there was any bread, had increased three times over pre-war prices. And by August, the official bread ration in Petrograd (formerly St. Petersburg) had been reduced to half of what it had been three months previously. The railway system had almost completely collapsed. By the beginning of October 1917, the economy had largely disintegrated; yet the Provisional Government tried to continue the war against Germany. Meanwhile, throughout the summer and autumn, hundreds of thousands of peasants were seizing the land of the landowners and aristocracy.

On 25 October (7 November by the new calendar), a Military Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet (Council), largely controlled by a group calling themselves Bolsheviks, had staged a *coup d’état* in the capital. “The next day the whole town was in their hands and all the troops on their side”, writes Bernard Pares. The Winter Palace had been stormed, and the Provisional Government overthrown. Russia had a new government, called the Council of People’s Commissars.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed account of the “revolution” and upheavals in the country at large, see *Ten Days That Shook the World* by John Reed.

The abdication of the Czar and the fall of the Russian monarchy in general was welcomed by liberals, radicals and social democrats throughout the world, including Canada. Socialists generally, however, had fewer illusions. They also welcomed the end of Czarism, but saw it as an attempt to sweep away the remnants of feudal autocracy, and an attempt to form a system of government in line with modern capitalist needs. Most émigré workers in Canada who had come from the Russian Empire, as well as Ukrainians from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, greeted the news of what was called the February Revolution, the abdication of the Czar, and the proclamation of a republic in Russia with, in the words of Peter Krawchuk “joy and enthusiasm”. A large number of meetings and demonstrations were held across Canada in which immigrants of Finnish, Jewish, Polish and Ukrainian origin “expressed their happiness at the victory of the revolution in Russia”. In Toronto, on 18 March 1917, a joint meeting of Polish and Ukrainian social democrats, as well as Russian Social Revolutionaries, was held to commemorate the fall of the Russian monarchy.

The events in Petrograd in October/ November 1917, and the establishment of a Soviet government would, however, give rise to considerable controversy within, not only social democratic parties worldwide, but also the Socialist Party of Canada. Bolshevism was in the air.

### **Bolshevism**

The first social democratic organisation to be formed within the Russian Empire, in 1883, was the Party of Russian Social Democrats, which was soon discovered by the Czarist police, and suppressed. During the same year, a group of Russian émigré social democrats, headed by Georgi Plekhanov, formed the Emancipation of Labour group in Geneva. Although it attempted to popularise what it considered to be socialist or social democratic ideas in Russia, it had little direct influence on developments in the country. A number of small social democratic organisations came and went in Russia during the 1880s and 1890s; the only organisation with a large membership (claimed at up to 10,000) was the Jewish Bund, which operated largely among artisans in the west of the country, within the Pale of Settlement, and underground in a few large cities and the capital St. Petersburg. One of the cities where there was a group, in the university, was Kazan.

Unlike in Western Europe and North America, however, so-called social democratic and Marxist groups and parties in Russia developed and emerged from Populist, pro-terrorist groups, such as the Narodnaya Volya (People’s Will). Many Russian radicals and rebels, who claimed to be social democrats or even democratic socialists, found it extremely difficult under the Czarist autocracy to rid themselves entirely of pro-terrorist ideas and forms of organisation. Even Plekhanov admitted this. One such individual who never completely abandoned such ideas, attitudes and organisation, while, at the same time, claiming to be a social democrat, socialist and communist, and who later fanatically promoted them, was a young student lawyer from Kazan University, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, who, in 1901, adopted the *nom-de-guerre* of Vladimir Lenin.

Lenin was born in April 1870, in Simbirsk. His father, Ilya, was part Russian and part Tartar. He was neither a peasant nor a worker, in the generally accepted sense of the word. By the time that Vladimir was born, his father had become the director of schools for the whole Simbirsk region, and, the previous year, had received the

Decoration of St. Vladimir, which raised his status to that of a hereditary nobleman. He was a devoted servant of the Czar. He died in 1886. His eldest son, Alexandre, entered the law school in St. Petersburg the following year, and immediately joined the terrorist Narodnaya Volya group. Shortly after, the group which included Alexandre, attempted to assassinate the Czar, but failed and were captured. Together with four other members of the group, Alexandre Ulyanov was hanged. Meanwhile Vladimir Ulyanov entered Kazan University, where he too joined a similar Populist, pro-terrorist, anti-Czarist group. Among this group, however, were some who considered themselves to be Marxists and social democrats. Young Vladimir was one of these. He began to read some of the mainly earlier workers of Marx, such as the *Communist Manifesto*. He probably also read Bakunin's Russian translation of the first volume of *Capital*, published in 1872. In December 1887, he was expelled from Kazan University, but in 1892 he graduated in law. In 1893, he went to St. Petersburg where he joined the main circle of social democrats in the city. In 1895, Ulyanov visited Plekhanov in Switzerland; following his return to St. Petersburg, where he first met Yuri Martov, he, Martov and another comrade were arrested and sentenced to five years exile in Siberia.

In 1898, the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party was formerly established in Minsk, attended by only nine people. Shortly after, three of them were arrested. The man who was to become Lenin later claimed that this first congress of the RSDLP had never really founded the party. Lenin was released from banishment in Siberia in 1900, from where he left for Western Europe. He settled in Switzerland and, with Martov, began to publish a paper, *Istra*, in December 1900. Between May 1901 and February 1902, Lenin wrote *What is to be done?*, which, in the words of S.V. Utechin in his 1963 introduction to the book, "became a guide-book for his followers in matters of organisation, strategy, and tactics and which has been adhered to by Communists ever since".

Lenin's main criticism was of a group of social democrats known as 'Economists', and their defence of workers' 'spontaneity'. In his view, unlike that of Marx, the workers, by their own independent efforts, were incapable of organising for their emancipation; they were only capable of a trade union consciousness. He argued that a highly centralised political party, run by a vanguard of so-called 'professional revolutionaries' of bourgeois origin, with their own ideology, was necessary to lead the masses to socialism. Such a party was not just necessary in Russia, but universally. Moreover, Lenin's idea of socialism was state ownership – that is nationalisation, of the land and means of production which, twenty years later, he would admit was state capitalism, albeit administered by the party of the proletariat. Many of Lenin's opponents, in Russia and elsewhere, would contend that his ideas and proposals for organisation had more in common with those of the French revolutionaries of the eighteenth century than with those of Marx and Engels of the late nineteenth century<sup>3</sup> (see note below).

The second congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party was held, first in July 1903, in Brussels, and then, following the expulsion of the delegates from

---

<sup>3</sup> In his book *What is to be done?*, Lenin asserts that "there can be no question of an independent ideology being worked out by the working masses in the very process of their movement..." And: "Class political consciousness can be brought to the worker only from without, that is, outside the sphere of the relations between the workers and the employers". (The emphasis is Lenin's. See pages 89 and 123 of *What is to be Done?*, Panther Modern Society edition, 1970.) Also: "The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively of its own efforts, is able to achieve only Trade Union consciousness". (quoted in *The Seeds of Evil* by Robin Blick, 1993, p.16).

Belgium, in August in London. Altogether there were 50 delegates, including Lenin, Martov, Plekhanov and one other who, later, was to become well-known as Leon Trotsky. Stalin had been sentenced to three years' exile in Siberia, and did not visit London until the Fifth Congress in 1907. We are not concerned here with the factional fighting between the various members, other than that Lenin was able to obtain a majority (Bolsheviks) over Martov's minority (Mensheviks), largely through trickery and the ousting of the Bundists, for his vanguardist party instead of a loosely organised, federal party which was prepared to ally itself with the liberals. Neither faction of the RSDLP, however, had just socialism as its objective. The explanatory notes of the Little Lenin Library edition of Lenin's *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* states:

The programme of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, adopted at the Second Congress, consisted of two parts: a maximum programme setting forth the ultimate aims (the dictatorship of the proletariat and the building of socialism) and a minimum programme, containing the immediate demands of the proletariat, which could be realised even under capitalism and the purpose of which was to destroy the relics of feudalism, and to remove the obstacles to the development of the proletarian class struggle.

Over the years, numerous unity conferences were held to no avail. The executive committee of the Second International, to which both factions belonged, attempted to bring the two factions together, but encountered Lenin's opposition to any arrangement short of capitulation by the Mensheviks. In 1914, a special commission of the International prepared a resolution. The outcome was prevented by the outbreak of war and the demise of the Second International. In March 1918, the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks) renamed itself the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). From then on, the word Bolshevism spread worldwide, although very few people had any real idea of what Lenin and the Bolsheviks stood for; this included Canada, where the censorship of the press was almost absolute. Many workers, of whom some should have known better, imagined that the Bolsheviks had established socialism in Russia. Many Canadian workers of Russian, Finnish and Ukrainian origin welcomed the 'Great October Revolution' and the Bolsheviks, as they had the fall of the Czar, and the establishment of a republic. The Canadian government took an opposite view, and acted accordingly.

### **...and the Socialist Party of Canada**

The April 1916 issue of the *Western Clarion* printed the following statement:

Our comrades in Great Britain are having a very strenuous time in face of the present crisis; but they are nobly upholding the WORKING CLASS POSITION in spite of Prussian Militarism, and jingoistic sneers.

It is times like these that draw the revolutionists of every country closer together for united action against the COMMON ENEMY; and may we, in the near future, be united together with the revolutionists of other lands who have expressed the aims and principles of that part of our class, who, realising that they are slaves, express a desire to be free,

in an INTERNATIONAL which, founded on the firm rock of PROLETARIAN SCIENCE, shall withstand all the storms that may assail it.

In the same issue, the *Clarion* reported the Dominion Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Canada as stating that “We are all heartily in accord with the attitude of the S.P.G.B., and hope that before long we will be affiliated with them in a new ‘International’”. The Editorial Committee of the *Socialist Standard*, the official organ of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, commented in its June 1916 issue: “Comrades, a toast! Here’s to the coming Socialist International!”

Under the heading “An open letter to the Socialist Party of Great Britain”, the Editorial Committee of the *Western Clarion* (official organ of the S.P. of C.) published a long article in its August 1916 issue, in which it welcomed the *Socialist Standard*’s riposte. The article noted that “For several months now, well intentioned efforts have been directed by us along the line of placing THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA upon a firm and impregnable basis.” It cites the fact that the SPC had endorsed the SPGB’s pamphlet *Socialism and Religion* as its own policy. The *Clarion*’s “Open Letter” mentions that, in 1905, the Socialist Party of Great Britain took the “clear and unmistakeable” stand of refusing to affiliate to the International Socialist Bureau on the grounds that it was not an expression of working class interests; and that, in 1909, the Socialist Party of Canada likewise stated its opposition to the Second International because it had seen fit to admit to membership “certain non-socialist bodies, particularly the British Labor Party”. The *Western Clarion* concluded by reiterating that the SPC has made “many strides” in the matter of organisation, and accepted that still more work would have to be accomplished before “our” international arose; “...an exchange of views respecting this most desirable attainment would perhaps be conducive to much good”.

In 1915, the Socialist Party removed the last two paragraphs of its platform (*Western Clarion*, 24 May 1915). These regarded when the party was “in office” and its pledges to promote “the interests of the working class alone”. Moreover, the original Platform included the paragraph: “The irrepressible conflict of interests between the capitalist and the worker is rapidly culminating in a struggle for possession of the power of government – the capitalist to hold, the worker to secure it by political action. This is the class struggle.” In 1913, the word “power” had been replaced by “reins” (*Western Clarion*, 24 May 1913). In 1915, the paragraph was shortened to “The irrepressible conflict of interest between the capitalist and the worker necessarily expresses itself as a *class struggle*.” (*Western Clarion*, May 1915). In 1918, the paragraph was yet again amended to “The irrepressible conflict of interest between the capitalist and the worker necessarily expresses itself as a struggle for political supremacy. This is the class struggle.” (*Western Clarion*, September 1918). It was not changed again.

Political action, and the capture of the state, was central to the SPC, despite the support and, indeed, advocacy of industrial unionism by many of its members. Opposition to leaders also remained an important aspect of party policy. In an article in the May 1915 issue of the *Western Clarion*, Pritchard refers to Antonio Labriola’s criticism of the ‘Great Man’ theory in his essays on the *Materialistic Conception of History*, wherein Labriola argues that “the mass of proletarians no longer holds to the word of command of a few leaders”; and that “the socialisation of the means of production cannot be the work of a mass led by a few...”. Pritchard returned to the subject, in an article entitled “The Philosophy and Policy of a Revolutionary Party”, in

which he claimed that central to social evolution and revolution was the capturing of state power. However, how the socialist society would actually be created, and what character it would take, was up to the workers themselves. “They were the revolutionaries”, and leaders could not tell them what to do. Only a fool, in Pritchard’s view, could believe that the transformation from capitalism to socialism could be accomplished without suppressing the capitalist masters who controlled the politicians (*Western Clarion*, 16 December 1916). And if the masters refused to acknowledge the workers’ political mandate? “So much the worse for the masters.” Previously, in February 1916, Donald McKenzie predicted that “the coming revolution could not be peaceful”. Nevertheless, Pritchard stressed that a revolution was “of necessity” a political act; and that a socialist society could not be established by soviets, the unions or a general strike. He was no syndicalist. The workers had to be educated to socialist ideas before they could, as a majority, emancipate themselves – even if, as he said many years later, it took 500 years.

In the 1916 British Columbia Provincial general election, the Socialist Party of Canada contested four constituencies:

<b>candidate</b>	<b>constituency</b>	<b>votes</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Bill Pritchard	Comox	246	11.57%
John McDonald	Fernie	218	11.20%
Albert (Ginger) Goodwin	Trail	262	19.07%
John Harrington	Vancouver	1,380	1.44%

None were elected. In addition John McInnis contested Fort George, not on the Socialist Party ticket but as an “Independent Socialist”. McInnis gained 492 (42.82%), only seven votes less than the Conservative winner, Roderick Ross.

In the Alberta Provincial elections of 1917 the SPC stood three candidates, although none were particularly successful:

<b>candidate</b>	<b>constituency</b>	<b>votes</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Joseph R. Knight	Lethbridge	786	22.02%
Sydney Keeling	Edmonton East	243	3.66%
John Reid	Edson	203	11.44%

Knight, with one other also stood in the Federal elections of that year:

<b>candidate</b>	<b>constituency</b>	<b>votes</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Joseph R. Knight	Red Deer	701	6.54%
George Paton	Medicine Hat	460	4.22%

Not for the first time, or the last, all was not well for the Socialist Party of Canada. During 1917, a reformist Labour Party was formed in British Columbia and Manitoba, in an attempt “to forge a broad electoral opposition to the Canadian government”, according to Peter Campbell in his *Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way*. Former members of the SPC, including Hawthornthwaite, Pettipiece and Kingsley, who became its Vice-President, threw in their lot with the new party. They became labour leaders! Some of them, including a number of members remaining in the Socialist Party, were soon to embrace Bolshevism.

## The Canadian Bolsheviks

According to Ross McCormack, in his *Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries*, when the February Revolution broke out in Russia “some socialists considered the struggle in Russia simply another bourgeois revolution”. Kingsley, no longer a member of the Socialist Party, explained that “the modern proletariat...has yet to become a sufficiently powerful factor in the Russian state to ensure that the new order shall be dominately (sic) impressed with its aspirations and ideals”. The *Western Clarion* of May 1917, observed that, although events in Russia were encouraging in that they were moving the proletariat towards emancipation, the historical juncture for the inauguration of the co-operative commonwealth had not yet arrived. As previously noted, the Russian and Ukrainian social democrats in Canada gave the movement in Russia “unqualified support”.

The Bolshevik coup in October, says McCormack, had a profound effect on the western Canadian radical movement. “Labourites, social democrats, Wobblies, and even Socialists considered this victory the most important event in European working class history since the Paris Commune. They rushed to follow the Bolshevik lead.” The Socialist Party of Canada was, to some extent, caught up in the excitement generated by the Bolshevik victory; though strong reservations persisted in the party about a proletarian revolution occurring in an economically backward country such as Russia. Nevertheless, the March 1918 issue of the *Western Clarion* reported the Dominion Executive Committee of the SPC informing the Petrograd Soviet that “we had yet to note an error of tactics or a violation of working class revolutionary principles”. They expressed pleasure in the progress of their revolution.

In March 1918, the largely defunct Social Democratic Party of Canada renewed its attempts at reconciliation with the Socialist Party, and proposed a union “on the basis of the Bolshevik programme”. The SPC was not impressed. And when a few locals responded favourably to the SDP initiative, Chris Stephenson, who had replaced Pritchard as the Dominion Secretary, reminded them that Lenin and Trotsky had denounced socialists who failed to keep the revolutionary faith. In January 1918, the *Clarion* reprinted an article by Trotsky; and, according to Milne in his *History of the Socialist Party of Canada*, articles by various Russian revolutionaries became frequent in its pages. The Provincial Executive Committee of the Socialist Party in Manitoba published as a leaflet the preface to Trotsky’s *Bolsheviki and World Peace*, and one by Lenin, *Ideas on the Russian Revolution*. In January 1919, Robert Russell, a prominent member of the Socialist Party of Canada, who in 1920 was to be jailed for his part in the Winnipeg General Strike, ordered 500 copies of the pamphlet *Soviets at Work*, from the party headquarters with the intention of distributing them to returned Canadian soldiers. It is not known whether he received them; but he considered, at the time, what was happening in Russia as a possible model for Canada, although he became increasingly opposed to the Bolsheviks and the Canadian Communists after 1922.

On 11 November 1918, the World War ended. The same month, the government banned the *Western Clarion*. The Socialist Party of Canada was not suppressed; but the government saw ‘bomb-throwing Bolsheviks’ in all directions, and took ‘appropriate’ measures against the ‘menace’. On 18 December 1918, the Socialist Party published a new journal, *The Red Flag*. An editorial in its 11 January 1919 issue stated:

The official organ of the Party has been suppressed, and representations to Ottawa are so far without results. Leaflets have been confiscated and complaints ignored. Almost every letter bears unmistakable signs of having been tampered with, though no censorship mark to that effect is on them.

There was extensive interference with the mail, both coming into the office and going out: "The mail of individual members of the Party also suffers from the same despicable censorship". *The Red Flag* continued to be published twice a month until 11 October 1919. Then it too was suppressed by the government. On 18 October, the Socialist Party published the *Indicator*. In January 1920, the ban on the *Western Clarion* was lifted, and the paper appeared again on 15 January, with the following comment:

When the *Clarion* was banned, and after several attempts to get the ban lifted had failed, *The Red Flag* was issued. This name was under pressure, and later changed to the *Indicator* which we have continued to publish as a weekly to this date. The *Indicator* is now discontinued.

By an Order-in-Council, in September 1918, the government had banned more than a dozen organisations, and many publications. The ban applied to:

Any association, organisation or corporation which, while Canada is engaged in the war, should have for one of its purposes the bringing about of any governmental, political, social, industrial or economic change within Canada by the use of force, violence or physical injury to person or property, or threatening such injury in order to accomplish such change.

The Socialist Party of Canada did not advocate, or support, violence, but its publications were nevertheless banned. Moreover, as in the past, the bourgeois press encouraged patriotic citizens to attack Socialist Party offices and members. The Winnipeg *Free Press* was particularly guilty of such incitement. On 31 January 1919, the Winnipeg Trades Council journal, *Western Labor News*, reported that on the previous Sunday, between 1800 and 2000 returned soldiers, of whom 700 were in uniform, marched from their headquarters to Market Square, where they broke up a meeting of the SPC. In scores of cases, men were seriously hurt, homes entered, and buildings raided and demolished. Among the latter was the Winnipeg headquarters of the Socialist Party, where the destruction was complete. Although the war had been over for more than a year, some wartime restrictions had not been relaxed, but strengthened. For example, all publications of Kerr and Co. of Chicago were still banned in Canada, and it was an offence to even possess a book or pamphlet published by the company. Almost all actions of an industrial or political nature engaged in by workers to improve or protect their conditions of existence were seen by the government, the employers and the press as evidence of a conspiracy to impose Bolshevism on Canada.

### **Russia, the Socialist Party and the SLP**



In 1920, the Socialist Party of Canada published the fifth edition of its *Manifesto*. The preface, written by Jack Harrington, and under the imprint of the Dominion Executive Committee of the party, was then, and later, much criticised for its comments on Russia. Many in the Socialist Party did not agree with his, or the Executive's, analysis.

The preface to the fourth edition drew attention to the war which had just begun, its causes and the prediction that "the outbreak of peace" would be as "cataclysmic as the outbreak of war". Harrington, in the fifth edition, asserts "that we have been carried forward toward the Social Revolution requires no proof", and continues:

The Russian Revolution has been carried through and the working class of Russia are the masters of that country. They have retained mastery after almost three years of warfare against both the victors and vanquished of the Great War. They have overthrown the national autocracy which was suited to early capitalism, have conquered the seat of power from the capitalists, have put down a dozen counter-revolutions of formidable character, which were strongly supported by foreign powers, and have, isolated from the civilised world, evolved an economy which has fed and clothed, and armed the men who accomplished this amazing feat.

It is a working class achievement and harbinger of the accomplishment possible when the workers take control of social life.

At the time of writing the above, it is unlikely that Harrington was aware of the real situation in Russia. He, like most people in Canada and elsewhere, had to rely mainly on the Canadian press, which was still largely censored and, of course, controlled by its capitalist owners who saw the hand of Bolshevism everywhere; and the statements, proclamations and propaganda of the Soviet government who were, in fact, the real masters of Russia. The working class in Russia, who were only a minority of the country's population, were not "the masters of that country". Far from it!

On 6 January 1918, the Bolshevik government supported the dissolution of the democratically elected Constituent Assembly because the Bolsheviks were in a minority. The government established the 'Red Terror' of its not-so-secret police, the Cheka, who imprisoned and executed, not just right-wing 'counter-revolutionaries', but Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries, anarchists and dissident Bolsheviks. Trotsky, as Commissar of Military Affairs, established the death penalty for disobedience under fire in the newly-established Red Army, and restored the saluting of officers, of whom many were former Czarist officers. In December 1919, Trotsky submitted a proposal for the "militarization of labour", wherein he, with Lenin's approval, stressed that coercion, regimentation and the militarization of labour were not merely emergency measures, but that the Russian state had the right to coerce any citizen to perform work, at the time of its choosing. In Russia, the Bolsheviks crushed, or attempted to crush, all strikes by workers whose conditions, like those of workers in Canada and elsewhere, had deteriorated since the end of the war. The Bolshevik regime was not, as claimed by its supporters, a 'dictatorship of the proletariat', but a dictatorship over the proletariat and peasants of Russia. Its nationalisation of the banks, land and much of industry was not socialism, but a form of state capitalism, which Lenin had to admit. In spite of the claims of some, socialism was 'not on the cards' in Russia in 1917 or, three years, later in 1920. This was a view initially held

by the Socialist Labor Party of America and its supporters in Canada, as well as the Socialist Party.

In an article in the 24 November 1917 issue of the *Weekly People*, under the title “The Russian Revolution”, Arnold Petersen, the National Secretary of the Socialist Labor Party of America, argues that socialism is not possible until capitalism has developed all the essential forces of production, and where the exploited proletariat has divested itself of the notion that the two main classes in society are identical; “and that this system of production is God-ordained and the only possible one”. Furthermore, he contends, “even in a highly developed capitalist country, until the working class organizes in industrial unions...supplanting the political state by the industrial representative councils of workers”, socialism cannot be established. Turning to Russia, he writes that the country is “woefully behind in capitalist development. By far the majority of the population is composed of peasants, a large number of whom are illiterate, and wholly ignorant as regards the object of the labor movement, and the nature of the social revolution”. Consequently, a class conscious proletariat is largely absent. Last, but not least, they do not have the benefit of “industrial unions, the condition *sine qua non* of the Socialist Republic”. The Bolsheviks are, therefore, a failure, according to Petersen.

However, within a few months, the SLP changed its views on Russia. Following his return from Russia, John Reed, the author of *Ten Days that shook the World*, informed the Socialist Labor Party that Lenin was a great admirer of Daniel De Leon, and that in Lenin’s opinion Russia would have to establish an Industrial State as conceived by De Leon. The SLP was much impressed by Lenin’s admiration of its former leader; and from that time, considered Russia to be a Proletarian State and Socialist Commonwealth, despite some minor criticism of the Bolsheviks. It is also true that the ideas of De Leon continued to influence some members of the Socialist Party of Canada at the time. For instance, in an article entitled “The O.B.U. and Class Struggle”, published in *The New Democracy* of August 1919, Charles Lestor approvingly quotes “old Dan De Leon” for stating that the working class and the capitalist class have nothing in common. The 21 June issue of *The Red Flag* had also sympathetically quoted Daniel De Leon on “The Burning Question of Trades Unionism”.

### **The Comintern and the Communist Party of Canada**

The Communist, or Third, International, generally known as the Comintern, was founded in March 1919, in Moscow. It was supposedly an international organisation of all the world’s communist parties; its primary aim was to create a world party with national sections, under the control of the Bolsheviks, with the ultimate goal of an ‘International Soviet Republic’, and the replacement of existing socialist and social democratic parties by pro-Bolshevik parties.

As early as 1914, following the collapse of the Second International, Lenin advocated a Third International, to be based on “parties of a new type”, meaning highly-disciplined parties led by professional revolutionaries. His attempt to impose this concept on an international conference of anti-war groups at Zimmerwald, Switzerland, in September 1915, came to nothing. In April 1917, Lenin returned to Russia; and the following month, the Bolshevik-dominated seventh congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party passed a resolution directing its Central Committee “to proceed immediately toward the founding of the Third International”.

On 19 December 1918, a meeting, chaired by Maxim Gorky, was held in Petrograd to prepare for the founding congress of the Third International. In January 1919, “representatives” purporting to represent eight “communist and socialist parties”, issued an invitation to various organisations and parties in 39 countries to the founding congress of the Communist International. Despite the international appearance of the invitation, all of them were Russians or other nationals residing in Russia at the time.

The first congress of the Comintern was held in Petrograd on 2-6 March 1919, and was attended by 51 ‘delegates’ claiming to represent 30 countries. Only 33 delegates had voting rights, and of these 13 were members of various pro-Bolshevik parties within Soviet Russia, and eight were officials of the Soviet government’s Commissariat of Nationalities. The five delegates representing Finland were all residents of Petrograd who had previously fled from Finland. Thus only seven delegates actually attended from abroad – two from Austria, and one each from France, Germany, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. There were no delegates from Canada or the United States. Although a much larger congress, the percentage of ‘foreign’ delegates to the second congress of the Comintern, also held in Russia, between 19 July and 7 August 1920, was much the same. It was at this congress that Lenin imposed his ‘Twenty-one Conditions for Admission’ to the Comintern, which caused much controversy in Canada and elsewhere. The ‘conditions’ included ‘democratic centralism’ (strict party discipline), and the subordination of all member parties, as ‘sections of the Communist International’, to the Comintern executive, whose majority, at the time, were Soviet officials. A number of delegates refused to accept the Twenty-one Conditions, and withdrew from the congress. Trotsky said after their adoption that “we have created one solid International Party of Communists which has branches in various countries”.

In Canada, the first pro-Bolshevik groups joined one of the two illegal, and mutually antagonistic, communist parties in America: the Communist Party of America, or the United Communist Party of America. The decision to form the Communist Party of Canada was taken at a convention at Guelph, Ontario, in May 1921. In February 1922, the illegal, ‘underground’, communist party created an open, legal, Workers’ Party of Canada, which operated for two years. In September 1925, it once again became the Communist Party of Canada, a name it retained until 1943 when it was reorganised as the Labor Progressive Party. Most of the early leaders of the Communist Party of Canada were young skilled workers, mainly of British origin, such as Jack MacDonald (not to be confused with the Socialist Party member, Jack McDonald), Florence Custance and Tim Buck, who led the party for 30 years. Many of the Communist Party’s staunchest supporters, particularly during the 1920s, were Canadian workers of Finnish and Ukrainian origin. Membership of the party throughout the 1920s fluctuated from about 2,000 to 5,000.

What effect did the founding of the Communist International and, later, the Communist Party of Canada have on the Socialist Party?

L. Gambone, in his *The Impossibilists*, notes:

By 1921, the SPC was again in trouble...A major headache was the Communist tendency. The party initially viewed the Russian Revolution favourably, albeit skeptical as to the extent that socialism could be achieved in such a backward country.

The question of affiliation to the *Comintern* was raised by pro-Bolshevik elements, and this caused serious disruption within the party.

Many members were hostile toward the *Comintern's* infamous '21 Demands' of affiliation, which gave the Russian Party virtual *carte blanche* control of all the others. Many socialists, including most of the revolutionary unionists and direct-actionists, mesmerised by the apparent success of the October Revolution, ignored the authoritarian nature of Bolshevism and left the party to form the new Communist movement.

There is some truth in what Gambone writes. Milne, in his *History of the Socialist Party of Canada*, has a section on the Third International and its effect on the SPC. Referenda on affiliation occurred in organisations throughout the world, says Milne. There was a referendum in the Socialist Party. "The party survived, but large numbers of members supported affiliation and the communist breakaway depleted party ranks, even properties being lost where local votes favoured affiliation". The party had taken a battering. Opposition to the Third International and the Communist Party was, however, fierce and vocal within the Socialist Party.

Peter Campbell, in both his *Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way* and "Making Socialists": Bill Pritchard, the Socialist Party of Canada, and the Third International", discusses the opposition to the Comintern and the Communist Party, within the SPC, in some detail. Harrington, Pritchard and Chris Stephenson all criticised the Bolsheviks, while Jack Kavanagh joined the Communist Party. (Kavanagh joined the Socialist Party of Canada shortly after arriving in Vancouver, from England, in 1907. He was elected Party organiser in 1910, and President of the British Columbia Federation of Labour in 1912. He played an active role in the formation of the One Big Union in 1919. He actually joined the Communist 'front' organisation, the Workers' Party, at its foundation in 1922. He resigned from the Workers' Party later that same year, but rejoined it in 1923. In 1925, Kavanagh emigrated to Australia, where he became one of the leaders of the Communist Party of Australia, and, shortly after, its general secretary. He was expelled for alleged Trotskyism in 1934). Wallis Lefaux, who joined the Independent Labor Party in 1925, visited Russia in 1920, and defended the militarization of labour "in the context of the external threat to the country's survival, and the need to strengthen the Russian economy". Pritchard, particularly, put great stress on the working class emancipating itself, and was a continual and vociferous critic of the reliance on leaders. He considered the Russian Revolution a bourgeois, not a socialist, revolution. "But to an orthodox Marxist like Pritchard", says Campbell, "the bourgeois nature of the revolution still made it historically necessary, not some kind of mistake. He did not condemn Lenin – he simply pointed out that the level of productive forces in the Soviet Union would force him into the world market and into the capitalist system". Indeed, "For Pritchard, the dictatorship over the proletariat, rather than the dictatorship of the proletariat, was a product of the conditions Lenin had to deal with, not a result of the autocratic tendencies inherent in Bolshevism itself". Pritchard argued that the Russian Revolution could not build a socialist society on a "feudal dunghill". Generally, writes Campbell, members of the Socialist Party of Canada who did not support or join the Communist Party remained faithful to Marx's view that a bourgeois revolution had to precede a socialist revolution. They applied this to Russia in their critique of the Bolsheviks who, in their view, had tried to leap an essential stage in history. They, therefore, defended the Russian Revolution as historically necessary, but argued that it could not lead to socialism. Such arguments were very similar to those of the German Marxist Karl Kautsky, who claimed that he knew that

socialism could not be created in Russia in 1917 because all countries had first to go through a stage of capitalist development.

Members of the Socialist Party, such as Jack Harrington, Bill Pritchard and Charles Lestor, were also critical of the Comintern and the Communist Party of Canada. They considered it, and its legal 'front' party, to be undemocratic, unnecessary in a country like Canada with at least limited democratic traditions, and led by a small minority that dictated policy to the membership. Pritchard considered the Comintern's Twenty-One Points required for affiliation to be "an insult to Canadian socialists". In July 1921, he said that the decision to create an underground Communist Party was "ludicrous in a country like Canada", and referred to the Comintern as "our friends of the rat-hole persuasion (by choice)". In December 1921, at a Socialist Party meeting in Vancouver, he had a near fight with his old comrade Jack Kavanagh, who had recently joined the Workers' Party. Harrington and Chris Stephenson also argued that the Communists put the party before the interests of the workers.

Bill Pritchard, in his recorded talk, in 1974, remembers that, in the summer of 1921, "...certain members, entranced by the new Russian state, insisted that the local hold a meeting forthwith to consider the matter of affiliating to the Third International. I remember Harrington's studied and logical argument against our party having anything to do with it". Many, many others were completely opposed, he says. Indeed, in August 1918, a writer (name unknown) in the *Western Clarion* noted:

We venture the assertion that the nucleus of a new International is today in the making, composed of the Workers' Socialist Party, the Socialist Party of Great Britain, and the Socialist Party of Canada.

The Workers' Socialist Party was the United States equivalent of the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

## *Chapter Four*

### **GENERAL STRIKE AND ONE BIG UNION**

In 1918, Canada, and particularly British Columbia, was badly affected by the worldwide outbreak of Spanish influenza. In Vancouver, for example, it struck down many longshoremen. But, as previously noted, Western Canada was also seriously affected by industrial unrest, caused largely by rapidly increasing inflation, culminating in the 1919 general strike in Winnipeg. Bitter class conflicts continued for some time, until the beginning of, in the words of Robert Bothwell, the onset of “a savage depression” at the beginning of the 1920s:

...in the cities, bread lines formed outside welfare offices; in the country families struggled to make ends meet in a world that had no use, or at any rate no price, for their products. Government grudgingly doled out money, as little as possible, to meet need.

*(A Traveller's History of Canada)*

But before the onset of mass unemployment, workers in Canada, as elsewhere in the industrial world, were determined to fight back. Almost every action of an industrial or political nature engaged in by the working class, in Canada as elsewhere, was seen by the government and the employers as evidence of a conspiracy to impose Bolshevism. Milne notes that there was undoubtedly an overall plan operating within the country. With the ending of the war, and the return of tens of thousands of soldiers to civilian life, the employers saw the clamour for jobs as an opportunity to destroy union ‘power’ built up during the war years.

### **Winnipeg**

Winnipeg was the centre of the industrial crisis which shook Canada in the early summer of 1919. At the beginning of the year, three-quarters of the city's workers had voted overwhelmingly in favour of succession from the craft union dominated Trades Council. The security agencies, both military and civil including the ‘Mounties’, were convinced that a bloody revolution was imminent, and prepared to suppress it. The army general staff ordered their commanders to prepare contingency plans for the outbreak of civil war. “Prominent citizens urged veterans to save the city”. On 26 January, a mob of mainly returned soldiers prevented the Socialist Party from holding a memorial meeting for Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. And a mob of veterans hunted Sam Blumenberg, an active member of the Socialist Party, through the North End of Winnipeg, and wrecked his wife's cleaning shop. Two days later, soldiers attacked a number of companies which employed European workers, and beat up suspected ‘enemy aliens’ in the streets; they also attacked the German Club.

On 1 May, May Day, metal and building trades workers went on strike in defence of the right of collective bargaining. In the words of Professor Kenneth McNaught, in his *Penguin History of Canada*, “It began as a strike in the building and metal trades whose masters refused to implement collective bargaining or raise wages. Within two weeks the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council voted overwhelmingly to strike in

sympathy". On 15 May, Winnipeg was paralysed by a general strike as more than 35,000 men and women came out in sympathy with the metal and building workers. "The tremendous solidarity which had been developing since the end of 1917, caused thousands to rally in support of their Winnipeg comrades", notes McCormack. On 9 May, the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council held a referendum of union members. The response was overwhelmingly in favour of a general strike, with 11,112 in favour and only 524 against. The Trades Council appointed five of its members to the Central Strike Committee, including Robert Russell as its main spokesman. Some time later, the Committee was joined by another 195 members, three from each striking union, to form a Central Strike Committee of 200. Not surprisingly, this committee proved to be far too cumbersome; and on 22 May, it was reduced to a much smaller strike committee of 15 members, with Russell as the main negotiator accepted by the Mayor, Charles Gray and Premier Norris.

Robert Boyd Russell was born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1888. He was apprenticed as a machinist in the John Brown shipyard. And he became a member of the Independent Labour Party. He emigrated to Canada in 1911. In 1914, after a few months in the Social Democratic Party, he joined the Socialist Party of Canada, soon becoming an active member. As a machinist, Bob Russell joined the International Association of Machinists (IAM) immediately after arriving in Canada. In 1918, he became a delegate to the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council; in February that year, he had become a full-time, paid official and organiser for the IAM. He vigorously opposed the IAM's policy of excluding Asiatic workers as members. The International Association of Machinists was an American-based craft union, but unlike many such unions, its members, particularly in Winnipeg, influenced as they were by the SPC, were both militant and generally anti-war, despite the fact that numbers of them were employed by plants producing war materiel. In April 1918, Russell was appointed editor of the IAM's official *Bulletin*. Bob Russell did not look upon himself as a leader in the generally accepted sense of the word. At a meeting in Winnipeg on 18 May 1919, before an audience of more than 5,000 striking workers, he argued that so-called leaders were merely mouthpieces of the rank and file. Peter Campbell, in his *Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way*, claims that Russell's views were "virtually identical to those espoused by the Polish revolutionary Marxist, Rosa Luxemburg", in which she argued that the struggles of the masses are the chorus, and the leading bodies merely the speaking parts; the role of the leaders was to act as the "interpreters of the will of the masses".

Whether Russell had read Luxemburg's writings on the subject in, for example, *The Mass Strike*, is not known.

Workers outside Winnipeg, after some hesitation, supported the Winnipeg strikers. Indeed, there were sympathetic strikes throughout Western Canada. At the beginning of June, 10,000 workers in Vancouver struck; they were joined by workers in most British Columbian cities, as well as the generally non-unionised loggers in the interior. Early in 1919, Bill Pritchard had been involved with the recently formed Loggers and Camp Workers' Union, and had become editor of its paper, *The Camp Worker*. His involvement, however, was cut short by him being delegated to visit Winnipeg, and his subsequent activities and arrest, following a speech he gave in Victoria Park on behalf of the strikers. He was not alone in being arrested. There were many others.

## Repression – Bloody Saturday

The strike committee members, as well as propagandists such as Pritchard, continually exhorted the workers to remain calm and non-violent; and McCormack notes that the general strike was non-violent. However, the government, he says, was, not surprisingly, aligned with the ‘upper classes’, and was convinced that the general strike, as well as the sympathetic strikes elsewhere in Western Canada, was the product of Bolshevism and a ‘revolutionary conspiracy’. It, and the ‘upper classes’, resolved to fight the ‘red menace’ to the bitter end.

Although it was not until 17 June that six of the strike ‘leaders’, and two Socialist Party propagandists, were arrested, the employers had been calling for the arrest of the ‘agitators’ almost immediately after the commencement of the strike in early May; and in late May, the Justice Department began preparing cases against these men. Many other strikers had been arrested, and one socialist ‘agitator’, Sam Blumenberg, fled to the United States to escape arrest.

Larry Tickner, writing in the journal *World Socialist* (no. 6), has given a dramatised but reasonably accurate account, somewhat telescoped, of the Winnipeg general strike and its outcome. Nevertheless, he provides useful information, particularly with regard to those arrested, and their backgrounds and motives:

- George Armstrong was an active member of the Socialist Party of Canada, and a representative of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. Although not arrested, George’s wife, Helen, was also an active member of the SPC, and was a member of the strike committee, representing the Women’s Labor League.
- R.E. Bray was a soldier and a member of the strike committee. He was not a socialist, but claimed to be a pacifist who subsequently became an active union organiser.
- A.A. Heaps was an upholsterer by trade, a labourite Alderman in Winnipeg, and a committee member.
- William Ivens was a former clergyman who had been expelled from the Methodist church for his pacifist views. At the time of his arrest, he was editor of the *Western Labor News*, and was later elected to the Manitoba Legislature on behalf of the Independent Labor Party, where he served for 16 years.
- Richard Johns had previously been an active member of the Socialist Party, and was a railroad machinist. He was, in fact, not in Winnipeg during much of the strike, but in eastern Canada, being arrested on return to the city.
- John Queen was a labour leader and an Alderman in Winnipeg; during the strike he was the advertising manager of the *Western Labor News*.
- Bill Pritchard was not a member of the strike committee, but the Mounties in Vancouver had been monitoring his speeches and activities for some considerable time. His arrest seemed almost inevitable.
- Bob Russell was, in the words of Tickner, “esteemed to be the leader of the strike”. Nevertheless, he was arrested later, on 12 August 1919. His request for bail was initially denied; but, together with the others, was granted bail on 10 September.

On the morning of Saturday, 21 June, the Central Strike Committee prepared to hold a mass meeting in, and a parade from, Market Square, opposite Winnipeg City Hall. Previously, the City Police of 200 men had voted in favour of striking; on 9 June



the government dismissed them, and replaced them with 1,800 'specials' (the 'bosses' goon police') recruited, and paid for, by the Citizens' Committee, representing the city's business elite; Mounties, and local militia units from the Winnipeg Rifles, Winnipeg Grenadiers and soldiers from the Winnipeg Rifles and the Cameron Highlanders, including 20 machine-gunners. The state was taking no chances! One bystander was killed instantly and another died later; others were wounded or clubbed by the Specials. The crowd dispersed, running in various directions. The troops and specials then took over the streets and the empty square. Trucks with mounted machineguns patrolled the streets. Bloody Saturday was over.

Of the situation, Professor McNaught writes:

Although the policy of the strike leadership was firmly non-violent, the entire city police was dismissed and replaced by 'Specials', while militia and Mounted Police were assembled. When, after nearly six weeks, the strike had still not been broken, the Federal government authorised the arrest of the leaders. This provoked the one major incident in which violence occurred – a peaceful march (in defiance of the Mayor's ban on parades), which was broken up by Mounties and returned soldiers. In the melee one spectator was killed and thirty wounded. With the leaders in jail on charges of seditious conspiracy, and the city patrolled by the military, the remainder of the strike committee called off the strike after receiving a promise from the Premier that a Royal Commission would investigate the causes of labour's unrest and the conduct of the strike. (*Penguin History of Canada*)

After six weeks, the Winnipeg General Strike collapsed. By the end of June, workers in other western towns and cities drifted back to work. The employers established open shops and blacklists. In Winnipeg, the unions in the contract shops and the civic employees were forced to sign no-strike pledges; and the men in the Vancouver docks were forced, literally, to tear up their union cards and sign 'yellow dog' contracts.

The report of the Commission on the strike sustained the view that its goals were those of collective bargaining, better wages "and social justice", and that its methods had, in fact, been non-violent. There had been no Bolshevik conspiracy.

### **Seditious Conspiracy**

But the government did believe, despite its own Commission's findings, that there had been a conspiracy, Bolshevik or otherwise. There had been a seditious conspiracy, it claimed.

Independently of the others, F.J. Dixon was charged, in part, of writing and circulating articles in the *Western Labor News*, and of seditious libel. Dixon was a labour member of the Manitoba Legislature who undertook to edit the *Western Labor News* following the arrest of Ivens and Queen. He conducted his own defence and, despite hostility from the judge, after 40 hours of deliberation by the jury was found not guilty. Russell was also charged and brought to trial, in November 1919, separately. He was charged on six counts of seditious conspiracy and one count of common nuisance. He was defended by a lawyer, Robert Cassidy. The jury comprised

twelve largely prosperous farmers from rural Manitoba. The charges against Russell as well as the others were, briefly summarised, as follows:

- Count 1: A general form of seditious conspiracy to bring hatred and contempt to excite disaffection against the government, the laws and constitution, and generally to promote ill-will and hostility amongst the people and between the classes.
- Count 2: Seditious conspiracy in overt acts; in calling of seditious socialist meetings and distribution of seditious socialist literature; participation in the founding of the One Big Union with syndicalist objectives; the prosecution of an illegal strike, to discommode and inconvenience the inhabitants of Winnipeg, and the paralysing of all industries and businesses in Winnipeg and endangering the lives, health, safety and property of said inhabitants.
- Count 3: Seditious conspiracy to carry into effect a seditious intention to endanger human life and to cause serious bodily injury, and to expose valuable property to destruction and serious injury.
- Count 4: Seditious conspiracy to organise an unlawful combination or association of workmen and employees to get demands by unlawful general strikes which were intended to be a step in a revolution against the constituted form of government in Canada.
- Count 5: Seditious conspiracy to undermine and destroy confidence in the government, laws and institutions. To persuade workmen to form unlawful associations for the purpose of obtaining control of all industries and of obtaining the property rightfully belonging to other persons.
- Count 6: Seditious conspiracy to unlawfully bring about changes in the constitution and to enforce the 'Soviet' form of government in Canada through means similar to those in Russia.
- Count 7: Committing a common nuisance by use of an unlawful general sympathetic strike in which various employees walked out illegally and which endangered the lives, health, safety, property and comfort of the public and obstructed the exercise and enjoyment of rights to all of His Majesty's subjects.

Bob Russell never stood a chance of being acquitted. The state was not really interested in what he was actually doing during the strike. His lawyer attempted to detail Russell's activities as a union organiser. The Crown was not, however, interested. The prosecution refused to let his defence lawyer introduce his previous union involvement as evidence. The Crown was only interested in what he had said, particularly at recent Socialist Party meetings to large audiences in Winnipeg theatres, as well as SPC propaganda and literature. Indeed, the prosecution lawyer, Andrews, stated that he was mainly concerned that Russell was an advocate of revolutionary socialism. Robert Boyd Russell was found guilty on all seven charges, and was sentenced to two years imprisonment in Stoney Mountain Penitentiary. Of him, Campbell comments: "Russell went to prison with the satisfaction of knowing that the vast majority of workers of all ethnic and religious backgrounds supported his actions. Fellow SPCer, Max Tessler, held a party at his home for Russell just before he entered prison on 26 December 1919, indicating the respect and affection Jewish socialists in

Winnipeg had for Russell”. Bob Russell served 350 days in the Penitentiary. On his release, he was welcomed by a crowd of 4,000.

George Armstrong, Socialist Party member, was found guilty on all seven counts, and was sentenced to one year in Manitoba Prison Farm. Dick Johns, also a Socialist Party member, was found guilty on all seven counts, and was sentenced to one year in Manitoba Prison Farm. John Queen, the Alderman, was found guilty on all seven counts, and was sentenced to one year in Manitoba Prison Farm. The pacifist and former reverend, William Ivens, was found guilty on all seven counts, and was sentenced to one year in Manitoba Prison Farm. Bray, however, was found not guilty of the six conspiracy charges, only of the charge of committing a public nuisance. He was sentenced to six months in Manitoba Prison Farm.

William Arthur Pritchard was tried in January 1920. Campbell writes that he was charged with a crime against which there was no real defence. “Even the charge itself was a spur-of-the-moment, trumped-up amendment to the Criminal Code”. The prosecution was aware that he was not a member of the Central Strike Committee, but had travelled from Vancouver to speak on behalf of the striking workers. The prosecution lawyers merely linked him with every piece of Socialist Party literature confiscated in police raids across the country. Unlike Russell, however, Pritchard was able to speak to the court on various subjects unrelated to the general strike. Bill Pritchard, therefore, made the most of it. His speech to the jury has become part of Canadian socialist and union folklore. He spoke for two days, from 10.00 a.m. to 10 p.m., without notes, with reference to working class history, science, socialism, the trade union movement in Canada and elsewhere, and current affairs. He criticised French utopians such as Saint-Simon, German Social Democrats and Bolsheviks; and he defended Marx, Marxism and the Socialist Party of Canada. He concluded his address with: “The fight I carry on amongst my fellow-workers is a fight with ideas”. Tickner notes that Pritchard was also found guilty of sedition, and was sentenced to one year in Manitoba Prison Farm. And Campbell says that “he was sent to prison not so much because of who he was, or what he did, but for what he represented”.

Pritchard did not waste his time in jail. He was put in charge of the prison store; he taught European immigrant workers, who were in the jail, to speak and write English, and he pursued his interest in Gilbert and Sullivan operas. He was, on one occasion, visited by Adolph Kohn, a member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, who was speaking on behalf of the SPC. And Kohn was able to pass volumes one, two and three of *Capital* to Pritchard through the cell bars. “We had an economics class in jail”, said Pritchard. He was released on 28 February 1921. The same day, he spoke to an audience of 7,000 people, with a similar number turned away.

### **One Big Union**

According to Larry Gambone, in *The Impossibilists*, “...the SPC’s long-held criticism of conservative craft unionism created a climate for the growth of a revolutionary union current within Impossibilism...Shortly after this trend appeared, a wave of radicalism swept across the labour movement of Western Canada...the OBU was a child of Impossibilism”. Indeed, almost all of its leaders were also members of the Socialist Party of Canada. The Social Democrats had little influence. The Preamble and Constitution of the One Big Union were written by SPCers, as were most of the other influential documents. And in Campbell’s view, “...the OBU was an attempt to unite the politics of Karl Marx with the economic power of the trade union

movement...After the Winnipeg general strike the OBU became the main expression of the SPC emphasis on worker education and initiative". Surprisingly, Milne, in his *History of the Socialist Party of Canada*, does not mention the One Big Union in this context.

At the British Columbia Federation of Labor convention in early 1919, Bill Pritchard and Jack Kavanagh supported the idea of workers organising on the basis of industrial unions. And at the Western Labor Conference, held from 13 to 15 March, a number of resolutions were passed criticising those unionists who were prepared to lobby Conservative and Liberal members of the Provincial Legislature, criticising "existing political forms, clearly showing the capitalist nature of the present parliamentary machinery", and even endorsing a "system of soviet control". Following the Conference, Pritchard and Vic Midgley visited Seattle in the United States, in an effort to obtain support for a One Big Union from the Seattle Trades and Labor Council. In May, Pritchard, together with Alf Budden, addressed a meeting of unionists in Butte, Montana. The actual founding of the One Big Union took place at another union convention on 4 June 1919, three weeks after the commencement of the Winnipeg General Strike. A referendum was held, and a further conference was held in Calgary, from Wednesday, 11 June, to Monday, 16 June, with representatives from Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan, which drew up the constitution of the One Big Union of Canada. The preamble was as follows:

Modern industrial society is divided into two classes, those who possess and do not produce, and those who produce and do not possess. Alongside this main division all other classifications fade into insignificance. Between these two classes a continual struggle takes place. As with buyers and sellers of any commodity there exists on the one hand of the buyer to buy as cheaply as possible, and on the other, of the seller to sell for as much as possible, so with the buyers of labor-power. In the struggle over the purchase and sale of labor-power the buyers are always the masters – the sellers always workers. From this fact arises the inevitable class struggle.

As industry develops and ownership becomes concentrated more and more into fewer hands, as the control of the economic forces of society becomes more and more the sole property of imperialistic finance, it becomes apparent that the workers, in order to sell their labor-power with any degree of success, must extend their forms of organisation in accordance with changing industrial methods. Compelled to organise for self-defence, they are further compelled to educate themselves in preparation for the social change which economic developments will produce whether we seek it or not.

The One Big Union, therefore, seeks to organise the wage worker, not according to craft, but according to industry; according to class and class needs. We, therefore, call upon all workers to organise irrespective of nationality, sex, or craft, into a workers' organisation, so that we may be enabled to more successfully carry on the everyday fight over wages, hours of work, etc., and prepare ourselves for the day when production for profit shall be replaced by production for use.

Workers of the World Unite.

There then follows the constitution, naming the organisation THE ONE BIG UNION. Membership of the OBU was open to all wage workers. A General Executive Board, comprising a chairman, a secretary and representatives of the various industries within the organisation, was to be elected for a period of six months, by and from the accredited delegates attending the conventions. The wages of the members of the General Executive Board were to be \$40 per week, plus expenses when away from home of \$4 per day: not a princely sum! Initiation fees would be a maximum of one dollar per new member. Conventions of elected delegates, from the local labour councils, must meet ever six months; one delegate for 2,000 members or less, and one additional delegate for each additional 2,000 members. Furthermore “Whenever a strike in any district or industry takes place, no member of the One Big Union shall handle directly or indirectly any produce of the industry on strike”.

The preamble and constitution of the One Big Union was first published, on 26 June 1919, in *The New Democracy*, a pro-union newspaper published in Hamilton, Ontario, from which the above is taken.

### **Mixed Response**

Under the headline “The O.B.U. and Class Struggle”, writing in the 14 August 1919 issue of *The New Democracy*, Charles Lestor notes that “the workingmen of this western country are now discussing the O.B.U., and a few words from the standpoint of a would-be red may be of interest”. He then quotes with approval Daniel De Leon’s statement that “The employing class and the working class have nothing in common”.

Lestor asserts that the working class is an enslaved class. “This is a fact”, he says, “and the question that confronts it is, how will the O.B.U. help the working class to escape from its bondage?” The function that the union fulfils in addition to maintaining the value of labour-power, he continues, is that of nourishing, protecting and defending “those revolutionary spirits that endeavour to arouse their fellow workingmen to a realisation of their degraded position and try to unite them into a political force, powerful enough to crush their enemies. The class struggle is a struggle for freedom – from ownership”. He argues that the American Federation of Labor, the largely craft union organisation, is controlled by such a reactionary element that not only retards the “revolutionary movement”, but has been used against the workers in Europe and the world over. In the flowery language for which he had become famous, Charles Lestor writes:

The imprisonment of Debs is due to the support the leaders of the A.F.L. give to capitalism. The horrible torture inflicted upon the workingmen and women in the States who dare to espouse the cause of labor are made possible by the fact that Gompers and Co. are behind the judges and condone also the actions of those brutal cowards who tar and feather, lynch and beat-up those noble-minded men and women who refuse to bow to the yoke of capital and try to educate the members of their class to a realisation of their position. The A.F.L. is daily cursed by every political prisoner in the ‘land of the free’. Why is education, working class education, in the United States so far behind? The economic conditions are rotten ripe, but, ye gods and little fishes that wag their tails in the mighty deep, did you ever see anything like the ignorance of the slaves of God’s country?

In his view, the OBU would protect propagandists against discrimination, and would provide facilities for educating the workers along class lines. The One Big Union, he says, is our sustaining faith. He was a True Believer.

Gambone writes that “The OBU grew like a mushroom overnight taking in most of organised labour west of Ontario. But in three years the OBU had lost most of its support”. Although an exaggeration, there is some truth in both statements. Because the Winnipeg General Strike interrupted the planning and launching of the One Big Union, together with the subsequent jailing of such people as Bob Russell, George Armstrong and Bill Pritchard, it was not particularly well-organised. Nevertheless, within less than a year, the OBU had more than 100 locals and 40,000 members; indeed, it took almost the entire union membership of Western Canada. And more than half of them were in British Columbia, the Socialist Party of Canada stronghold, where the largest number, at least initially, were among the lumber workers.

Organising the lumber workers was extremely difficult. Before the war, the IWW had attempted to organise them, but with little success. So had the AFL-affiliated Timberworkers’ Union, also without success. Many of the lumber workers were transient, and worked on the Prairie farms during the spring and summer. It was not until January 1919, that the Loggers’ and Camp Workers’ Union (LCWU) was successfully organised, mainly by two Labourites, Birt Showler and Helena Gutteridge. The initial organiser of the LCWU was an IWW member, Harry Allman. In 1919, Ernest Winch became the LCWU organiser, and by the summer the union had more than 8,000 members. In July, it affiliated to the One Big Union and changed its name to the Lumber Workers’ Industrial Union (LWIU). It was the largest union in the OBU, and its biggest provider of funds. But it, and the OBU, was soon to be beset by both organisational and personality problems and conflicts.

Ten days after his release from prison, Bob Russell was appointed organiser for the Winnipeg District of the One Big Union. At the time it had around 4,500 members in the city. But Russell, like other OBU activists and organisers, had a difficult task. As already noted, the post-war slump was beginning to cause mass unemployment. The OBU was under attack from the state, the employers and American Federation of Labor officials. It was also subverted by the Communists, of whom more later. But the conflict between Winch and Allman caused the main problem during the first year of the organisation’s existence. Peter Campbell, in his *Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way*, describes the controversy in considerable detail.

In the November 1919 issue of *The Worker*, Harry Allman published a list of sixteen demands, “at least half of them directed at the power and control of Ernest Winch”. He demanded that full-time union officials, within the OBU, should not have a vote on the General Executive Board; that they refrain from participating in any political movement (presumably aimed at the SPC) without the consent of the full membership; that no paid position be held for more than six months; that all union officials return to work as loggers for a period of at least one year before running for office in the union again; that the officials’ salaries be capped; and moreover, all decisions by union functionaries be under the strict control of the Executive. Allman also argued that the Loggers’ Union dues be paid directly to the OBU head office in Winnipeg, and not to Winch’s office in Vancouver. Such a move would have effectively destroyed Winch’s job as the LWIU general secretary and organiser. According to Campbell:

During 1920, therefore, the conflict between Winch and Allman evolved into the dispute between the OBU and the IWIU. The issue became one of centralisation versus decentralisation, geographical versus industrial forms of organisation. Winch, given his record of maintaining a firm grip on the organisations he was part of, and regional rather than national focus, was headed for a showdown with Victor Midgley and other OBU leaders.

By the summer of 1920, almost 45% of the One Big Union's funds were from the LWIU. A confrontation between the IWIU and the OBU was almost inevitable. It came at the OBU convention in Port Arthur, Ontario, in September 1920. Initially, the LWIU was charged with not having paid its dues for June and July, which was true (but other unions had not paid theirs either). Next, it was argued that the LWIU credentials were invalid; but this charge was dropped. Lastly, it was claimed that Winch's credentials, which were from Cranbrook, were not from the area where he actually worked, which, again, was true. The OBU leadership were out to get Winch and the LWIU delegation. By the time that the credentials committee had decided that the LWIU's credentials were acceptable, all but one of its delegates had left the convention. Nevertheless, following a referendum, in which the LWIU members supported Winch, the union quit the One Big Union.

### **Communist Sabotage**

During 1921, Bob Russell and Richard Johns embarked on a long speaking and organising campaign, in Alberta and Saskatchewan, on behalf of the One Big Union. But the withdrawal of the Lumber Workers' Industrial Union from the organisation had weakened it considerably. Even Russell, who had become its undisputed leader, threatened to resign at least twice during 1921 and 1922. Gambone, in his *The Impossibilists*, writes that the membership of the OBU was, by 1923, "down to only 5000 members". It was probably twice that number, but well down on its 40,000 membership in the summer of 1920. "The Communists didn't help either", comments Gambone. "Like revolutionary unions world-wide, the OBU was to suffer at their hands".

Early in 1921, the OBU was invited to the founding of the International Congress of Revolutionary Labour and Industrial Unions, generally called the Profintern, to be held in July that year, in Moscow. Russell declined the invitation, but delegated Joe Knight instead who reported on the Congress at the OBU's third annual convention, in Winnipeg, that September. Apparently, Russell and Knight were sympathetic towards affiliation to the Profintern by the OBU, at least at first. As mentioned previously, the illegal Communist Party of Canada had, in February 1922, formed a legal 'front' organisation, the Workers' Party. A number of members of the One Big Union joined the Workers' Party, as did some former members of the Socialist Party of Canada, including Tim Buck, Joe Knight, Maurice Spector and Bob Russell's old friend and comrade, Jack Kavanagh. But, as both Campbell and Gambone note, the Profintern and, therefore, the Communists opposed breakaway unions such as the OBU. "The Communists and their supporters within the union (OBU) began a campaign of disruption as they followed the Comintern's orders of forcing the OBU members back into AFL unions or destroying the organisation outright", observes Gambone. Attacking Russell, the SPC and the OBU, Maurice Spector claimed that

“We are not confronted with the question of educating the workers today; that is not necessary”. The OBU rejected affiliation to both the Profintern and the Workers’ Party; and in November 1922, the OBU expelled Workers’ Party members from the organisation. The Communists, therefore, concentrated on attempting to get control of the AFL-affiliated unions – with little success.

Of the situation at the time, Local 109 Winnipeg of the Socialist Party of Canada issued a leaflet, which stated among other things that:

Since the close of the World War a tremendous struggle expressing itself as a war of ideas has convulsed the organisations of the working class. This struggle of ideas leaves the position of the Socialist Party of Canada untouched. For us, the road is both straight and clear. Socialism is our object, to the purpose of making socialists we direct our energy.

The cause for the split in the ranks of the S.P.C. must be laid at the door of the Third International, for laying down world-wide tactics in twenty-one points to be adopted and rigidly adhered to. The split in the ranks of the Party was inevitable, resulting in a minority of members in Winnipeg still maintaining that the position of the S.P.C. is correct. The result of the split was the formation of a new party, the Workers’ Party of Canada.

The leaflet notes that the Workers’ Party claims to be a party of ‘action’, and continues: “This latest arrival states that the present need is for a party of ‘strength, of action of feeling’”, which included attacks on socialists in the One Big Union as well as the SPC. However, Tim Buck advised Communists in the west of the country to “ignore them (the OBU) and concentrate on those organisations and individuals who are the real menace”.

### **OBU Fightback – and Demise**

During 1921 and 1922, the miners of Nova Scotia were in conflict with the British Empire Steel and Coal Company (BESCO). The company, which was the largest employer in Nova Scotia, wanted to cut wages by one-third, because of falling markets and company losses, a decision supported by the miners’ own union, the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). And in January 1922, the company did cut the miners’ wages by one-third. In mid-August, against the wishes of the UMWA leadership of John L. Lewis, the miners went on 100% strike, returning to work on 5 September, achieving a wage cut, not of 33% but of 19%. It was a victory of sorts. But the miners were far from happy with their union’s lack of support for their action. In the summer of 1923, the steelworkers, who were also members of the UMWA, were faced with the same problem. They, too, went on strike, as did other miners in Nova Scotia early in 1924, following a similar wage cut. The One Big Union soon moved in to take advantage of the situation, much to the annoyance of the UMWA leadership in the United States, and the Communists locally who insisted that the workers remain in the UMWA. The OBU flooded Nova Scotia with leaflets, charging the UMWA with selling the workers out; the OBU then sent in organisers.

The outcome for the OBU was mixed. During another bitter strike of Nova Scotia miners in 1925, the OBU sent large sums of money and food, and hundreds of tons of clothing which it had collected from workers throughout Western Canada. The British



Empire Steel and Coal Company refused to give in to the OBU and the miners were forced to return to work in 1926, and to sign a check-off agreement with the United Mine Workers of America. And the OBU lost most of the members it had gained in Nova Scotia.

Although the membership of the One Big Union, as with almost all organisations in Canada and elsewhere at the time, was predominantly male, the union managed to organise numbers of female workers in Winnipeg during 1925. Campbell comments:

There was a determined, albeit paternalistic, effort to protect female employees in restaurants from sexual harassment; many young women became actively involved in union work for the first time, and the Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Unit of the OBU engaged in effective strikes and boycotts, cleaned up conditions, shortened hours, and procured one day's rest in seven for workers in almost forty establishments.

Said the *OBU Bulletin* of 15 January 1925: "...these girls are members of the working class and that's what counts".

Despite its weaknesses, the OBU had, according to Gambone, increased its membership to 17,000 by 1925 and to 24,000 by 1930. In 1927, the One Big Union participated in the creation of the All-Canadian Congress of Labour. In August of that year, Russell wrote to the Governor of Massachusetts, on behalf of the OBU, charging that the State of Massachusetts would be "legal murderers" if it executed the anarchists, Sacco and Vanzetti. They were, however, executed – Charles Lestor was in Boston at the time. The latter was appointed editor of the *OBU Bulletin* in January 1928, following in the footsteps of fellow Socialist Party members, John Houston and Frank Woodward. Charlie Lestor had been a member of the Industrial Workers of the World, in and out of the Socialist Party a couple of times, and was an admirer of Daniel De Leon; but he was an able writer, an energetic organiser and a first rate soapbox orator. He was particularly hostile towards the increasingly Stalinised Soviet Union. In his first article as editor of the *OBU Bulletin*, Lestor writes:

The sending of Trotsky into exile is causing a number of students of socialism to ponder, and many who heretofore have been enthusiastic supporters of the Soviet government are now realising that 'things are not what they seem' in the land of the Muscovite. Those who have carefully studied the French Revolution will observe a parallel between the Russian and French upheavals, and classify Trotsky as the Russian Danton. In many features the Bourgeois Revolution and the Russian Revolution are the same.

Labour-power is a commodity in Russia and sells at the cost of production. Any attempt on the part of the Russian proletariat to raise itself will be ruthlessly suppressed by the Stalin outfit, because within the framework of the capitalist society the working class cannot raise itself 'without springing everything into the air'.

This man who proved his worth in the days of trial and error, who stood by Lenin in the hour of danger, this man who created the Red Army, who did the best by his writings and great organising ability to help the workers win, is now sacrificed to the gods of the capitalist world. Trotsky has his faults – who does not? But all through he has proved himself a true soldier of the Revolution.

Let his traducers, the so-called Communist Party, revile him: let his enemies, who have no other objective in view but to sell Russia to the highest capitalist bidder persecute him; the more they do this the better from the standpoint of his honour, Trotsky stands higher in the estimation of the revolutionary proletariat than at any other time since the Revolution.

It is up to those who are class conscious to stand by him and so long as he continues to maintain those principles to defend him against his treacherous enemies, the so-called Communist Party

(*OBU Bulletin*, 9 February 1928)

Daniel De Leon and Leon Trotsky were apparently Lestor's great unsung heroes.

Unfortunately for the One Big Union, it was unable to establish permanent large industrial, or even general, unions. Nevertheless, it increased its influence as well as its membership during the early 1930s. It fought against increasing lay-offs of workers, holding mass meetings and calling on both employed and unemployed workers to unite against the bosses. At one meeting, on 15 April 1932, in Winnipeg, Russell argued that "unless the employed workers acted together with the unemployed workers, it would not be long before one section was used against the other, to the detriment of the working class as a whole". By the beginning of 1934, Russell was not only General Secretary of the OBU, but also Secretary of the Labour Council and editor of the *OBU Bulletin*, due to Lestor's sudden resignation and return to England. The formation of the Congress of Industrial Organisations (CIO) in the United States in 1935, together with the founding of similar unions in Canada, adversely affected the OBU. In its early days, the CIO was both militant and successful in organising unskilled workers in mass production industries. The One Big Union, therefore, continued to lose ground; and CIO-affiliated unions merely replaced the OBU, particularly during the Second World War. In 1956, the Canadian unions affiliated to the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organisations united to form the Canadian Labour Congress. The OBU decided to join on the understanding that it would remain an autonomous union within the CLC. However, at a Unity Conference, the OBU delegates voted to break up the organisation, and allow its former members to become members of CLC locals. Gambone notes: "Impossibilism's child had a rather ignominious death". At its demise the One Big Union had about 12,000 members. Robert Boyd Russell died in 1964.

Was the OBU a syndicalist organisation? Larry Peterson writes:

The major historians of the Canadian OBU repeatedly call this union a Canadian version of syndicalism, but nowhere do they show how the OBU was syndicalist or why this term is specifically relevant in this case. They could easily have left off the label without affecting their overall analysis of the OBU.

(*Labour/Le Travailleur*, No.40)

Peterson notes that such historians equate syndicalism with support for the general strike, although even a cursory knowledge of Canadian labour history would show that highly political socialists, such as members of the Socialist Party of Canada, supported general strikes if necessary. Says Peterson: “Although many syndicalists supported industrial unions, industrial unionism itself was never universally accepted as part of syndicalist philosophy.”

Larry Peterson describes the OBU thus:

Revolutionary unionists in Canada carried centralized organization to its logical extreme by founding the One Big Union in 1919. All workers were organized in one union without regard to craft or industry, either in mixed locals or in central labour councils in larger towns. To be sure, there were strong movements for separate industrial unions within the OBU, especially among lumber workers in British Columbia and northern Ontario. However, the core of the OBU recognized only general local unions, not unlike the unions locales of the CGT.<sup>4</sup>

(“The One Big Union in International Perspective: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism 1900-1925. *Labour/Le Travailleur*, Spring 1981)

Peter Campbell also notes that to describe the OBU as syndicalist is to disguise the overwhelming Marxist orientation of the leading theoreticians in the organisation. All the editors of the One Big Union Bulletin were, or had been, members of the Socialist Party of Canada.

(*Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way*)

## *Chapter Five*

### **THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA**

Between 1905 and 1910, the Socialist Party of Canada was the country’s third largest political party. Only the Conservative and Liberal Parties were larger. The Socialist Party had considerable support and influence in the west, particularly in British Columbia; it also had many supporters in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, although the city of Winnipeg was, some time later, to become the centre of labourism in Canada. The SPC had fewer members and sympathisers in Ontario, and almost none in Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

---

<sup>4</sup> The French Confédération Général du Travail.

Although the Socialist Party of Canada was nominally a revolutionary, ‘Impossibilist’ party, during the first five years or so, it had many reformers within its ranks. Over the years, however, most of them either resigned, or were expelled, from the party. The anti-reformist Platform, first drawn up in Nanaimo in 1903, remained the solid anchor of the party, and reflected the revolutionary aspirations of its membership far more from 1911 onwards. Its views on Asian and women workers also became more clear-cut than previously – they were all wage-slaves together.

The SPC opposed the World War, and suffered accordingly, with its meetings banned or broken up by the police, the Mounties or by pro-war mobs. The party was not actually banned, but its members were harassed, spied on, hunted down and jailed when they refused to be conscripted into the army. One member, Ginger Goodwin, also the organiser of the Smelters’ Union, was shot dead while on the run. Most members of the SPC were active, and sometimes prominent, union members. With increasing unemployment, they were often the first to be fired from their jobs. After November 1917 and the Bolshevik coup, many radicals, including Socialist Party members, were subject to ‘anti-red’ propaganda and persecution, whether they were sympathetic to the Russian upheaval or not. In 1921, an illegal Communist Party of Canada was founded, following the creation of the Comintern in 1919. In 1919, the General Strike in Winnipeg resulted in a number of members of the SPC being jailed for treason. During the same year, the One Big Union was founded, largely by members of the Socialist Party. All this had a profound, indeed devastating, effect on the party. Last but not least, the Canadian state closely monitored the activities of prominent members of the SPC and OBU. Some of them left the country, either for a few months or, in some cases, permanently.

### **Monitoring Mounties**

One of those who was closely monitored by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Mounties, was, not surprisingly, Charles R. Lestor. On 11 January 1920, a Mountie agent reports, according to Item 9, “Individual Agitators” of the 29 January *Bulletin*, an official Mountie publication, that at a meeting of the Socialist Party in Vancouver, Charles Lestor “gave another of his violent speeches”. The agent claims that one of Lestor’s utterances was that “when the working class came into its own and the capitalist class was overthrown, there ought to be judges, and he hoped to be one...If a capitalist lawyer came before him he would give him twenty years”.

The 16 September *Bulletin* states, under “Miscellaneous Notes”, that “Charles Lestor is leaving for England in a few weeks. He has no official backing, and is paying his own way”. The 23 September *Bulletin* reports, “from an outside source”, that the Mounties are informed that Charles Lestor, “socialist agitator of Vancouver”, has secured about \$500 “for his transportation to Moscow”, and is leaving for England, en route to Russia. The 7 October *Bulletin* reports that, on 26 September, Lestor had stated that he would be absent from Canada for three to four months. He had read that the *Daily Herald* had refused Soviet gold worth £75,000. Lestor, according to the Mounties, said that “When I heard that the paper had refused the gold, I knew I must go...If we [presumably the SPC] can get this, or any other Soviet money, we won’t hesitate to take it, knowing that we are going to put it to good use”.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> In the spring of 1920, Soviet commissars, Leonid Krassin, Nikolai Klishko and Viktor Nogin, met George Lansbury, the then editor of the *Daily Herald*, to discuss the possible funding of the paper. As no agreement was reached, Francis Maynell, a director of the *Daily Herald*, visited Maxim Litvinov in

In conversation, Lestor is reported to have said that he would be travelling via England “to educate his ignorant fellow-workers”. In Russia, he intended to “form an opinion whether Bolshevist methods are applicable in the Western World”. The report ends: “He has about \$500, not a large sum for so ambitious a project”.

We know that Charlie Lestor arrived in Britain. Harry Young, who at that time was an enthusiastic young pro-Bolshevik, wrote many years later in the *Socialist Standard* (January 1953) that Lestor

...had just arrived in this country after twenty years in Canada and the USA. His Canadian style, accent and rig made him remarkable enough; his address to the large audiences of unemployed ex-servicemen was extraordinary. When most of the ILP and Communist ‘unemployed organisers’ devoted their attention to personal invective against individual ministers, or the usual temporary nostrums for increase of dole, or (much more) prevention of its decrease, Lestor never failed, in my hearing at least, to go straight to the root of the matter.

He just could not speak to an audience without dealing with the capitalist system... In clipped and rugged terms, without a wasted word, he would grip a large audience from the first phrase and proceed to build up a vigorously logical exposition of surplus-value.

Unlike Young, Lestor never reached Moscow. When the money ran out, he returned to Canada. In July 1926, a Mountie agent reported that Charles Lestor had been very busy addressing audiences in the Market Place, and at the railway shops in Winnipeg. To some extent, he had been occupied in denouncing religion. When speaking on economics, while he avoided mentioning the One Big Union, “he follows the general line taken by that body”. The agent says that, while in Winnipeg, Lestor’s course “is an example of underhand campaigning”. Officially, says the *Bulletin* of 6 August 1926, Lestor has no connection with the OBU. “He is a socialist, but he speaks along OBU lines”. A further report, dated 30 July, says:

Lestor is still on the job. He was in Transcona yesterday. This man is undoubtedly speaking on behalf of the OBU. He travelled down in the OBU organiser’s car...Lestor never mentions the OBU in his speeches, but the men are fully aware of whom he speaks.

Charles Lestor was not the only socialist who was monitored by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Far from it! Others included George Armstrong, Bill Pritchard, Jack Harrington, W.W. Lefeaux, Vic Midgely and John “Jack” McDonald.

Moses Baritz was, of course, a marked man. It did not seem to worry him however. After being released from jail and expelled from America, he went first to Australia and then to New Zealand, from where he was also deported in January 1920. He was not the only socialist to arrive from North America; a number of members of the

---

Copenhagen where Litvinov handed Meynell a tobacco pouch containing a string of pearls, which he handed to Theodor Rothstein. On a further visit, Meynell secured from Litvinov the £75,000-worth of jewels to finance the *Daily Herald*, but the directors of the paper unanimously rejected the offer, and Meynell resigned as a director. Lestor did not get the jewels or any money either. Ultimately, the Communist Party of Great Britain and Sylvia Pankurst’s magazine, *Dreadnought*, received a sum of money, said to be nearly £2,000,000, following the sale of various jewels and precious stones. (See *Hostile Action: The KGB and Secret Soviet Operations in Britain* by Peter Shipley, pp14 – 15, London, 1989.)

Socialist Party of Canada had made their way to Australia and New Zealand during, and after, the war. Some, like Baritz, did not stay long; others were seamen who came and went, whilst some settled permanently in Australasia, joining the socialist movements there. One such member of the Socialist Party of Canada who spent a few months in New Zealand was John Amos McDonald. His visit and political activities have been chronicled by Kerry Taylor in *Labour/ Le Travail* (32, Fall 1993). Formerly a member of the Industrial Workers of the World, McDonald, who joined the SPC around 1911, was a regular contributor to the *Western Clarion* and a member of the Dominion Executive Committee during the First World War. Peter Campbell notes, in his *Canadian Marxists*, that McDonald was born in 1889 into a family of eight on a Prince Edward Island potato farm. He was, writes Campbell, “a major figure in the history of socialist thought and activism in Western Canada, New Zealand and the United States”.

Jack McDonald arrived in New Zealand, via Australia, on 3 October 1921. He was invited not by the New Zealand Marxian Association, which had recently adopted the Object and Declaration of Principles of the SPGB, but by the newly-formed Communist Party of New Zealand. It is not known if he was aware that the invitation had come from the CPNZ and not the NZMA. Nevertheless, McDonald was considered “a socialist teacher and propagandist of international repute”. The Communist Party was anxious to extend its propaganda activity. “The sad reality”, writes Taylor, was that “very few people even knew that it existed”. Total membership throughout the country was probably fewer than 50, and dynamic speakers were scarce. “The New Zealand communists greeted McDonald with great enthusiasm.” The New Zealand police were aware of McDonald’s arrival in the country, as reports of his activities in Canada and Australia had preceded him.

On arriving in Wellington, McDonald spoke at a number of meetings. He was also the main speaker at a large meeting to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the Russian Revolution. “In communism, he suggested, lay the great hope of the oppressed masses of the world”. However, Taylor notes, “McDonald articulated a very particular view of the Revolution, suggesting that Russia had yet to achieve communism”. This, argued McDonald, was only possible when the means of production had developed to a higher stage. And Taylor adds: “This analysis reflected the philosophy of the Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB) whose ideas he had absorbed while active in the Socialist Party of Canada (SPC)”. That this analysis did not send alarm bells ringing through the minds of New Zealand’s communists “suggests a certain theoretical simplicity on their part”.

Later, in November, Jack McDonald travelled to Auckland where the first controversy of his tour erupted. The Auckland communist group asked him to speak from the platform of the local Labour Party, “which he refused to do, again reflecting the philosophy of the SPGB who saw all other parties other than themselves as bogus tools of the master class”, says Kerry Taylor. McDonald was supported by the Wellington group of the CPNZ, some of whom had been former members of the New Zealand Marxian Association, and who at the time formed the National Executive of the Communist Party. This resulted in open conflict between the Auckland and Wellington groups. McDonald then moved to the west coast, where he spoke at eleven meetings at eight different locations. Most were in mining communities. Throughout his stay in New Zealand, the police attended all his meetings, as they had with Moses Baritz previously, making notes of his comments. Taylor adds that among the miners of the west coast, “there had been an attachment to the particular philosophy of the Socialist Party of Great Britain”. This did not augur well for the Communist Party of

New Zealand. For example, continues Taylor, “the New Zealand Marxian Association (NZMA), which had been formed at the end of 1918, adopted the principles and objective of the SPGB. The majority at the NZMA’s foundation conference were from the West Coast mining communities. Equally significant, several influential figures on the Coast had previously been members of the Socialist Party of Canada”.

By getting McDonald to visit the west coast, the CPNZ had hoped to bring about greater unity. It was not to be. In March 1922, members of the Millerton Marxist Economics Class suggested a west coast organisation of workers to be formed outside, and opposed to, the Labour Party. A conference was arranged for Easter. The CPNZ expected new branches to be formed. Its hopes were dashed. The conference was held in the Miners’ Hall in Blackball. A motion was proposed that the organisation be linked to the Communist Party; two counter motions were tabled, one calling for the formation of a Marxian Education and Propaganda League, the other favouring a separate West Coast Communist Federation, opposed to both the Labour Party and the Communist Party. McDonald, much to the disgust of the Communist Party, favoured a separate communist or socialist federation, arguing that the Communist Party in Wellington was “effectively defunct”. The outcome was that delegates voted 11 to one in favour of a West Coast Federation. The newly-formed Federation immediately attacked Harry Holland, the leader of the Labour Party, and ran a candidate against the Labour Party in the 1922 General Election. Taylor comments:

McDonald argued that the Labour Party was scarcely different from the Conservative, Reform and Liberal parties. He reflected the essential ‘Impossibilism’ of the SPGB/ SPC tradition by suggesting that the only immediate demand should be the overthrow of capitalism.

A little over a month later, Jack McDonald left New Zealand, and settled in San Francisco, where he again took up his trade as a house painter. Later, he opened a small bookshop which finally expanded into a huge book-store, which became world-famous. He never returned to Canada, although he continued to write for the *Western Clarion*. He joined the Workers’ (later World) Socialist Party of the United States. John Amos McDonald died in 1968, in an automobile accident in Oakland.

## **Decline**

On 16 July 1920, the *Western Clarion* reported that George Armstrong had been elected to the Manitoba Legislature for Winnipeg City. Armstrong received 2,767 votes. Held under a proportional representation system, Armstrong came eighth of 37 candidates – ten were elected. Bob Russell also ran, but was not elected, which is difficult to explain as he received 1535 votes to 1500 votes for William J. Tupper, the Conservative candidate, who was elected at number ten. George Armstrong’s wife, Helen, also stood in Winnipeg City, but only received 433 votes. Milne notes that the election of Armstrong was less “an evidence of increasing socialist activity than trade union compensation for his prison term”; in the following all-dominion election in 1921, many trade unionists “turned in other directions”. On 18 July 1922, the Winnipeg Local 109 of the Socialist Party of Canada again adopted George Armstrong as candidate in the Provincial Manitoba election. The party manifesto, complete with a photograph of Armstrong, did not advocate palliatives but claimed that “the organisation will still fly the flag of the Revolution. No compromise, no surrender”. This time, Armstrong was not elected, although he received 1273 votes, coming eleventh. This despite the fact that Richard W. Graig, a United Farmers’

candidate who was elected, only received 1179. Something was clearly amiss in the electoral system.

In the British Columbia election of 1920, the Socialist Party of Canada fielded seven candidates:

<b>candidate</b>	<b>constituency</b>	<b>votes</b>	<b>% of total</b>
John Burrough	Prince Rupert	676	19.68%
John Dennis	Vancouver	1,451	0.72%
Sid Earp	Vancouver	1,694	0.84%
John Harrington	Vancouver	2,956	1.46%
William McQuoid	Vancouver	1,524	0.75%
James Smith	Vancouver	2,267	1.12%
Christopher Stephenson	Vancouver	1,818	0.90%

The election results were not good for the Socialist Party. More and more workers were turning to various leftist reform parties; and in many instances, such parties were being led by former members of the SPC. An Independent Labour Party had been formed in Ontario in July 1917. A Federated Labour Party was also founded in British Columbia also in that year, and a Dominion Labour Party in Manitoba in 1918. In British Columbia, an Independent Labour Party was founded by a former member of the SPC, Angus MacInnis, at the end of 1925. We shall meet this Independent Labour Party again in 1932. Political reformism, often masquerading as Marxism or revolutionary socialism, was now on the agenda.

In 1921, the Liberal Party came to power in Canada under the leadership of William Lyon Mackenzie King, who remained in power except for two short intervals, when there was a Conservative government, until 1948. A small, pudgy, colourless individual, King used spirit mediums to allegedly commune with his dead mother, who made most of his political decisions for him – and the country.

Bill Pritchard was released from jail on 28 February 1921. He had, according to his recorded statement, been separated from his family for almost two years. The evening following his release, he debated, somewhat shakily he admits, with Professor Osborn to a “packed house estimated in excess of 2,000 in the vast hall of the Industrial Bureau”. He was in a weakened condition, having spent the last few weeks in the prison hospital unconscious, a victim of an epidemic which had affected a number of the inmates. A few days later, Pritchard was asked to debate with another professor, on the subject of Free Trade, at the Strand Theatre, also in Winnipeg. He was, however, too sick to speak. Fortunately, Adolph Kohn was still in town, and he debated with the professor on behalf of the Socialist Party. Back in Vancouver, Pritchard’s health soon improved. His first speech was at the Royal Theatre in February 1922. He continued to speak, on average once a month, at the Empress and Star theatres until the latter part of 1924, often to audiences of 2,000. He also wrote articles for the *Western Clarion*.

The Socialist Party of Canada stood two candidates in the 1921 Alberta Provincial elections:

<b>candidate</b>	<b>constituency</b>	<b>votes</b>
Frank Williams	Calgary	1,745
Marie Mellard	Edmonton	883



In 1924, Bill Pritchard was one of only two candidates nominated by the Socialist Party of Canada at the British Columbia Provincial election:

<b>candidate</b>	<b>constituency</b>	<b>votes</b>	<b>% of total</b>
William Pritchard	Nanaimo	1,083	31.14%
John Harrington	Vancouver	3,281	1.73%

The Canadian Labour Party had eleven candidates – another sign of increased labour reformism. Nevertheless, the Labour Party candidates received, on average, less than 20% of the votes, and less than 4% in Vancouver.

That the Socialist Party of Canada was concerned by the advance of reformist labour parties is demonstrated by a number of articles on the subject in the *Western Clarion* and other journals sympathetic to the SPC. On 1 March 1921, for instance, the *Winnipeg Socialist*, published on behalf of the party in that city, features on its front page an article by Adolph Kohn entitled “The Socialist Party or The Labor Party”. He begins by stating that the Socialist Party has for its object the ownership of the means of living and their democratic control by the whole community. He says that before socialism can be established the working class must desire it. He is critical of both the Labour Party and the Independent Labour Party. Of the Independent Labour Party, Kohn argues that it

...has a platform which states its object is the co-operative commonwealth. But this declaration is a pious phrase. It is followed by no statement of the conditions necessary to the realisation of socialism. It does not explain the material basis of modern society and the struggle between the owning and the working class from it. It does not lay down a policy line with the facts of working class subjection. It does not indicate in any way whatever the interests of those in power is to keep the working class poor and prevent any improvement in their status. It does not tell the workers that socialist ideas must spread among workers and be accepted by the masses before we can expect any attempt to change conditions to the co-operative commonwealth.

Of the Labour Party, Kohn argues that it panders to the workers’ ignorance. “It dangles reform bait before their eyes and keeps their attention from the real path to emancipation”. Moreover, “This Labour Party comprises elected candidates who deplore talk about class conflict and begin their session by explaining that now they are elected they represent all classes, and will act like any other party’s aldermen”. He reminds his readers that the capitalists are ready to extend the suffrage where they have the voters with them, as with the women’s franchise in 1917. The Labour Party, says Kohn, is ignorant of economics.

They ask for equal pay for equal work, irrespective of sex. Legislation to fix wages has always been honoured more in the breach than in the observance. Wages depend upon economic conditions and revolve around the cost of existing as a worker. Minimum wage laws and administration have generally worked out as maximum wage laws, and administration of the laws takes care of the employers’ interests.

Such is the depth of Labour Party ignorance. They do not know that a worker's wage and his product are quite different things. In conclusion, he claims that the programme, policy and outlook of the Labour Party will be very useful to the capitalists when they wish to throw sops to the workers.

Writing in the 2 February 1925 *Western Clarion*, Jack McDonald, now living in San Francisco, says that the British Labour government "came, stayed for ten months, and departed without even knocking a splinter off the social base". Capitalism was never challenged. On the contrary, claims McDonald, the Labour leaders soon proved themselves to be adroit champions of the very system they were supposed to rout or, at least, modify. "Even many members of the nobility and aristocracy were agreeably surprised at the conservative attitude taken by the heads of the new administration." McDonald then quotes from an article in the 16 May 1920 issue of the *Western Clarion*, which reports that the Dominion Labour Party was surprised that the Winnipeg Local of the Socialist Party of Canada refused to co-operate with the DLP in the Manitoba Provincial Elections held that summer. "Sometimes it is very hard to distinguish the difference between the right wing of labour and the left wing of the bourgeoisie. The Dominion Labour Party occupies what is to us an uninhabitable house." McDonald concludes:

As we have seen the appellation – labour – does not signify that the party is carrying on behalf of the working class in opposition to those who own and rule. It is merely a fascinating title made use of by political adventurers to secure the continued enslavement of the workers, and consequently maintain intact the present mode of exploitation.

Nevertheless, the onward march of labourism worried and concerned the much battered Socialist Party. By the summer of 1921, even Robert Russell had become estranged from the SPC, resigning from the party in February the following year, although he remained friends with Alex Sheperd and other members. Russell concentrated on the One Big Union, whilst some of his former comrades accused him of no longer being a socialist. Others who had previously been active in the SPC, became organisers and propagandists of the OBU to the detriment of the party. And there was apathy, particularly among the growing numbers of unemployed workers, both members and non-members of the SPC alike. By the beginning of 1924, the Socialist Party of Canada probably had fewer than 500 members (there does not seem to be any records extant to confirm this). Milne notes that the *Western Clarion*, "formerly enlightened by controversy, exuberant and forward-reaching, became depressed by weighty theses now turning backward". Pritchard, of course, was no longer the editor. Jack McDonald objected to the tone of many of the articles; he also expressed his dismay that it was no longer the official organ of a revolutionary party. Its circulation declined steadily, its expenses being largely met by money from the 'Whitehead Estate', the financial legacy of George Whitehead, a former SPC member and writer who died in 1919.

### **...and Fall**

The July-August 1925 issue of the *Western Clarion* was its last. Bill Pritchard was no longer speaking to audiences in Vancouver. And Campbell notes in his *Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way*, that:

Most telling, however, is the fact that when the *Western Clarion* died in the summer of 1925 Pritchard did not seem overly concerned. In an article in the last issue called “The Curtain Call” he attributed the demise of the paper to the reaction and conservatism of the age, citing Mussolini, the Palmer raids, the Ku Klux Klan, and the American Legion...There was a tone of defeatism, a sense of being controlled by overwhelming forces that was rarely in evidence in the pages of the *Clarion* prior to 1919.

Over the next few years, Pritchard drifted towards nationalism, and by 1927 was speaking on behalf of the Independent Labour Party, although he continued to defend the OBU. He was elected councillor of North Burnaby, and some time later, reeve. In 1930, Pritchard, as Mayor of Burnaby, organised unemployed workers into gangs in order to pay off their local taxes. These labour crews helped build much of Confederation and Robert Burnaby Parks, as well as trails, bridges and gardens in Central Park, and the clearing of municipal roads – until the money ran out. “Hundreds, if not thousands, of people who could not pay their taxes worked on that project to save their homes”, said Jim Wolf, Burnaby’s heritage planning assistant. By 1933, he was heavily involved with the newly-established Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). In 1937, Bill Pritchard left Canada for California. We shall meet him again in this narrative.

The Socialist Party of Canada ceased to exist as an organised party in 1925. The December 1933 issue of the *Western Socialist*, published in Winnipeg, states that “The Socialist Movement in this country received a setback in 1925, when the Executive of the old Socialist Party of Canada in Vancouver decided to dissolve the party, this being done in view of an apparently hopeless situation, without consulting the membership. We admit the party was very weak at the time, but to quit and disorganise was a tragic step, the folly of which we all recognise in the difficulties we are having to again restore the organisation to its former footing”. Nevertheless, socialist activities did not cease entirely. There is evidence that a number of small locals continued to function. According to some old-time members during the 1970s, there were no organised activities in Vancouver after 1925 for about seven years. Bill Pritchard claimed that he was a member until 1927. There is, however, evidence that some British Columbia locals continued to hold meetings and publish pamphlets throughout the 1920s. Jim Milne comments: “Several years passed. A Proletarian Club came into being in Vancouver, a Science Study Club in Winnipeg, similar groups elsewhere, as some of those who had been in the Socialist Party of Canada sought ways of keeping alive the purpose for which the party had existed”. Jim Brownrigg, in an undated (c. 1975) letter to George Jenkins, states that following the discontinuation of the *Western Clarion*, former members of the SPC founded ‘The Political Economy Club’ in Vancouver, which published a number of pamphlets including a hardback edition of the first nine chapters of Karl Marx’s *Capital*, complete with Marx’s original footnotes.

In November 1926, Chris Stephenson, who had been the Dominion Secretary of the Socialist Party throughout the difficult period of the Winnipeg General Strike and the founding of the One Big Union, died a painful death from cancer. And, as he lay dying, he commented to Bill Pritchard that the real task of the socialist movement was to rid Marxism of its Hegelian weaknesses. In the words of Peter Campbell, “A worker intellectual to the last, on his deathbed Stephenson’s heart, mind and soul

remained dedicated to finding a way forward for Marxian socialism. The battle was still a battle of ideas.” (*Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way*).

# **THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA**

## **Object and Declaration of Principles Adopted June 1931**

### **Object**

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means of producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.

### **Declaration of Principles**

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA holds – That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. lands, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labor alone wealth is produced.

That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of plutocratic privilege.

That as political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon all members of the working class of this country to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the

system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give rise to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

\* \* \* \*

## *Chapter Six*

### **NEW BEGINNINGS**

The Great Depression really hit Canada hard. In 1933, in the depth of the depression, unemployment reached 25% of the workforce. Prices for Canada's primary products of wheat, timber and minerals, plummeted on the world market. Mining communities in Ontario became ghost towns. Thousands of western farmers were bankrupted, and many families evicted by the banks. Years of drought, combined with the erosion of formerly rich prairie topsoil, caused by poorly fertilised 'wheat mining', turned their holdings into dustbowls. The government of R.B. Bennet attempted to copy Roosevelt's New Deal policy with programmes of public works, with little effect until the inevitable worldwide economic upturn years later.

George Woodcock, a former anarchist-pacifist, in his *A Social History of Canada*, says that "Socialism had appeared as a political philosophy, represented by a number of rather dogmatic and sectarian groups like the Socialist Party of Canada and the Social Democratic Party of Canada". These parties, he contends, tended to reflect the socialism of Europe rather than the North American experience; and "there was room for a movement that reflected real urges for reform" in Canada. This was the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF).

In 1932, notes Milne, there were numerous labour, farmer, cooperative and 'progressive' groups spread across the country "sharing a common desire to make capitalism a better society". In July, a group of farmers, 'intellectuals', small businessmen, and a few workers, launched a broad-based coalition in Calgary which, at its first convention in Regina in 1933, became the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. Milne observes that "Canada now had a national party of sorts intended to serve the underdog". But Woodcock remarks that the CCF avoided the obvious emphasis on socialism, as well as the appearance of a political party on the established Liberal-Conservative model. It adopted a manifesto which, in his words, "was mildly social democratic, calling for the nationalisation of key industries...including the Canadian Pacific Railway, but otherwise envisaging a mixed economy".

The membership of the Communist Party of Canada had increased to around 5000 by 1928, but this declined in the early stages of the Great Depression. Furthermore, government repression, including the arrest of eight of its leaders in August 1931, drove the CPC underground from 1931 to 1934, when it was able to hold its seventh convention in July. After that, the depression and its subsequent mass unemployment gave it much support. The growing threat of fascism also increased its popularity.

#### **Again the 'Impossibilists'**

In June 1931, in the words of Jim Milne, "the Socialist Party of Canada began again in Winnipeg" or, alternatively, as the *Socialist Fulcrum* (no. 3/4, vol. 14, 1981) puts it: "The Socialist Party of Canada...was organized in June, 1931 in Winnipeg". As we shall see later, the words "began again" and "was organized" are of interest to the observer of the Socialist Party of Canada. The organisation, or reorganisation, of the SPC was quite a modest affair, however. Preliminary meetings were held in the One Big Union's Plebs Building, which Bob Russell provided free of charge. Russell was

fairly sympathetic, and remained friends with Sheperd, but considered the OBU to be more important than a socialist party. Among those taking part were George and Helen Armstrong, Sheperd, who had been living in Chicago for a number of years, and Charles Lestor, then editor of the *OBU Bulletin*, who also brought in a number of OBU members. Other former members of the old SPC soon joined. Once established, the party rented a hall and commenced holding public meetings, as well as outdoor meetings on Market Square and on street corners. Lestor was one of the speakers, but after five months, he and a number of OBU members who had joined with him, resigned from the party. Members of the SPC claimed that Lestor had joined the party with a view to controlling it. After some discussion, in March 1932, the Socialist Party of Canada adopted the Object and Declaration of Principles of the Socialist Parties of Australia and Great Britain, and the Workers' Socialist Party of the United States, as the members decided that this was a clearer statement of their aims than the original Platform, drawn up at the beginning of the century. Some of the wording was very slightly altered or omitted.

Despite the fact that Bob Russell had been an active member of the SPC, had remained friends with Alex Sheperd and other socialists, and had permitted the socialists to use the OBU premises in Winnipeg, there emerged a deepening rift between the One Big Union and the Socialist Party of Canada. In May 1932, when the SPC announced that it intended to adopt George Armstrong as the party's candidate in the upcoming election, Russell said that whilst he would support his old friend personally, he would not support the Socialist Party, "which was doing everything to destroy the effectiveness of the OBU", presumably because of Armstrong's membership of an American Federation of Labor affiliated union, and the SPC's emphasis on political action by the working class. Over 100 propaganda meetings were held in the two months preceding the election, and more than 16,000 leaflets were distributed. George Armstrong received, in Winnipeg, 849 votes, coming 21st out of 29 candidates. Again, he was not elected. Charles Lestor, who had already fallen out with the SPC, attacked the party, saying that "If we support this so-called bunch of socialists, we would not be true to ourselves". By January 1933, Lestor, as the editor of the *OBU Bulletin*, refused to continue publicising SPC meetings and activities in the paper.

Meanwhile, in British Columbia, things were moving swiftly as well as confusingly between 1931 and 1934. In his *Canadian Marxists*, Peter Campbell chronicles the events in more detail than is necessary here. At the centre was Ernest Winch who, like Charlie Lestor, had been in and out of a number of parties and groups. By 1931, Winch was the leader of the Independent Labour Party, formed as previously noted in Vancouver in 1925, as a coalition of former members of the Socialist Party such as Ernest Burns and Wallis Lefaux (by the 1960s, Lefaux had, apparently, returned to 'Impossibilism', and was in contact with the SPC again), the Federated Labour Party and the Canadian Labour Party. The ILP's ultimate aim was supposed to be a socialist revolution but, 'in the meantime', the party advocated numerous reforms and palliatives. In November 1931, it ran a number of candidates in a local, municipal election. Its 8-point programme included the municipal control of public utilities, and the "efficient organisation of our relief department". Shortly after, its Vancouver District Council instructed the party's representatives to be "non-committal on the question of sweepstakes". There was no mention of socialism. By the end of 1932, it had between 1400 and 1800 members with about 30 locals. Many of its members, however, were over 50, and most of the locals were little more than social clubs. At the fifth annual conference of the Independent Labour Party, it was decided to add the



word “socialist”; i.e. the Independent Labour Party (Socialist). This was ratified by its Executive Committee in February 1932. The ILP(S) was also in touch with the Ontario Labour Party, and Winch cooperated with the Communists.

In July 1932, following a referendum of the membership, the Independent Labour Party (Socialist) changed its name again – to the Socialist Party of Canada! The *Socialist Fulcrum* (no. 3/4 of 1981) takes up the story. Because of its socialist name, the Vancouver branch of the bogus SPC attracted some former members of the original Socialist Party of Canada to its public meetings. They soon discovered that this ‘Socialist Party of Canada’ accepted the reform, and not the abolition, of capitalism despite its name.

The ex-old SPC’ers decided to join the Vancouver Local of the non-socialist Socialist Party to persuade it to either abandon its new name or to reject its reformist approach, and adopt the revolutionary principles upon which the Manitoba group and its international Companion Parties were based. With an intensive education program, this tiny nucleus persuaded a majority of the Vancouver branch of the spurious SPC to secede and become the Vancouver Local of the real Socialist Party based in Winnipeg.

Not surprisingly, such activities gave rise to considerable friction. The bogus Socialist Party put up a contest for the headquarters hall and furniture which the old SPCers had acquired, but to no avail. The new Vancouver Local had about 50 members, including nine speakers. They met every night of the week; Sunday was for discussions on socialist principles, Monday was a business meeting, Tuesday an economics class, Thursday consisted of an open forum with invited speakers, Friday was history class, and Saturday was for a social. Towards the end of 1933, the Vancouver Local ran five candidates in the British Columbia Provincial election. The results were:

<b>candidate</b>	<b>constituency</b>	<b>votes</b>	<b>% of total</b>
James King	Burnaby	29	0.25%
William Black	Vancouver-Burrard	109	0.27%
Sydney Earp	Vancouver Centre	71	0.25%
Rodney Young	Vancouver Centre	63	0.22%
John Burrough	Vancouver Centre	98	0.24%

Not a very good start. Ernest Winch was elected for Burnaby with 4,548 votes (39.27%). The CCF vote averaged about 25%, but the Liberals swept the board. Ernest Winch meanwhile had taken his bogus socialist party into the recently founded Co-operative Commonwealth Federation.

To the east, in Ontario, another “socialist” party was founded in February 1932, mainly by Arthur Mould who had been a leading member of the Ontario Labour Party. Referred to as either the Socialist Party of Canada (Ontario) or just the Ontario Socialist Party, it did not adopt the object or principles of the SPC reconstituted in Winnipeg in 1931. nor did it have much in common with the Socialist Party of Ontario, founded in 1903, which became part of the SPC in 1905. the Ontario Socialist Party claimed to be a Marxist party, with a commitment to the class struggle

and working-class emancipation; but it advocated reforms like the ILP/SPC in British Columbia, as well as attracting expelled members of the Communist Party of Canada and various Trotskyists. Again, like the ILP/SPC, by 1934 it had largely disappeared into the CCF, and Arthur Mould became an apologist for the Soviet government, and a supporter of the Communist Party which he later joined in 1943.

Towards the end of 1933, Charles Lestor suddenly resigned as editor of the *OBU Bulletin*, and returned to England. On 8 February 1934, he applied for membership of the Leyton branch of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, and was accepted by the branch. On the application form, under remarks, Lestor wrote: "An old member of the Socialist Party of Canada", but did not mention all the other organisations to which he had, at various times, belonged. When his application to join came before the Executive Committee of the SPGB, all hell was let loose. Robert Barltrop, in *The Monument*, dramatically writes:

There was a spectacular debate, of course...Moses Baritz pounded the table and roared that this man was a spy from a counter-revolutionary camp. Charlie did not contest the allegation, probably because he was the only man in the room besides Baritz to whom it might have appealed; to his dying day he believed strongly that capitalism was protected by an army of conspirators and secret agents everywhere.

Which was not surprising really, as the Canadian Mounties had indeed monitored his every movement for years. Less dramatically, the Executive Committee minutes state that "Owing to certain objections raised against his membership of this Party by comrades who had known him in Canada, it was suggested that the SPC, of which he was one time a member, should be approached and its opinion asked to his fitness for membership of this Party". The report continues that the reply from the Socialist Party of Canada explained that Lestor, with other members of the OBU, had assisted in the formation of the SPC in June 1931; that he was one of the ablest exponents of socialism in North America, but that he was undisciplined and acted all the time as a freelance. After four or five months, he and the other OBU members had dropped out of the SPC, it being the opinion of the Canadian members that Lestor had come into the organisation with a view to controlling it on behalf of the OBU. "While editor of the *OBU Bulletin* he gave prominence to the reform organisation known as the SPC in British Columbia, which practically amounted to endorsement". The letter from the Socialist Party of Canada concludes by stating that while recognising Lestor's ability as a propagandist, it "would not admit him as a member of this party". It was moved that Lestor's application form not be accepted, but the resolution was defeated by nine votes to two, and Charles Lestor thus became a member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, of which he remained until his death in 1952. Barltrop comments: "Had Lestor's political reputation been made in Britain and not Canada, the SPGB almost certainly would have refused to have him".

### **The Western Socialist**

The Socialist Party of Canada now had no journal or newspaper. The *Western Clarion* had died in 1925. In Winnipeg, it had produced a few leaflets, including one outlining a brief history of the SPC since 1905, and another supporting Armstrong's candidature in the Provincial election. In 1933, the SPC discussed the desirability of

producing a party journal. The Vancouver Local decided to publish a journal in time for the Provincial election in October. The journal was launched that month, and it was agreed to call it the *Western Socialist*; beneath the title was the phrase “Journal of Scientific Socialism in the Western Hemisphere”. Its title was probably inspired by the original *Western Socialist*, a predecessor of the *Western Clarion*, first published in October 1902 by R. Parmenter Pettipiece.

The first issue of the *Western Socialist* states that “Following a lapse of several years we reorganised in Winnipeg in June 1931”; and, in the editorial: “Another arbitrary division, marked off by time, has been traversed since the last publication of the *Western Clarion*, the old official organ of the Socialist Party of Canada, and the first issue of our new paper, the *Western Socialist*.” This first issue analysed in detail the Regina Manifesto of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and, in the words of Jim Milne, a foundation member of the reorganised SPC, “found it wanting”. The second issue exposed the Communist Party as an anti-socialist organisation. There were times, particularly during the Depression years, when the *Western Socialist* was not published, or had to be mimeographed, because of lack of funds.

In the April 1935 issue, attention returned to the CCF when a correspondent asked: “As the CCF is a federation of working class parties having for their object the overthrow of capitalism and the building of a socialist society, why does the Socialist Party, which claims the same objective, continually make attacks upon it, confusing the minds of the workers?” The Editorial Committee of the *Western Socialist* replied that the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation carefully avoided any mention of the class struggle between employers and workers, whilst its leaders flatly deny its existence. It has, says the *Western Socialist*, a vague “ultimate” aim and an “immediate” programme of public works, the regulation of “wages and hours of labour”, the “right to work” and “a decent standard of living”. Indeed, if elected to office, the CCF “would have no mandate to proceed with socialist reconstruction, but would be compelled to carry on with the administration of capitalism”. Reform policies do not advance the case of socialism. On the contrary, they retard it. In the July issue, the editors criticised the ‘funny money’ Alberta Social Credit Party for advocating a basic dividend of \$25 to all workers in the Province if it gets into power. Social Credit argues that “there is a deficiency of purchasing power”, and that the solution would be to create, and distribute, more money. The editors reply that there is no shortage of money. All the wealth in existence represents at the same time all the purchasing power in existence, and every dollar in wealth produced is also a dollar in purchasing power. Money acts as a medium for circulating commodities, but only in proportion to the amount of value contained within it, or represented by it. Value is determined by labour-time.

In the same issue, Jack McDonald explains the uses, and limitations, of unions. In typical ‘Impossibilist’ language, he writes:

The price which the worker gets for his labour-power is closely associated with the cost of production of the commodity. This labour-power is itself a product of labour, as it requires a certain amount of food, clothes, and housing to maintain it in marketable condition. As every brand of labour-power needs must possess a considerable degree of skill, the expense of this training becomes embodied in the value of the product. Also, to ensure a continuous and ample supply of labour-power, the big slaves must keep on producing little slaves to take their places

when their years of usefulness have ended, and the expense of raising these recruits gets entangled in the cost of producing labour-power.

When this “worker commodity” reaches the market, continues McDonald, it becomes subject to the same laws that govern the purchase and sale of oats, bricks or macaroni. If the supply is small and the demand big, then wages are certain to rise above the bare cost of subsistence. This condition, however, seldom obtains, argues McDonald. “The market is invariably glutted with anxious sellers, and by no means overpopulated with buyers”. This keeps the price of labour-power “in a chronically submerged status”. In such a situation the workers should combine together (in unions) instead of separately, and by threatening the boss with strikes, boycotts or ‘go slows’; and “by means of these formidable means of persuasion, attempt to get better wages, less hours and more favourable conditions around the job”. Real victories have been won by organised workers in unions, but only in favourable circumstances where demand was extraordinarily large, such as in war time. But, concludes McDonald:

...in looking over the pages of modern history, we cannot find a great deal to boast about in the way of results. When we pause or consider the time and energy expended, even the most optimistic mortal could scarcely contend that any important successes have been recorded... Strikes can be broken, boycotts evaded, and ‘go slow’ suddenly develops into go fast when the rulers of the state call their reserves into action.

In 1938, Tim Buck, the long-time leader of the Communist Party and a one-time member of the Socialist Party of Canada and the Socialist Party of North America, issued a leaflet inviting workers to join the Communist Party. In the June issue of the *Western Socialist* the editors replied. In the first paragraph of the leaflet, Buck announces that “Our country is facing grave times”. The editors ask: “Since when have the working class owned anything more than their labour-power, that this land in which we live should be designated ours?” Tim Buck, who should have known better, condemns the poverty of the workers, but ignores the cause. Buck, says the *Western Socialist*, is critical of the anti-democratic actions of the governments of Ontario and Quebec, but wholeheartedly approves “the savagery and mass slaughter in Russia over the past several months”. How do you account for it, Tim?, demands the *Western Socialist*. He doesn’t.

### **Slow Progress**

The Socialist Party of Canada as reconstituted in 1931 was not a mass party. A Dominion Executive Committee was established in Winnipeg, from among the members in that city. The actual number of members who originally comprised the Winnipeg Local is not known, but it was recorded as 24 in March 1934. There were six members in the North Battleford Local and an unknown number in the Edmonton Local. According to the *Socialist Fulcrum* (no. 3/4, 1981), a properly constituted local was not founded in Victoria until May 1939. This latter was largely the work of Chris Luff. Although almost all members of the SPC in the early 1930s had been members of the SPC between 20 and 25 years previously, Luff was not among them. Chris Luff was born in 1882, and, before emigrating to Canada in 1920, had attended meetings of the Socialist Party of Great Britain in London. He heard Alex Anderson speak in

Hyde Park as early as 1907. At one time, Luff spoke regularly in Beacon Hill Park, in Victoria. He died in 1981, almost 100 years old.

As already noted, the membership of the Vancouver Local, in 1933, was around 50. It was officially recorded the following year as 45. Its headquarters, taken over from the bogus Socialist Party of Canada, was a two-storey, converted house at 666 (the Number of the Beast!) Homer Street. A large sign reading "Socialist Party of Canada" was erected across the front of the building. According to John Ahrens in 1990, who first saw the building in 1934, it had a speakers' platform, seats, tables and a large, first-class library upstairs. Enclosed with a letter to a "comrade" (probably George Jenkins) dated 13 September 1974, Jim Brownrigg lists all active members of the Vancouver Local, between 1933 and 1935, whom he could remember. They were: Jack and Mrs Aird, William Black, James Blackwood, Jim Brownrigg, Jack Burrough, Thomas Connors, William Coombs, George Craig, Syd Earp, Ellen Fairclough, Morley Ferguson, Bob and Mrs Gardener, James Jenkins, James King, Cecil Linder, Ray MacLeod, George Moran, George Palmer, William Pettipiece, Jim Pritchard, William Roddy, Doc Roberts, George Sangster, Alex Sheperd, Jack Taylor, Rodney Young and two members, Jamieson and Meany, whose first names Brownrigg could not recall. There were in addition at least half a dozen whose names he had forgotten. At least 20 of these had died by 1974.

During the 1930s and into the '40s, the Socialist Party of Canada had many more sympathetic former members than actual members. And, of course, some former members had joined, and were active in, the Communist Party and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. For example, in October 1933, Bill Pritchard became the British Columbia organiser of the CCF, and was editor of its paper, *The Commonwealth*. And during the same period, Ernest Winch often cooperated with the Communists. In 1937, Pritchard moved to California, where he remained, except for short visits back to Canada, for the rest of his life. He returned to 'Impossibilist' politics when he joined the Workers' Socialist Party of the United States, a companion party of the SPC. He died in 1981, still an active member of the socialist movement in the United States. Winch remained a member of the CCF, but during the 1950s supported the Communist Party's so-called peace 'fronts'. Winch died in 1957.

In 1931, the Socialist Party of Canada was able to espouse a much clearer picture of the kind of society which had been developing in Russia since the Bolshevik coup d'état. Most members of the SPC, even at the time, did not think it a socialist revolution, even if a number of them were sympathetic towards the Bolsheviks and the withdrawal of Russia from the war in Europe. Those who did not shout "Throw away your books, the time for action has come!", argued that the upheavals in the Russian Empire, prior to the Bolshevik coup and following the establishment of a 'Soviet' government, were the manifestations of a bourgeois revolution, which would ultimately force capitalism on Russia. Just what kind of capitalism, predominantly private or state, was not always clear to them. By the beginning of the 1930s, despite Communist Party claims that socialism existed in the USSR, it was more than obvious to socialists, and the Socialist Party of Canada, that the Soviet Union was rapidly developing a highly bureaucratic and dictatorial form of state capitalism. Hundreds of thousands of peasants had been forced off the land, and driven into the factories which were being constructed throughout Russia, Ukraine and Siberia. They had become propertyless wage slaves. They were not just creating profits, but by 1930, extremely high profits which were being used for further capital development and very high salaries for an emerging and privileged ruling elite. Proclaiming such truths would

soon bring the Socialist Party of Canada into conflict, in more ways than one, with the Communist Party of Canada.

Despite having its leading members arrested and officially being driven underground by the government, the Communist Party was still able to disrupt and, on occasion, break up Socialist Party meetings, particularly in Winnipeg where the SPC regularly 'held forth' at its 'university of the streets' on Market Square. Communist opposition was not just verbal. One Sunday afternoon in 1931, the Communists brought in literally scores of 'heavies' from Winnipeg's North End to break up a Socialist Party of Canada meeting. The *One Big Union Bulletin* of 18 June 1931 reports:

The Socialist Party of Canada was again subjected to a violent and unprovoked attack at the hands of the choicest scum of the Communist Party on Sunday evening last. A group of organized ruffians made the attack when the speaker was inviting questions, the gangsters being led by one who stood in front and gave signals to the rest.

...during question time, a rush was made and the speaker pushed off the box onto other thugs who had worked in behind, one of whom aimed a vicious kick at him and then ran away. A wild fight followed, the Communist gang making desperate efforts to get Lestor, the speaker, on the ground, but although surrounded by the latter, and with the aid of one or two friends fought his way through, and escaped.

Indeed, it was somewhat ironic that, early in the century, the Mounties, police and even the army would attack and break up socialist meetings, yet during the 1930s the police would warn the SPC that the Communists were likely to disrupt its meetings, as well as on occasion rescuing socialists from Communist disruption and attack. There is less evidence of Communist disruption of socialist meetings in the Pacific West, where the Communist Party had fewer members and the Socialist Party more support.

Despite some progress, and an increasing membership, in Winnipeg, Vancouver, Victoria, Toronto, Calgary, Moose Jaw, North Battleford and even in Montreal and St. Johns, all was not well within the Socialist Party of Canada.

In his report to the 1935 annual conference of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, the then 'Foreign Secretary', Frank Evans, states:

In Canada an unfortunate dispute arose in the Party, leading to the breaking up of a group which controls the *Western Socialist*. The present position and future probable developments are obscure. Details as to the cause of the dispute are of a complicated nature and are in the hands of the Executive Committee. As soon as matters are cleared up a report will be made to Branches.

A letter was received from Fred Neale, General Secretary of the Socialist Party of Canada, dated 12 March 1935, reporting that a group in Winnipeg had split from the SPC. The split resulted in the formation of two rival SPCs. The main bone of contention was clause six of the Declaration of Principles. The official Socialist Party, who were in a minority, was represented by the General Secretary, Neale, and Sheperd. The unofficial SPC, who were in the majority, included Jim Milne, George Armstrong of Winnipeg, and Jack Burrough in Vancouver. Basically the Milne faction was in favour of amending clause six, and the Neale faction opposed any such

alteration. Apparently, the official minority faction was far from happy with material published in the January 1935 issue of the *Western Socialist*.

Although virtually none of the “voluminous explanations” and correspondence survives, the nature of the dispute, which caused the split is clear.

The only contentious article in the January 1935 issue of the *Western Socialist* is “What Next! What Next!” in which the writer A.P. (Alex Paterson) concludes:

Let the Communists get their barricades ready, arm themselves with bows and arrows, pick handles, and demands of one idiotic kind or another and see if the State will intervene.

You are darned right it will, and its power and ruthlessness may make the necessity of the first step needed to achieve emancipation for the workers and the human race self-evident to all reformers and quasi-revolutionaries, whether they be CCFers, Communists or just plain dumb Liberals and Tories. That first step is to capture those State powers with the avowed intention of using them to crush the opposition of those minorities who object to social ownership and democratic control of the means of, and for, producing wealth.

Now clause six of the Declaration of Principles of the Socialist Party of Canada states, as does that of the Socialist Party of Great Britain:

That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly of the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of plutocratic privilege.

The principle does not claim that the ‘proletarian’ State would, or should, be used “to crush the opposition of those minorities who object” to the establishment of socialism, unless those minorities, generally assumed to be former capitalists and/ or their hangers-on by socialists, use or attempt to use violence against the wishes and actions of the majority. Then, according to the logic of clause six, it could be used. Peaceful opposition would be considered quite acceptable in the view of socialists generally. But, presumably, not by the writer of the article “What Next! What Next!”. Following the establishment of socialism, the Socialist Party of Canada says, echoing Engels, that the coercive State would rapidly die out or “wither away” to be replaced by an administration of things.

Initially, the SPGB, through its EC, adopted a policy of neutrality; but a few weeks later, it instructed the editors of the *Socialist Standard* to omit adverts for the *Western Socialist*. On 2 July 1935, the EC of the SPGB resolved that it was “opposed to amending clause six of the Constitution and Bylaws [i.e. the D of P] of the Socialist Party of Canada”. Milne wrote to the SPGB complaining of the “undemocratic action” of the Dominion Executive Committee and General Secretary of the SPC in September; but the SPGB EC stated that “We are not in a position to give judgement on [SPC] internal affairs”. The SPGB, however, refused to send copies of the *Socialist Standard* to the Milne faction. By the 13th of October 1936, the Workers’ Socialist Party of the United States resolved that Milne be written to, and asked if

there was any chance of the SPC dispute being settled. In April 1937, as the dispute in Canada had not been settled, the WSP(US) proposed a conference, and this was taken up by the SPGB. It was supported by Sheperd, but rejected by Neale, who refused to consider any reconciliation. Efforts were made by the WSP(US) and the SPGB to hold a conference, but this apparently never took place. In November 1937, the Boston Local of the Workers' Socialist Party of the United States criticised the stand taken by the SPGB, and called on it to recognise the majority SPC, not the minority. The SPGB, however, again adopted a policy of neutrality between the two factions. And in January 1938, a committee of the SPGB examined all the correspondence which it had received, and resolved that no fresh facts had been uncovered. A draft on these lines was therefore prepared.

Despite the fact that in 1936 the Vancouver Local of the SPC stated that, in the opinion of its members, the differences in the party were irreconcilable, by the beginning of 1938, in the words of the General Secretary of the SPGB, "unity had now been re-established". By June 1939, two months before the commencement of the Second World War, locals of the Socialist Party of Canada were reported in Edmonton, Moose Jaw, Nanaimo, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria and Winnipeg. Locals in Montreal and St. John came and went probably before the beginning of the controversies in 1935 or, at the latest, February 1936. In March 1938, the SPGB agreed to take copies again of the *Western Socialist* on an exchange basis with the *Socialist Standard*. Comradely relations were restored between the Socialist Party of Great Britain and the reunited Socialist Party of Canada.

### Elections

In 1935, the Edmonton Local of the SPC allegedly ran four candidates in the Alberta election. They were G.A. Brown, Frank J. Campbell, C.M. Christiansen and Roy W. Devore. They produced a leaflet in which they ask "Mr Workingman":

Are you tired of the capitalist system yet? Would you prefer it dished up on a different platter with new seasoning, or are you ready to break with it altogether and set up a new system of society?

It continues:

Socialism is the only logical alternative to capitalism. *SOCIALISM HAS NEVER BEEN TRIED* – anywhere, at any time! Does this statement strike you as being strange? Do you immediately think of the Russian Dictatorship? Of labor governments or the "CCF"? Socialists have nothing in common with these. They are NOT alternatives to capitalism. The Socialist Party was here before these were ever heard of. We will be here when they are forgotten. The Socialist Party advocates socialism without qualification, without equivocation and without subterfuge. There can be no halfway ground.

*All other Parties* in this election advocate capitalism with certain variations. Their purpose is to mend and not end *capitalism*. Ours is the exact opposite.



Is it not far more consistent to vote for something you want even though you do not get it, than to vote for something you don't want, and get it?

The *Socialist Fulcrum* (no. 3/4, vol. 14, 1981) relates how one of the Socialist Party candidates, Roy Devore, managed to inveigle his way on to the platform of a large Social Credit Party rally, whose main speaker was "Bible Bill" Aberhart, a proponent of Major Douglas's 'funny money' theories. Not realising that Devore was an opponent, they allowed him to speak. He then proceeded to expose the 'Socred's' monetary reform programme. And the audience, assuming that Devore was some kind of Socred, applauded. According to the *Socialist Fulcrum*:

As the socialist stated his case, he kept an eye on the Bible puncher seated across the platform from him. A red hue appeared on the back of Aberhart's neck and slowly progressed upward and toward the front of his bald head. The 'great leader' knew what was happening and must have feared disruption in the thinking of his flock. He needn't have worried. After many years of running capitalism in Alberta, that once powerful and conservative voice of the capitalist class is now extinct.

And the outcome of the election? It is something of a mystery as regards the Socialist Party of Canada. The *Socialist Fulcrum* gives no results. Under "Summary of Results by Electoral Division: General Election, Thursday, August 22, 1935" in *A Report on Alberta Elections 1905-1982* (Edmonton, 1983), Kenneth A. Wark, Chief Electoral Officer, lists the candidates of various parties, including Conservative, Liberal, Labour, Social Credit, United Farmers of Alberta and a handful of Communists and Independents. But no Socialist Party candidates are listed for Edmonton or elsewhere. Peter Campbell, as well as a number of other writers, comments that the SPC candidates may have been withdrawn just prior to the election.

In the same year, the Vancouver Local fielded a candidate, John "Jack" Taylor, in the Federal Election. He was opposed by the Liberal, Ian MacKenzie, who won with 7,658 votes; Wallis Lefaux, a former member of the SPC, representing the CCF, received 7,552 votes; A. Sherwood polled 5,187; and an independent, Mahon, who polled 1,872 votes. Jack Taylor of the SPC came bottom with a disappointing 251 votes.

Undeterred, in October 1936, the Vancouver Local contested a by-election in Vancouver-Burrard, in which its candidate, Christopher R. Walker, polled only 45 votes (0.22%).

At the General Election of 1937, the Vancouver Local stood two candidates:

<b>candidate</b>	<b>constituency</b>	<b>votes</b>	<b>% of total</b>
James King	Vancouver Centre	234	(0.68%)
John Burrough	Vancouver East	53	(0.13%)

In Vancouver East, Burrough was opposed by former Socialist Party member, Bill Pritchard, who was standing for a breakaway group from the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the British Columbia (Social) Constructives. He polled

464 votes. Harold Winch, another former SPCer, received 11,350 votes on the CCF ticket, and was elected.

There was another by-election in Vancouver Centre in 1939, at which the by now united Socialist Party of Canada nominated John Burrough as its candidate. He received 74 votes (0.67%) from a total of almost 11,000. The three other candidates achieved more than 3,000 each. Obviously, the workers of Vancouver, as elsewhere in Canada, were not interested in, or prepared to vote for, socialism.

For the Manitoba Provincial Election of 27 July 1936, the Socialist Party fielded its General Secretary, Fred Neale, as its official candidate in Winnipeg. A leaflet was distributed, headed "Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada", which reprinted the SPC's Object and Principles, and contained a section headed "Other Political Party Positions" which briefly commented upon the policies of the Liberal-Progressive and Conservative Parties, Social Credit, the Independent Labor Party, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the Communist Party. This stated in part:

The Liberal-Progressives and the Conservatives are avowedly capitalist parties and stand for the preservation of the existing private property relationships. The workers, therefore, should know what to expect from these parties which openly stand for the present system of exploitation...

Knowing that SOCIALISM is the ONLY solution to the poverty problem, and that it can be brought about ONLY when the electors become socialists, we have consistently opposed the ILP, CCF and Communist Party, all of which practice the dishonest political manoeuvre of seeking election on a program of reforming capitalism. It is dishonest because some, at least, of those who do it know that the reforms will not solve the problem.

The leaflet concludes: "Our candidate, FRED NEALE, stands for SOCIALISM; if you want SOCIALISM, VOTE FOR IT".

The workers of Winnipeg did not, however, want or vote for socialism.

Somewhat surprisingly, there is no record of Fred Neale having run as a candidate for the Socialist Party of Canada in any Manitoba Provincial election during the 1930s. It might be that, as in earlier cases, the candidate was withdrawn before polling day. A Frederick Neale (Contractor) is, however, officially listed as a candidate for Wellington South, in the Federal Election on 14 October 1935, as a "Rec" (Reconstruction Party).

What was the Reconstruction Party? It was a small party, which emerged in the early 1930s as a West Coast variant of the League of Reconstruction, according to Peter Campbell in his *Canadian Marxists*. It was reformist, semi-Fabian and had much in common with the CCF from which it broke away. Almost all of its members were former members of the Socialist Party. Indeed, Bill Pritchard was, for a short while, chairman of the Reconstruction Party in British Columbia. Whether the Reconstruction Party's Frederick Neale is the same as the Socialist Party's Fred Neale is not known; it certainly shouldn't have been as dual membership of this type was, and is, strictly forbidden. The Reconstruction Party soon faded away.

## **Racism and the Klan**

As described in Chapter One, there were Asian workers in Canada, mainly in British Columbia, as early as 1880. They included Indians, Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese. In the main, they did not migrate to Canada by choice. Hostility, over racism as well as anti-Asian riots, began almost immediately following their arrival in British Columbia. Most of the opposition came from workers, including Trade Unionists, of British origin. Many workers from Britain looked upon Asians, as well as immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, as inferior.

Such racism did not abate during the 1920s and 1930s, particularly in British Columbia, but also in Saskatchewan. Bumsted, in his *The Peoples of Canada*, details the situation during this period.

Immigration from Asia continued during the post-world-war decades, mainly from China and Japan. Says Bumsted:

As the Province through which immigration from Asia was bound to come, British Columbia felt itself particularly threatened. Much of the criticism of the Oriental 'menace' was economic in nature, although underlying this objection was a general concern for the racial integrity of the Province as a "white" civilization. Exclusion of Asian immigrants continued to be a major goal, and attempts were made to limit both the amount of land held by Orientals, particularly in the agricultural sector, and competition in retail trade, especially from small stores run by Chinese grocers and their families. The general argument was that the newcomers would not assimilate, although there is considerable evidence that the Japanese were acculturating rapidly.

The increasing territorial expansion of Imperial Japan, in the 1930s, only increased concern in British Columbia regarding Japanese residents.

Another, much more sinister problem in Canada following the war, was the revival of the Ku Klux Klan in the United States, and its appearance, and activities, in Canada, particularly in Saskatchewan. In the US, the Klan was devoted to spreading anti-black, as well as anti-Catholic, propaganda. According to Bumsted, its secret rituals, fundamentalist Protestantism and operations, appeared to some Canadians little different from a host of other secret societies. It posed as the defender of British nationality against the 'alien hordes'. Many of its supporters were conservative Protestant ministers. By 1929, there were more than 125 Klan chapters in Saskatchewan alone. Promoting extreme Canadian nationalism, the KKK was often supported by powerful Conservative politicians. Explains Bumsted:

...its appeal was plainly to a beleaguered conservative Protestant population in Saskatchewan, heirs to the old spirit of WASPishness so prevalent in large sections of rural Canada. Like the Orange Order, it was unabashedly racist and exclusionist in its rhetoric, appealing to popular fears of various sorts.

A minority of Canadians of German and Italian origin supported Hitler and Mussolini. A Canadian government representative, in 1932, spoke sympathetically at the League

of Nations in support of Japanese claims to Manchuria; and, surprisingly, at the Berlin Olympic Games the Canadian athletes were the only Commonwealth contingent to give the Nazi salute at the opening ceremony. Moreover, of the 800,000 Jews who escaped from Nazi-controlled Europe, the Canadian authorities accepted fewer than 4,000. Most Canadians of Ukrainian origin were anti-fascist, but a sizeable minority were anti-Jewish, and supported the pro-Nazi Ukrainian National Federation of Canada, a front for the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists based in Europe.

Both racism and anti-Jewish prejudices were not unknown among other sections of the Canadian population during this period. Indeed, in 1939, anti-Jewish views, possibly most overt in Quebec, were also prevalent among English-speaking Canadians as well.

Jewish quotas existed in various professions, universities, medical schools and industries. Jews were restricted from buying property and in some areas, from holidaying at some resorts, from joining many private clubs or using their recreational facilities and even from sitting on the boards of various charitable, educational, financial and business organisations. Anti-Jewish sentiments were being voiced regularly – and with impunity – by many respectable newspapers, politicians, businessmen and clergymen, and by leading officers of such groups as the Canadian Corps Association, the Orange Order, the Knights of Columbus and farm and business organisations.

*(None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948,*  
I. Abella and H. Troper, Toronto, 1982)

As has previously been noted, the Socialist Party of Canada at its foundation in 1905, and for a number of years thereafter, was not unanimously anti-racist, despite calling on the workers of the world to unite for socialism. Some members, including Hawthornthwaite, were anti-Asian. By 1910, however, the SPC declared that it looked upon all workers equally, irrespective of their origins. And by the early 1930s, the Socialist Party had a clear-cut, anti-racist viewpoint and policy.

It argued that racism was a social phenomenon, whose cause was rooted in the structure of modern capitalist society. The claims that there are ‘pure’ or inferior or superior ‘races’, or unchangeable racial characteristics, is unscientific and, therefore, groundless, asserts the SPC. Racism is largely a social problem which cannot be solved or eradicated in isolation, or within capitalist society. Only socialism will finally put an end to racist attitudes and prejudices. In the words of clause four the Socialist Party of Canada's principles: “...the emancipation of the working-class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex”.

## *Chapter Seven*

### **WAR AGAIN (1939-1945)**

During the 1920s and 1930s, Fascism and Nazism had come to power in Italy and Germany; and Spain and almost every country in Central and Eastern Europe had succumbed to quasi-fascist or right-wing totalitarian regimes. Many leftists, while opposing fascism and Nazism, supported the equally totalitarian Soviet state. By the late 1930s, war between Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, on the one hand, and supposedly democratic France and Britain on the other, was almost inevitable. But what was the cause of the Second World War? Was it, as many on the Left imagined, a conflict between fascism and anti-fascism; between totalitarianism and democracy? And what would be the view, and stand, of the Socialist Party of Canada and its companion parties? Whilst vigorously opposing fascism and Nazism, their views were not the same as the Communists or the Social Democrats and Labourites, either in Europe or Canada.

Ten years previously, the Communists had predicted the imminent collapse of capitalism. They were wrong; it did not collapse. For much of the same time, they and many Labourites, claimed that fascism was the final political form that the capitalist class would use to crush the trade unions and workers' parties. It was, they said, the bourgeoisie's last gasp. In the view of the socialists of the Socialist Party of Canada, this was not so. It was their view that fascism and Nazism were totalitarian movements which arose, and could only arise, in countries which were still relatively backward from a capitalist standpoint; which had a largely undeveloped parliamentary system; had, like Italy and Germany, only recently become a unified nation; had a working class who were politically unsophisticated; and, importantly, had largely been kept out of world markets for their surplus commodities. The view of the Socialist Party of Canada was that a war would be a conflict between states over more material things than fascism or Nazism versus democracy; and that it would, in fact, be a very similar war to the First World War. The SPC, moreover, had little faith in Canada's so-called democracy. And in this they were soon to be proved right.

#### **Another Anti-War Manifesto**

On 1 September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Two days later, Great Britain declared war on Germany. Canada was soon to follow. On the same day that Britain declared war, the Dominion Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Canada drew up the "Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada on the War".

In typical 'Impossible' language, the Manifesto begins by stating that "Once again the great powers of Europe are at war. Once again the workers in their millions are drawn from their sweatshops, their breadlines and their slums, to be thrown into a horrible conflict neither of their making nor in their interests. Once again the bestial, mercenary nature of capitalist society is exposed". In more sober and analytical prose, the Manifesto explains that it is the nature of capitalism that in their quest for markets, raw materials and sources of exploitation, the respective capitalists of the world are engaged in constant competitive struggle with their rivals; and by virtue of their control of the powers of government, they are in a position to transfer their conflicts

from the purely economic field to the military. This argues the SPC, is the explanation not just for previous wars, but the present one. It is not a war for “democracy, freedom and the independence of small nations”. Such arguments are merely used as bait for the participation of “politically uneducated workers”.

The Manifesto then quotes clauses one, two, three and six of the Socialist Party of Canada’s declaration of principles, adding:

The Socialist Party of Canada further declares that no interest is at stake in this conflict which justifies the shedding of a single drop of working class blood; and it extends its fraternal greetings to the workers of all countries, and calls upon them to unite in the greater struggle, the struggle for the establishment of socialism: a system of society in which the ever-increasing poverty, misery, terror and bloodshed of capitalism shall be forever banished from the earth.

The “Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada on the War” was prominently printed in the October 1939 edition of the *Western Socialist*.

Just prior to the outbreak of war, the Dominion Executive Committee of the party in Winnipeg, heard rumours that the Federal government was considering the suppression of the *Western Socialist* and possibly the SPC. In the First World War, the party had never actually been suppressed, but the *Western Clarion* had. As a precaution, and to forestall such a move, the Socialist Party of Canada, together with its companion party, the Workers’ Socialist Party of the United States, decided to move the publishing of the *Western Socialist* to Boston in the United States, from where in November 1939 it was issued as the joint official journal of both organisations.

The precautions proved wise for, in May 1941, the Canadian government did indeed ban the *Western Socialist* from Canada. On 8 June, the SPC wrote to the Press Censors for Canada, inquiring as to the reasons why the *Western Socialist* had been banned. Cail Reuileo, on behalf of the government censors, replied that over many months “objectionable material” had appeared in the journal. He particularly cited the following statements: “The worker has no interest in maintaining war production”; “Patriotism serves merely as a cloak for loyalty to capitalism, for sacrifice of the workers so that industry may have its profits. It can only bring harm to the working class”; and “It [the war] is simply the competition of two rival business firms, so to speak, for trade”. This sort of comment, replied the government, “is not likely to be helpful to our national war effort”. The government official emphasised that the censor’s action was not taken because it was a socialist publication; other “known socialist and labour publications”, even critical of the Canadian government, had not been banned. “However, statements which are deliberately intended to sabotage morale cannot be tolerated, as you will understand”. Reuileo concludes by saying that any publication so banned at a given time, may not necessarily remain banned for the duration of the war. It would depend on whether the journal continued to publish such views on the war.

In the July-August 1941 issue of the *Western Socialist*, the Socialist Party of Canada replied to the Press Censors. The reply makes no apology for the “objectionable” statements. Canada, like so many ‘democratic’ countries, continues the reply, refuses to allow its workers to hear all sides of the argument. The workers are continuously filled with war-mongering propaganda. But the reply denies that socialists “sabotage morale”, stating that socialists “condemn sabotage” as dangerous,

and a detrimental policy, “since working class emancipation can only be attained as the result of the democratic act of the overwhelming majority”. Moreover, socialists in Canada do not favour “enemy capitalists” as against native ones. The *Western Socialist* riposte claims that journals which “are in harmony with the war effort” are “neither truly socialist, nor in the interest of labour”. The SPC is not prepared to compromise. “Rather than emasculate the *Western Socialist* into a fear-watered, anaemic irresolute publication, where only that appears which is sanctioned by the capitalist censors, we would suspend publication altogether”, concludes the reply. (Incidentally, the Socialist Party of Great Britain took a different view. Both Barltrop and Perrin note that rather than risk suppression of the *Socialist Standard*, the SPGB, after June 1940, did not permit the journal to print anti-war material or articles, saying: “While we deeply regret having to adopt this course, we cannot see any workable alternative to it.”)

There was not complete unanimity with regard to the war within the ranks of the Socialist Party of Canada, however. Most members were opposed. But in Vancouver in 1941, a few members of the local came out in support of the war which, like the Canadian government, they claimed was “to save democracy”. The Dominion Executive Committee in Winnipeg, in the view of John Ahrens, writing a brief history of the Vancouver locals in 1990, “arbitrarily expelled the Vancouver Local in spite of the fact that most members held the socialist position”. In Ahrens’ view, the expulsion of the entire local was not a democratic act, and produced hostility between Vancouver socialists and the Dominion Executive Committee. At the time the local had about 40 members. Notably a similar schism occurred in the Socialist Party of Great Britain with fourteen members of the Islington branch resigning en masse in April 1940.

### **The Communists and Labourites in the War**

At the seventh Congress of the Communist International, held in Moscow between 25 July and 21 August 1935, it was decided to initiate a united front, on an international scale against fascism. The long denounced Social Democrats (“social fascists”), Liberals and even progressive Conservatives were to be welcomed as allies in the struggle against fascism. The German Communist Party’s alliance with the Nazis, against the Social Democrats, in Prussia in August 1931, had long been forgotten. The Popular Front in France and elsewhere was looked upon as a success by the Comintern. The non-aggression pact, signed on 23 August 1939, between the USSR and Nazi Germany, took the Communist parties of the world, including the Communist Party of Canada, by surprise. Within days of the outbreak of war in Europe, the conflict was not between fascism and anti-fascism, but a conflict between Germany and Anglo-French imperialism, according to the Comintern.

Following Hitler’s attack on Poland on 1 August 1939, J. Litterick, a member of the Manitoba Provincial Parliament, and secretary of the Manitoba section of the Communist Party of Canada, rushed a telegram to Mackenzie King, the Liberal Prime Minister of Canada, in which he, Litterick, stated in part:

Hitler has launched his military machine against Poland. The war that has begun establishes new conditions for the struggle of the democracies against Fascist aggression. The war in Poland is not a German-Polish war, but a war in which Hitler seeks to destroy world democracy. The

defence of Polish independence is at one and the same time the fight to defeat and crush the aggressors. The Communist Party stands for the independence of Poland, and the Communists stand together with the whole Canadian people in their fight to smash the aggressor.

The Moscow-Berlin non-aggression pact required the Communist Party of Canada, as elsewhere, to change sides. It did not, however, oppose the war as did the Socialist Party of Canada in its Manifesto of 3 September. Within days, the CPC campaigned for a peaceful outcome to the conflict, but on Hitler's terms. Not surprisingly, there was turmoil within the ranks of the Communist Party of Canada, with many members resigning from the party, and a number of leading members, such as Litterick, going into hiding. In June 1940, because of the CPC's 'defeatist' policy, Mackenzie King's government banned the Communist Party, and arrested and interned 100 leading members of the party. During the same month, the government banned the Ukrainian Labor Farmer Temple Association, closing down its halls and interning about 40 of its leading members, on the grounds that the Ukrainians did not support the Canadian war effort, which they denied. The Liberal 'democratic' government of Canada did not believe much in practicing democracy.

Soviet Russia soon took advantage of the non-aggression pact. Eastern Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as parts of Finland and Rumania, were annexed. But then, at first light on the morning of Sunday, 22 June 1941, Operation Barbarossa began. Nazi Germany attacked Soviet Russia. And overnight, the USSR became an ally of Great Britain and Canada. In the words of the Socialist Party of Canada, "Out of their hiding place came the Communists, flag-flapping and pledging undying allegiance to the cause of peace and democracy, and the struggle against Fascism". The imprisoned Communists were released from internment by the Canadian government in 1942. In 1943, the Communists reorganised as the Labor Progressive Party (LPP). It immediately became the most jingoistic of all the parties supporting the war. It demanded greater production from the workers, and opposed all efforts by them to increase their wages and to improve their conditions of work. It sabotaged all industrial action by the workers. As in Britain and elsewhere, Communist Party membership increased, at least for a while. In August 1943, Fred Rose was elected to the Federal Parliament. Three months before, the Comintern was officially dissolved.

Fred Rose was born in Poland in 1907, and came to Canada with his parents in 1920. He became a Canadian citizen in 1926, when his father, Jacob Rosenberg, was naturalised. He joined the Young Communist League in 1925, the same year the Socialist Party collapsed, becoming its national organiser in 1929, when he was also appointed to the Central Executive Committee. In 1930, Rose was sent to Moscow for six months where he served on the Executive Committee of the Communist Youth International, replacing Harry Young (later of the SPGB), who had just returned to England. He was a Communist Party candidate in Quebec in the 1935 Federal election, and in the Provincial election the following year, but in neither case was elected. In 1937, Rose was appointed to the Control Commission of the Communist Party of Canada, with the task of, to use his own words, "ferreting out traitors, spies and Fascists, who might have become members of the party for ulterior purposes". In June 1940, like other CPC leaders, he went underground, but was arrested by the Mounties in September 1942. In October, he was released on the understanding that he did not, under Section 39C of the Defence of Canada Regulations, participate in Communist Party activities. This he immediately ignored, becoming a Labor Progressive MP the following year.



Schmil Kogan, who later used the name Sam Cohen and, later still, Sam Carr, was born in the Ukraine in 1906. He arrived in Canada in August 1924. In 1925, he moved to Montreal where he joined the Young Communist League, becoming a full member of the Communist Party in 1927. Carr was sent to the Soviet Union in 1929 where he studied at the Comintern's Lenin Institute. Following his return to Canada, he was appointed Organising Secretary of the Communist Party. The same year, he applied for naturalisation; but, in fact, was convicted on three charges under the criminal code of Canada, for which he received a ten year sentence. In 1935, however, he was released on parole. In 1937, Carr again visited the Soviet Union and spent a short time in Spain. And in 1938, he became editor of the Communist Party of Canada's publication, *The Clarion*. In June 1940, Carr too disappeared, but was arrested in September 1942. But, like Rose, he was released shortly after. He was at last granted Canadian nationality in March 1945. A few days later, he was given a passport valid for the United States, Mexico and Cuba. At the beginning of 1945 the Communists of the Labor Progressive Party were 'riding high', but it was not to last.

On 5 September 1945, Igor Segeivitch Gouzenko, cipher clerk at the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, walked out of the building and defected. He took with him about 100 documents, including cables, which he had not previously secreted each time he had gone home. Most of the documents had been sent to or from the Glavnoye Razedyvatelnoye Upravleniye (GRU, Chief Directorate of Military Intelligence) in Moscow. These he handed over to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who, in collaboration with Britain's security service, translated them. They related to British, American and Canadian atomic weapons developments, radar, diplomatic messages, as well as forged Canadian passports. They also listed the codenames of a score or more of Soviet spies and secret agents working in Canada. The codenames included "Alek", "Debouz" and "Frank". We are not interested here in the detailed investigation, the arrest and jailing of most of them. Suffice it to say that "Alek" was the British scientist Dr Alan Nunn May, who was later sentenced to ten years imprisonment in Britain; "Debouz" was Fred Rose, who was jailed for six years; and "Frank" was Sam Carr, who, taking advantage of his newly acquired passport, and possibly receiving a tip-off, escaped to Cuba. Not surprisingly, however, the revelations that Rose, Carr and a number of other members and sympathisers of the Labor Progressive Party were Soviet spies had an adverse affect on the party. Once again the Communists in Canada were in deep trouble.

During the First World War, the trade unions were divided. In general, the largely craft unions supported the war in the east of the country, although some union leaders complained that the government did not consult them. In the west, most trade unionists and their leaders were hostile to the war, influenced by the Socialist Party of Canada and, to a lesser extent, by the Industrial Workers of the World. Attitudes were not the same in the Second World War, as there was not the rampant inflation and most workers regarded the war as a campaign against Hitler and Nazism. In the Second World War, the main leftist, reform political movement was the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation.

The CCF was far from united regarding the war, at least at first. Probably a majority of its members were in favour of the war, but with reservations. At the commencement of the war, the party's leader, James S. Woodsworth, caused quite a stir, both in the party and in parliament. Milne says that Woodsworth shook the CCF "from coast to coast". He was a Methodist, a militant anti-Marxist social democrat, whose conception of socialism was statist; he had, at one time, tried to cooperate with the Communists, but they had, he said, "double-crossed him". He wanted, in his own

words, “to improve the condition of the working class” in a rather sentimental way. Nevertheless, Woodsworth “took a position on the war much like that of the Socialist Party of Canada”, according to Milne. The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation soon rallied to M.J. Coldwell, who later succeeded Woodsworth, and who stated the ‘official’ position of the party to the war, which was that Canada should give economic assistance to Britain and its allies but there should be no overseas military participation by Canada, Canadian troops being used only for home defence and the “preservation of democracy at home”. Coldwell added: “Before a single Canadian is asked to give his life, voluntary or otherwise, to fight for his country, the profit should be taken out of the war”. Angus McInnis, a west coast CCF member of parliament, complained that Labour representation during the war was “almost entirely lacking”, and Coldwell argued that the CCF considered that “the only rational way of financing the war is by the country taking over the complete ownership of the banks and other financial institutions”. Milne concludes: “So the CCF inched along the way to war”.

### **...and the Socialist Party**

Although the *Western Socialist* was banned, the Socialist Party was not. Indeed, the party held both indoor and outdoor meetings throughout the war. At the Manitoba Provincial Election in April 1941, there were Conservative, Liberal, CCF and Social Credit candidates. The SPC did not contest the election, but it issued and distributed a lengthy statement. Considerable space is devoted to the poverty of the working class and its cause; and the CCF and other Labour candidates are criticised for their ‘socialism’, a form of public ownership of various means of production and transportation. But, except for an aside about the “current military strategy in Africa”, there is surprisingly no criticism, or mention, of the war. The CCF often came in for criticism from the SPC. This writer has in front of him a leaflet advertising a meeting in the Empire Hall, Winnipeg, on Thursday, 28 October 1943, in which Milne was booked to speak for the Socialist Party of Canada, on the subject of “The CCF and Socialism”. The leaflet states that “All are welcome and we are sure your time will be well spent”. At that time, the SPC was also holding outdoor meetings in Vancouver, Victoria and Winnipeg, and the Calgary Local was holding meetings in the park. There was little overt hostility. Indeed, the Calgary Local had been holding Sunday evening meetings for some considerable time. One of the Local’s most active members was Dan Pollitt, who died in July 1942. Of him the *Socialist Standard* of March 1942 reports:

Speakers will recollect with gratitude his services at the open-air Sunday meetings in the Park. He arranged the rostrum and the benches, and his genial countenance radiated encouragement to the speakers. After an afternoon in the scorching Alberta sun the speakers appreciated the hospitality and shade of the Pollitts’ pleasant bungalow, where they were welcomed by members of the family. Discussions were engaged in till a late hour, and less informed members received much enlightenment there.

By 1943, a new local had been formed in Vancouver by Ray MacLeod, F. Neale, Bill Roddy, a Miss Fairbourne and a number of others. Neale and Roddy distributed between 60 and 70 copies of the *Western Socialist* each month, clandestinely or

openly after the ban was lifted (probably in late 1944). In 1945, Ray MacLeod delivered 15 radio talks on behalf of the local, on CKMO. And the same year he stood on behalf of the SPC as a candidate in the Provincial election for Vancouver Centre. He received a disappointing 105 votes (0.25%). Both of the Coalition candidates were returned with almost 11,000 votes each.

In 1944, the Dominion Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Canada published *The Socialist Manifesto*. The preface, written by Jim Milne, commences:

This pamphlet was first published in 1910 as *The Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada*. During the ten-year period ending in 1920, five editions, totalling more than 25,000 copies, were issued. The growing insistence of members and sympathisers impels us to place the *Manifesto* once again in the hands of the working class. The present edition consists of 5,000 copies.

There are one or two minor alterations from the previous, 1920, edition. The section on history remains the same as the original, 1910, edition. There is a new, and updated, section of politics, which was considered desirable in view of the importance which reform parties, such as the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, had assumed in the minds of Canadian workers since 1920. Nevertheless, nothing was said about the Communist Party or the Social Credit Party, both of which in different ways had caused immense harm to the working class movement. Revelations regarding Fred Rose, Sam Carr and the Soviet spy ring were still a couple of years in the future.

The preface comments that it is the second time that the *Manifesto* had been issued in the midst of a war, and continues that then, as now, “the banner of international socialism was held high and the hand of fellowship extended to the workers of the world”. The SPC reaffirmed its adherence to socialist principles.

In the updated section on politics, which was considered *The Socialist Manifesto* claimed that capitalism has outlived its usefulness. Adding,

Within its confines can be found no solution for the wretchedness and insecurity endured by the workers. No more than momentary relief has ever resulted from the generations of effort to improve their conditions of life. Even their trade unions – their most potent weapon in these activities – have been forced to remain for the most part on the defensive, struggling not so much to improve their conditions as to prevent these conditions from becoming worse. Socialism offers the only way out. The failure of the workers to recognise this fact – no matter what else they do – can result only in the preservation of things as they are, with the prospect of darker days ahead.

The *Manifesto* claims that practically all reform legislation on the statute books has been enacted by capitalist political parties, not because capitalists are noted for their generosity, but because they are “practical gentlemen”, and realise that if workers live under poor sanitary conditions, and are ready victims of ailments, they will be spending time at home “that could be better spent turning out surplus-value for the factory owner”. Healthy workers are the most productive and profitable! *The Socialist Manifesto*, therefore, argues that

Capitalism can be reformed. It can be reformed in many ways. But it cannot be reformed in such a manner as to effect an essential improvement in the working class conditions of life. It cannot be reformed in such a manner as to raise the workers from the poverty level. Reforms, insofar as they have had any effect, have been effective simply in preventing the workers from sinking too far below the poverty level, their function being to do more than preserve the workers as able-bodied means of production.

The *Manifesto* reiterates what the socialist movement in Canada had been saying, on and off, for about 45 years – that the workers must ultimately turn to socialism. For socialism would solve the problem of distribution. Goods would no longer be produced for sale with a view to profit, but solely for use. And production would be pre-determined, and distribution affected neither by advertising nor sales staff, thus reducing wasted materials to a minimum and transferring great numbers of workers to desired occupations. The *Manifesto* envisaged that, under socialism, there would be plenty of leisure “beyond question”. Wars would cease. However

Socialism will not solve all the problems of human society. But it will solve all the basic economic difficulties that are a constant source of torture to so many of its members. The solution of a single one of these difficulties would warrant its introduction. The solution of them all renders it imperative.

On 9 March 1945, Milne gave an address in the Labor Temple, Winnipeg, on the subject of “The Meaning of Social Revolution”. The word “revolution”, he said, is a source of fear to a great many people. To the owners of capital, it is not disturbing that bombs drop from the skies, that the work of man should be ground into rubble, and that men, women and children should be killed – if these things happen in the interests of capital. But revolution! Intolerable! The Socialist Party stands for revolution. But, said Milne, let us be clear what we mean by revolution. It does not mean a change of rulers, or master, or government personnel, but a change that will put an end to all these things. “We mean a Social Revolution – a Socialist Revolution”. And, he concluded, the solution to the social problems of capitalism must be a social revolution, followed by a new system of society in which the means of distributing and producing wealth will be owned in common by all the people, and where wealth produced will be produced for no other purpose than to satisfy human needs. “We do not mean a condition of chaos, anarchy or bloodshed. We have these things now”. He invited his audience to join the socialists in the activities of the one movement worthwhile – the movement for social revolution.

But the workers did not join the Socialist Party of Canada in large numbers. By the end of the First World War, the SPC had, as we have already noted, ‘taken a battering’. This did not happen to the SPC in the Second. The Socialist Party of Canada of 1939 was a much smaller, and much less influential, organisation than the SPC of 1914. The SPC in 1945 emerged largely unscathed, but of little consequence in the country politically. It probably had fewer than 150 members when the war ended in Asia, in August of that year, although it had still more sympathisers. The impossibilist lamp continued to burn in Canada, but not too brightly.

In October 1945, Jim Milne was nominated by the Socialist Party as its candidate in Winnipeg for the Manitoba Provincial election. His message was based on what he

had said in the Labor Temple in March of that year. He received 222 votes and came last of the 20 candidates.

## *Chapter Eight*

### **POST-WAR PROGRESS OR PROBLEMS?**

The government, mindful of what happened in 1917, in the First World War, resisted the introduction of conscription until 1944. Inevitably, there were protests, but not on the scale of 1917. Even Quebec accepted the inevitable. And Mackenzie King won, yet again, the General Election of 1945, following the defeat of Nazi Germany.

With a population of just 20 million, Canada emerged from the war as the world's fourth largest industrial power. Most of the investment, however, was American; and the control of many Canadian industries was effectively in American capitalist hands. Membership of both NATO and NORAD, which put the Royal Canadian Air Force under United States command, increased Canadian dependence on its neighbour to the south. Nevertheless, it retained economic links with Castro's Cuba as well as trade and diplomatic links with the People's Republic of China. For 20 years after the Second World War, Canada 'enjoyed' a virtually continuous boom, with very little unemployment, in contrast to the mass unemployment following the First World War. Oil began to flow in Alberta in 1947. More than two million immigrants entered the country from Greece, Italy, Hungary and Poland, as well as from Britain and Asia. Many workers began to own cars and television sets.

#### **Russia and the Socialist Party**

In Canada, the Gouzenko spy scandal inevitably had an adverse effect on the Labor Progressive (Communist) Party. Nevertheless, most non-socialists, in Canada and elsewhere, imagined that the Soviet Union was in some way socialist or communist. And this made the work of the SPC increasingly difficult. The party in 1947, therefore, decided to prepare a statement on the nature of Soviet society. In 1948, it published a pamphlet, its first official document on the subject, entitled *The Russian Revolution...Its Origin and Outcome*.

In the introduction, the pamphlet says that chief among the false exponents of socialism during the last three decades have been the Russian government and its Communist Party supporters throughout the world. Socialists, it argues, have contested the view that a proletarian revolution occurred in Russia in 1917. "Russia is not a Socialist country; nor is it advancing towards socialism, except in the sense that all capitalist countries are so advancing." In the first chapter the pamphlet reiterates the Socialist Party of Canada's long time analysis of capitalist society, which it had detailed in its *Manifesto* from 1910 through to the last edition of 1944. It is not necessary to repeat this here. The second chapter briefly traces the background to the rise of Bolshevism in Russia, pointing out, as has been noted in this narrative, that before 1917, Russia was largely an agricultural country in which feudal society was in a process of decomposition; and "where 80% of the population still lived on the land, largely under conditions analogous to those prevailing in England in the sixteenth century". Capitalist industry had made its appearance during this period, centred mainly in the west of the country, and in the southern oil belt. But that was all.

Modern capitalist wars are won in modern capitalist workshops, says the Socialist Party pamphlet. By 1916, Russia's backward economic resources were incapable of

resisting the well-provided forces of industrial Germany. “In March, 1917, the Czar abdicated and the political ramparts of Feudalism fell apart”. According to the SPC, “the capitalist class rose to power”, presumably meaning that pro-capitalist parties and groups, such as the Constitutional Democrats and the Mensheviks, became dominant in the Duma, the Russian parliament. They supported the continuation of the war, and this proved their undoing. The SPC pamphlet recounts, as has previously been noted, that the Bolsheviks were able to take control of the Russian state, “and the short-lived independent capitalist rise to power came to an end”. According to *The Russian Revolution...Its Origin and Outcome*:

The Bolshevik Revolution was made possible, on the one hand, by the collapse of Czarism under the strain of highly mechanised warfare, and on the other hand, by the inability of the capitalists to appreciate the extent of Russia’s economic exhaustion, to pacify the people and consolidate their power. It arose ideologically from the material conditions of the highly developed countries of Western Europe. But its setting was a semi-Feudal economy and a mass of peasants and workers to whom for the most part socialism could have no meaning. The Bolshevik Revolution, therefore, was not and could not have been a proletarian revolution. The best that can be said for it is that it was *intended* to be a proletarian revolution.

Lenin and Trotsky, and their comrades, according to the SPC, despite their frequently unsound interpretations of events, were avid students of the writings of Marx and Engels and other socialist writers; and they believed that their programme could result in a socialist society. But their views were heavily coloured by Russian conditions. These were the opinions largely stated by Bill Pritchard as early as 1920, although not accepted by other members of the Socialist Party of Canada at the time, including Jack Harrington who wrote the introduction to the 1920 edition of the *Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada*. The so-called ‘Dictatorship of the Proletariat’ was, in fact, a dictatorship over the proletariat by the Bolshevik Party. The SPC of 1948 was quite clear about that.

The pamphlet comments that the dictatorship over the workers and peasants had been in existence for more than 30 years, and had proved a failure as an agent of working class emancipation. Socialists anticipated this failure, basing their findings on the teachings of Marx and Engels, “and the experiences of the working class movement itself”. Quoting Marx’s statement in the *Critique of Political Economy* (actually from the preface of *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*), the pamphlet continues:

No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces, for which there is room in it, have been developed; and new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society. Therefore, mankind always takes up only such problems as it can solve; since looking at the matter more closely, we will always find that the problem itself arises only where the material conditions for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation.

And, quoting Marx again, the pamphlet says that he was specific on the emergence of one society from another. In 1867, in the preface to the first edition of *Capital*, he wrote: “One nation can and should learn from others. And even when a society has got upon the right tract for the discovery of the natural laws of its movement...it can neither clear by bold leaps nor remove by legal enactments, the obstacles offered by the successive phases of its normal development. But it can shorten and lessen the birth pangs.” Put simply, using Marx’s analysis, the Socialist Party of Canada was arguing that the Bolsheviks could not have established socialism “by bold leaps” in a predominantly pre-capitalist society; all that they could do was to “shorten and lessen the birth pangs” – which was, in fact, what the Communists did between 1918 and 1948 when the SPC pamphlet was published.

### **Socialism in One Country?**

The rise of Stalin saw the adaptation of Bolshevism to the conception of ‘Socialism in One Country’, notes *The Russian Revolution...Its Origin and Outcome*. Formerly, the Bolsheviks had adhered mainly to the socialist view that socialism was not possible in one country alone; and they had devoted much of their time to fostering what they regarded as world revolution. To this end they had, in 1919, organised the Communist International. Stalin had, however, decided that Soviet Russia was capable of standing on its own feet, and world revolution was abandoned.

The SPC pamphlet quotes Stalin as saying that, under the pre-monopolist conditions of the forties of the last century, Engels had regarded socialism in one country as “impractical and impossible”. Had Engels been alive today, said Stalin, “he would not have clung to the old formulas”. He would have greeted our revolution “wholeheartedly” and would have said “Long live the victorious revolution in the USSR”. That Engels would have adopted Stalin’s view is, of course, nonsense said the Socialist Party. Marx and Engels “saw capitalism as an economy transcending the bounds of its political units, reaching maturity only by drawing the world into its orbit”. For capitalism breaks down the old self-sufficient economies. It has become global. Russia does not differ from other countries in this respect. Building a system of “commodity production, reaching out greedily to the markets of the world”, it becomes more dependent on the world economy the more that its industries are developed. (This has proved even more so since the collapse of the Soviet Union.)

The SPC pamphlet notes that Communists and ‘fellow travellers’ claim that the Soviet Constitution, adopted in 1937, is the “most democratic constitution in the world”. The Communists cite important changes in the new Constitution of direct election of governing bodies by secret ballot instead of indirect election by tier after tier of councils (soviets), and the extension of the franchise to “priests, preachers and others formerly classed as anti-social”. These changes were loudly applauded by the admirers of Stalin. But the Socialist Party of Canada was not convinced. *The Russian Revolution...Its Origins and Outcome* quotes from an article in the November 1936 issue of the *Western Socialist* which, in part, argues that:

...it is by no means certain that freedom of speech, press, assembly, etc., will have any real existence in the new Russian ‘democracy’. We have not succeeded in becoming enthused over the new Constitution. Stalin and his associates have not evidenced any real desire to introduce measures which may threaten their privileged position, and the recent



trial in Moscow, resulting in the execution of a number of Old Bolsheviks for the only known crime of having raised their voices at times in opposition to certain of the government's policies, does not indicate that they have become willing to permit other voices than their own to take part in Russian affairs.

The Socialist Party contended that there can be no democracy in a land where only one political party is permitted to exist, and in which that party forms "the leading core of all organisations".

Importantly, the SPC's pamphlet chronicles in considerable detail the existence at that time of widespread poverty of the workers and peasants on the one hand, and the comparative riches of a few on the other, in the Soviet Union. It says that Soviet statistics are vague but notes that there is a very wide differentiation in salaries, with an average of 500 roubles a month in 1947. Set against this, *The Russian Revolution...Its Origin and Outcome* briefly quotes Reg Bishop's famous pamphlet *Soviet Millionaires*, published in England by the Russia Today Society. It quotes Bishop's opening paragraph, wherein he writes:

The news that there are Soviet 'millionaires' – men and women who have been able to invest a million roubles in the country's War Loan – has come as a great surprise and, indeed, with a sense of shock to many people to whom the very word 'millionaire' represents an evil influence in society.

Bishop claims that the term 'millionaire' is misleading, as a rouble is not worth as much as a dollar or a pound sterling. And he continues:

Even were a rouble millionaire to be possessed of as much money as a sterling one, it would still not necessarily be either anti-social or anti-socialist, because the atmosphere of social inequity which surrounds a millionaire is due not to the measure of his wealth, but to the method of acquisition, and his use of it to exploit others.

He then insists that Soviet millionaires acquire their millions of roubles through their own unaided efforts, their own superior skills and initiative; a claim, says the SPC pamphlet, that has long been advanced in defence of the wealth of the wealthy. The SPC argues that "It is simply impossible for any individual to amass a million through his own unaided efforts", whether it be in dollars, pounds or roubles; and concludes that "There is no important feature of capitalist society that is not solidly entrenched in modern Russia". The workers of Russia, says the Socialist Party of Canada, will yet be inspired by the revolutionary watchwords, "Abolition of the wages system".

(NOTE: Although not noted in *The Russian Revolution...Its Origin and Outcome*, Bishop in his *Soviet Millionaires* pamphlet mentions that the first person in the Soviet Union to be publicly acclaimed as a millionaire was one Berdyebekov, a collective farmer from Kazakhstan, who subscribed "slightly more than one million roubles" to the Soviet War Loan. He mentions that Bishops of the Orthodox Church have made generous contributions to the war loan; that Vladimir Stefanov, a priest of the Moscow Church of the Assumption, had donated 73,000 roubles to the Defence Fund; that a "typical intellectual", Professor Galant, had sent 12,000 roubles to the fund, and that an inventor, Livshitz, had also donated 40,000 roubles to the Defence Fund.

Bishop includes a list of monthly earnings of Soviet workers, from 150 roubles a month up to 1,001 roubles a month. Between 1945 and the collapse of the Soviet Union, a minority of privileged apparatchiks and bureaucrats evolved into a self-perpetuating nomenclatura and finally, a full-blown capitalist class, some of whom are among the world's richest men.)

### **Ageing and Declining Membership**

The Socialist Party of Canada did not field any candidates at the Federal general election of 1949. But it did circulate a leaflet in which it outlined its criticism of the other political parties, stating:

An election is on again, and the politicians are once more in the fore displaying their virtues. Peace, progress, democracy and freedom are being solemnly promised by people to whom these terms have questionable meanings. Liberals praise themselves for taking us out of the depression of the Hungry Thirties, forgetting that they also took us into it. Conservatives offer the extravagance of Mr. Drew, hoping these will be effective in gaining votes as were the antics of Mr. Bennett at the turn of the Thirties. CCF members offer all the good things that are alleged to have come from Britain under the Labor government, but are awkward in their comments on the continued 'austerity' suffered by British workers. Communists rail against the imperialism of the Western World, but pretend that Russian imperialism is wholesome and attractive.

Politics has been described as a dirty game, says the SPC leaflet, and it must be difficult for the observer to watch the conflicts of the various candidates "without feeling sick at the wretchedness of what he sees". But, it continues, politics is not to be condemned because it is associated with so much that is foul; for the rottenness of capitalism is bound to permeate its politics. As always, the Socialist Party of Canada proposed, in the 1949 election, that the only alternative to capitalism is the establishment of a system of society based on common ownership and democratic control of the means of producing and distributing wealth by and in the interests of society as a whole. Unlike the CCF and the Communists, the SPC continued to oppose the advocacy of reforms. The 'Impossibilist' light continued to flicker.

Interestingly, there was something of a flash at the 1950 Convention of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, held in Vancouver. A Mrs Eve Smith, who apparently sympathised with the SPC, but was accused of being both a Stalinist and a Trotskyist (at the same time!), had purchased 30 copies of *Is Labour Government the Way to Socialism?* published by the Socialist Party of Great Britain in 1946. Responsible for the literature table, she prominently displayed the SPGB pamphlets together with various works by Marx and Engels. In what some claimed was a "staged provocation", Donald MacDonald, the Ontario CCF leader, and David Lewis, the party's National Secretary, confronted Eve Smith and instructed her to remove the offending literature. She refused to do so. MacDonald then announced to the Convention that she was selling copies of *Is Labour Government the Way to Socialism?*, a criticism of "our ally, the British Labour government". He demanded that the Convention ban the pamphlet. According to the *Vancouver News-Herald*, the Convention was thrown into uproar. Eve Smith attempted to explain to the delegates,

but some of them shouted her down, whilst others insisted that she be heard. They too were shouted down. One delegate from Calgary said that he was sick of a small group from British Columbia introducing Stalinist and Trotskyist tactics, and obstructing the Convention. At that point, Harold Winch, son of Ernest Winch who was also a delegate but did not speak, demanded a retraction from the Calgary delegate, saying: "We are all socialists in British Columbia, and we are all sincere". There was no retraction, order was finally restored and Eve Smith was forced to remove the SPGB pamphlets. Some time after she and a number of former CCF members joined the Socialist Party. By the beginning of 1950, however, the Vancouver Local of the Socialist Party of Canada had dissolved for lack of support. It was not a good omen.

In 1950, war began between North and South Korea along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Following United States and United Nations intervention, the Canadian government sent troops to fight on behalf of America and the UN. The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation largely supported the Canadian government; whilst, inevitably, the Communists of the Labor Progressive Party supported North Korea and the People's Republic of China. As in all previous conflicts, the Socialist Party of Canada opposed both sides. The war lasted for five years.

In 1951, John Ahrens and a number of other socialists in Vancouver organised a Social Science Forum with the object of reforming the Vancouver Local of the SPC. Following a series of encouraging meetings averaging 25 to 35 persons, a new local was formed in 1952 which continued until 1957. At the Provincial General Election held in June 1952, the Vancouver Local nominated Harold Holtby as its candidate in the constituency of Vancouver Centre. Holtby received 276 votes (1.26%). The CCF candidate was elected. But, once again, controversy developed among the members of the SPC in Vancouver. According to John Ahrens, who always seemed to be at the centre of any controversies for decades, a key dissident member, R. Walker, wanted to form an independent local for, among other activities, the publication of literature. Walker, according to Ahrens, was also an advocate of violent revolution. In 1955, Ahrens and another member, William Roddy, resigned from the local over Walker's policies; and, as previously, the Vancouver Local dissolved in 1957, whilst the Dominion Executive in Winnipeg decided to take no action. Not only that, but all was not well with the Socialist Party of Canada nationally.

According to Ronald Elbert in his University of Massachusetts thesis, *The Paper War: Conflict and Democracy in the Socialist Party of Canada, 1960-70*, by the end of the 1950s, the SPC found itself stagnating and unable to grow. Towards the latter part of the decade, Winnipeg was the only place in the entire country which still had a regular and properly constituted local; and even here, its dwindling membership was ageing and dying. By 1958, the party could no longer afford to rent a meeting place for either the local or for the Dominion Executive Committee meetings, which had to be held in the home of a Committee member, Anne Cherkes. By 1960, the Winnipeg Local was largely moribund, its main effort concentrated in administering the Dominion Executive Committee, which comprised Winnipeg Local members only. During this period, indoor and outdoor meetings were only held for visiting members of the companion parties in Britain and the United States. In Vancouver, as already noted, locals came and went with sickening regularity. The situation was much the same, but less dramatic, in Victoria. As Elbert notes, "Party numbers had dropped significantly; older members had died, while others simply dropped out or emigrated south, some joining the U.S. party." (One such active socialist, and former member of the SPC, was William S. "Bill" Hewitson, who moved to Santa Maria, California, where he continued propagating SPC/WSP ideas through his regular newsletter

“musings”. Another was William Z. Miller, who moved to Los Angeles and whose father allegedly “knew Karl Marx”.) Until the end of the decade there was little noticeable activity in other areas of Canada. Nevertheless, it was not all doom and gloom.

On 27 August 1959, Roy Devore, an active member of the SPC, gave a talk over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation network of Western Canadian radio stations on the subject of Socialist Party pioneers. He commenced by saying that surviving political observers of fifty or more years ago, might tell you of an unusual group of men, who were prominent adherents of a third Canadian political party, the Socialist Party, of whom most were now dead.

Compared with politicians of today, said Devore, these socialist pioneer organisers were more than unorthodox; they were almost a race apart. They were dyed-in-the-wool internationalists. They served without pay, relying upon literature sales and passing the hat around. And since their appeal was directed almost entirely to wage-workers and pioneer farmers, they amassed little wealth. Some of them travelled on foot, visiting the mining, lumbering and railway construction camps of British Columbia. Even more noteworthy than their perseverance was their indifference to personal advancement.

Some years previously, Roy Devore asked the then Clerk of the Executive Council for Alberta if he remembered Charles M. O’Brien, M.L.A. “Do I?” was his prompt reply. “Who doesn’t? He was the most singular person to sit in the House”. O’Brien was an Ontario Irishman, squat, balding, heavy of build and, with a protruding chin, was the type of person one turned to look at a second time. When he entered Alberta’s Legislature Chamber on that memorable day in 1919, continued Devore, and saw his seat ranged with those of His Majesty’s Opposition, O’Brien said: “Mr. Speaker, up to now I have always picked my own company. Since I am to be the only opposition here, I would like, please, to have my seat placed at an equal distance between these groups.” His wish was granted. The only socialist member of the Alberta Legislature was seated near the Speaker’s left hand, and where it was difficult for any other member addressing “Mr. Speaker”, not to address O’Brien.

Another crusader, Charles Lestor, continued Devore, was equally active in Western Canada:

Indeed, it might be said that Lestor spoke to more open-air audiences than anyone. There is a busy intersection in down-town Vancouver still referred to as ‘Lestor’s Corner’; and it is doubtful if there was a city or sizeable town here or in Alaska whose central square had not echoed to Lestor’s voice. Born in London\*, England, and a blacksmith by trade, he was a rugged man with a great sonorous voice and a mop of steel-grey hair. Lestor never sought public office...

\* The *Regina Morning Leader*, in 1911, says that Charles Lestor was born in Bradford, Yorkshire, England, in 1876.

Roy Devore, in his radio broadcast, then mentioned Alfred Budden, formerly a wheat farmer in Saskatchewan who burnt his unsaleable wheat, and “took to the road” as a socialist propagandist. He became one of North America’s leading exponents of Marxian socialism. “He stayed with the road until almost alone”. Although not mentioned by Devore, Alf Budden wrote the well-known SPC pamphlet *Slave of the Farm*.

Far different from Budden was Wilfred Gribble, an ex-sailor in the British Navy. He was a short, stocky man with a pointed beard. He was a good and popular street-corner speaker and, like Lestor, spoke on many corners in Western Canada. He also wrote poetry in his “spare time”, commented Devore. Not mentioned by Devore, however, Wilf Gribble was a foundation member, and the first organiser, of the Socialist Party (later World Socialist Party) of the United States in 1916.

D.G. McKenzie was the very antithesis of Gribble; a tall, thin, stooped, shy and delicate man, he was born into a military family in India. He never spoke on a public platform. “But as editor of the *Western Clarion* he was a tower of strength to his Party”. He was the Socialist Party’s only paid official – \$50 a month. At the Party conference in 1911, it was proposed that his salary be increased to \$100 a month. He replied that he would be quite satisfied if he received the full \$50, as he was, in fact, only getting an average of about \$30. Indeed, McKenzie received several offers from a number of wealthy journals to join their staffs, but he rejected them all, continuing to work for the Socialist Party of Canada.

Eugene T. Kingsley, founder of the *Western Clarion*, was a big man, a 250-pounder, with a rugged physique; and his large bald head made him look bigger and more formidable. His indomitable will kept him going despite the fact that he had lost both feet (other accounts say he lost both legs) in a railway accident in California. Despite this, he travelled far and wide debating and speaking on behalf of the Socialist Party.

According to Devore, Henry M. Fitzgerald “was the orator par excellence, a platform general with possibly no equal in all Canada”. He was a slight, wiry man with wavy auburn hair – Bill Pritchard said he was red-headed – and weak eyes covered by heavy spectacles, but with a voice that rang like a church-bell. Fitzgerald would take on all comers, “anywhere at any hour”. All who heard him attested to his unforgettable platform figure, swaying in rhythmic motion to the rich, resonant voice. When he spoke in Vancouver’s Empress Theatre, with a seating capacity of more than 1800, there was never a vacant seat, and many stood along the aisles.

There were, of course, many others less prominent or well-known, not mentioned by Devore. They were an exceptional company, he concluded. And they included Devore himself, who died in 1970.

### **A Brief Revival**

The Edmonton Local of the 1930s was little more than a memory by 1960. Toronto had never been a Socialist Party stronghold. But, surprisingly, it was to herald something of a revival by the beginning of 1960. In 1957, Sid and Gladys Catt emigrated to Canada from Britain, and took up residence in Toronto. Both had been active in the Socialist Party of Great Britain. Sid Catt had joined the Palmers Green branch at the beginning of the Second World War. He had organised canvassing in Ealing, and was a regular and persuasive speaker at Jolly Butcher’s Hill in Wood Green. Sid had also served on the SPGB Executive Committee for a period. He was a committed and experienced socialist. Gladys Catt told this writer that she did not consider outdoor, public speaking to be her forte, yet she, too, would come to address audiences for the Socialist Party of Canada.

Within a short time, Gladys and Sid Catt began activities. Traditionally, no public, outdoor or street corner meetings had been held in Toronto, and the police could move or arrest any group of people who exceeded three in number. After badgering City

Hall for some considerable time, it finally agreed to institute 'permits' for holding outdoor political or other meetings; but these permits had to be obtained for each separate meeting. Gladys and Sid Catt, and a few sympathetic supporters, decided to hold outdoor meetings each Sunday in Allen Gardens in downtown Toronto. They had to make applications weekly. And, over a number of years, many successful meetings were held in Allen Gardens, selling socialist literature. Steve Shannon, a local socialist, remembers when on one occasion when Sid Catt was speaking, he was surrounded by a crowd of homeless men, from the Shelter for the Homeless across the road. The crowd began shouting abuse at him for daring to tell them that they could solve their problems by establishing socialism. The longer he spoke, the angrier they became until they surrounded the podium. Shannon was convinced that they would not have harmed him. It was, says Shannon, like a scene from Tressell's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, adding that many of those homeless men probably froze to death sleeping outside in the following winter. At that moment, a cop on horseback broke up the melee and chased them off. Another regular Socialist Party speaker in Toronto, who also spoke in Allen Gardens was Ronald Yurkoski, a worker on the production line at the Dunlop Rubber Company.

By 1965, a Toronto Local had been formed with about 10 members and a number of sympathisers and potential members. Among the activists who built up the Local was a young and, according to some, flamboyant antiques dealer, Harcourt Syms, who became the Local's organiser. By 1966, the Toronto Local had between 17 and 20 active members according to Gladys Catt. It was, she said, a really active local. She was, however, less than enthusiastic regarding the Winnipeg Local, commenting that the local "consisted of several male members, whose wives were also members, but who were indoctrinated with the GOD idea – somewhat incongruous, but all the circumstances regarding the Winnipeg Local were unusual". She recalled that, at one meeting in Toronto, a North American Indian who had listened attentively to the SPC speaker defining socialism, exclaimed with great delight: "Why, that was what we had before the Europeans came here!" (According to Lewis H. Morgan, in his *Ancient Society*, first published in 1877, "Communism in living seems to have originated in the necessities of the consanguine family, to have continued in the punaluan, and to have been transmitted to the syndyasmian among American aborigines, with whom it remained a practice down to the epoch of their discovery.")

There was no such revival in Edmonton. But, by 1960, there were reports of increasing activity in Montreal, although no official local was chartered there until 1967. Nevertheless, there was a solid core of members which included: Trevor Goodger-Hill who had been a farmer; Maurice Spira, an artist; Gary Elias; Marie Koehler; and Henri Massé, who was a retired carpenter and an ex-member of the original Socialist Party of Canada. Massé had been an active participant in the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. Montreal, however, was a hard city to organise from the socialist viewpoint.

In 1960, the recently re-formed Victoria Local, seeing the possibilities of outdoor propaganda, began a long campaign, spearheaded by Chris Luff the party's Secretary-Treasurer to establish a regular 'station' at Beacon Hill Park. The City Police and Parks Departments opposed the idea, predicting problems,; but, after some debate, a majority of the City Council supported it. Beginning in October, the first SPC speaker was Chris Luff (followed by Don Poirier – there is a photograph of him speaking, in the rain, on the SPC platform).. According to the *Socialist Fulcrum* (vol. 14, no. 3/4), his speech went "on coast to coast T.V. and his photo was included in a one-page photo spread in the national WEEKEND Magazine." His photo, showing him

standing on the Socialist Party of Canada platform, is reproduced in that issue of *Socialist Fulcrum*. *Weekend* states:

Victoria's soap box forum was started by the Socialist Party of Canada, a far left Marxist group which denounces Russia as 'capitalist'. They nagged the reluctant city fathers for permission to set up the speakers' corner in the park, and won it when merchants lent extra weight to their pleas on the grounds that a Victoria version of Hyde Park Corner would be a tourist attraction.

George Jenkins, who joined the SPC in 1948, was the party's most active speaker in the Victoria area; and according to Ron Elbert, he was well-read, clever in argument, and in debates "would crush his opponents verbally with logic, and they would walk away defeated". He also edited the local's journal, *The Fulcrum*, in 1975 rechristened *Socialist Fulcrum* and adopted as the party's official publication. In 1961, there was a Federal by-election at Esquimalt-Saanich, British Columbia, in which the media nationally became interested. The Socialist Party decided to contest the seat, and nominated Don Poirier as its candidate. Following the campaign and result, the Victoria Local issued a report:

While the number of votes for socialism were few (122), they were more than was expected. The socialist case, or some of its principles and the party name, were spread across the country in some daily papers and on two national TV programmes, which also took in the territory comprising the north-western Pacific states of the USA as well as Western British Columbia. One of these programmes included close-ups of the front cover of the *Western Socialist*. The name of the party was also used on the national TV news of the election results.

Press reports of most of the local's eight by-election meetings were published in the two Victoria daily newspapers, including a mention in the editorial of one of them. Don Poirier spoke and contributed to discussions on a number of local radio stations; he also appeared, together with the other candidates, on two half-hour TV programmes. The SPC's views on trade unions were solicited by one union, and the party's views on nuclear weapons by the national chairman of the Canadian peace movement. Almost 10,000 election leaflets were distributed at meetings and from door-to-door. In 1963, the local nominated George Jenkins as its candidate for Esquimalt-Saanich, in the British Columbia Provincial election. This was a much lower-key effort by the local, and Jenkins only received 75 votes. Likewise, at a 1967 Provincial election in British Columbia, the SPC nominated Larry Tickner as its candidate in Oak Bay. He polled 54 votes. The SPC was, at the time, tearing itself apart. The Victoria Local had about 12 members, and about 40 sympathisers, "most of whom are as good as members" according to Elbert.

Between 1960 and 1965, members of the Socialist Party in Vancouver organised a number of well-attended meetings. A new local, the fourth since 1933, was formed in 1960 by Roy Watkins, John Ahrens, Tom Bitting, Bill Cannon, Ralph Brown, Ross Maley, Don Poirier and others. Poirier, who had joined the SPC after serving in the Royal Canadian Navy, was only 22 in 1960. He became one of the party's most dynamic speakers; and in 1962 was appointed SPC National Organiser as well as joint organiser of the SP and the WSP(US). He was, writes Ronald Elbert, "able to draw

hundreds of people to his outdoor meetings". At this period, the Vancouver Local established a 'Speakers' Corner' in Stanley Park, where Sunday evening meetings drew crowds of between 50 and 100. Don Poirier and George Jenkins, who came over from Victoria, were the main speakers. Ahrens occasionally spoke, and also represented the party on radio 'chat' shows and with letters to the local papers. Ahrens, however, complained of large numbers of individuals around Vancouver who wanted socialism, "but do nothing to bring it about". Nevertheless, the local always had "a large Socialist Party of Canada banner and literature stand well displayed" at its meetings. Meanwhile, in Winnipeg, as already noted, there was little or no socialist activity.



## *Chapter Nine*

### **COLLECTIVE DEATH WISH? THE PARTY SELF-DESTRUCTS**

Ronald Elbert, in his *The Paper War: Conflict and Democracy in the Socialist Party of Canada, 1960-70*, discusses the organisational structure of the SPC in considerable detail. The introductory section of this present chapter follows his account in somewhat less detail. The rest of the chapter, however, is based almost entirely on official Socialist Party documents and correspondence between members of the party and the Dominion Executive Committee (DEC), as well as correspondence with officials of companion parties in Britain and the United States.

The Socialist Party of Canada attempted to enforce a stricter observance of democracy, at least in theory, than is generally found in leftwing parties. The Dominion Executive Committee merely took instructions from the membership, in the form of referenda, which any sufficient number of party members, individually or through a local, could propose. Prior to 1965, the party constitution required the DEC to have seven members, with two substitutes, elected annually by the membership of the Winnipeg Local, and subject to approval by the membership nationally. In practice, the membership of the DEC remained very much the same for decades. Moreover, it was very much a family affair during the period of the internal conflicts in the 1960s, with the husband and wife team of Jim and Greta Milne, and the brother and sister team of Anne and John Cherkes dominating. Anne Cherkes, who joined the SPC in 1958, following the increasing blindness of John Cherkes, became both General Secretary as well as Treasurer, although John remained a member of the DEC as well as a member of the Editorial Committee of the *Western Socialist*. The *Western Socialist* had, in fact, two editorial committees, one in Winnipeg and the other in Boston in the USA, where the journal was actually printed and distributed. This arrangement was to cause friction between the SPC and the WSP(US). Milne was also a member of the Winnipeg Editorial Committee, as well as Recording Secretary of the Dominion Executive Committee of the SPC. Previously, he had been a contributor to the *Western Socialist* and had written the short, unpublished, but authoritative *History of the Socialist Party of Canada*. He was, like quite a number of Socialist Party members in Winnipeg, a railway worker, specifically a locomotive engineer. Also long-time members of the DEC were Bill Jenkins, who had been General Secretary of the party, and Alex Sheperd. The latter was born in Britain in 1897 and had been a socialist and trade union activist since about the middle of the First World War. In 1960, he owned a small tool and die shop. By 1965, the Winnipeg Local was the Dominion Executive Committee, and the Dominion Executive Committee was the Winnipeg Local. It was down to ten members. And their average age was around 65.

Surprising as it may seem, the Socialist Party of Canada had never held a national convention or conference before 1968. Communication between the DEC and members elsewhere in the country was by post, with the occasional telephone conversation and the even more occasional visit by a member from both the west and east of Canada. This was mainly due to the fact that the majority of the party's members could not afford the long journeys necessary. Thus, annual or even occasional conventions had, hitherto, been ruled out as impractical. This was a severe

handicap in solving the party's problems. Furthermore, the SPC's constitution had not been revised since June 1941.

### **Members-at-large**

Members of the Socialist Party of Canada were, where it was possible, expected to join and remain members of a local in the area where they lived. If there was no functioning local, which had to have a minimum of five members, then such members were accepted as members-at-large. If there was more than one local in a city, such as Vancouver for example, where at one time the SPC had more than one local, the members were expected to be members of the local nearest to where they lived. Members-at-large were inevitably considered to be on the fringes of the party. But there was nothing in the constitution or rules of the Socialist Party stating that a member had to be a member of his or her local. Members of the party living in, for example, Vancouver could remain members-at-large even when there was a properly constituted local in the city. It was all very vague. And by the early 1960s this vagueness, combined with personality conflicts, particularly but not entirely in Vancouver, would be the main issue responsible for the SPC largely self-destructing. (It should be noted that the Socialist Party of Canada's companion party in Britain, the SPGB, was just as anarchic in this matter. For example, during the period 1950-60, the SPGB had more than 20 branches in the Greater London area. Most members joined their local branch, and if they moved to another area would transfer to their nearest branch. But there was nothing to stop a member joining, or remaining in, a branch many miles distant despite the existence of a local one. Indeed, a number of members, including a few long-standing and prominent ones, belonged to branches simply because they preferred the company of the members in that branch. Inevitably, such laxness in the organisation led to the forming of cliques. The SPGB also had what it called the Central Branch, which was not really a proper branch at all, but merely a postal section, primarily for members who did not live near a functioning branch. The British party, as in Canada, also permitted members to belong to the Central Branch, that is to be members-at-large, even if there was a branch in their locality.)

Prior to the re-formation of the Vancouver Local of the Socialist Party in 1960, Roy Watkins, who had joined the party in 1945, probably with the agreement of John Ahrens, wrote to the World Socialist Party of the United States applying for membership-at-large of the American party, with a view to forming a local of a new party to be called the World Socialist Party of Canada (WSPC). Instead, previously, Bill Roddy had proposed that the SPC and the WSP(US) should amalgamate as one united North American socialist party. This had come to nothing. The WSP(US) was not in favour of either Roddy's proposal or Watkins' request to be a member-at-large. Also at the centre of what was to be the membership-at-large controversy, was James Brownrigg, who was intensely hostile towards John Ahrens. Brownrigg was born in Canada about 1900. He had joined the Vancouver Local in 1934, but had been repeatedly involved in clashes with other members in Vancouver. For much of his working life, Brownrigg had been an accountant or bookkeeper in the shipyards and docks in Vancouver and, between 1942 and 1947, in Seattle where he had been a member of the Workers' Socialist Party of the United States. When the new local of the SPC was formed in Vancouver in 1960, Brownrigg refused to become a member; and in 1961, he was permitted to be a member-at-large in the Vancouver area.

Conflict in Vancouver became inevitable, even without yet another dispute involving another member, Bill Cannon.

### **The Cannon Controversy**

Unlike most political parties, becoming a member of the Socialist Party of Canada was not easy. No one could just join. Ostensibly, all applicants accepted for membership had to be socialists before joining the party. They were expected to know the party 'case'. That some applicants knew more than others was inevitable. Nevertheless, the SPC insisted on a minimum of knowledge, and an applicant had to answer a number of questions before becoming a member. The foreword of the "Application for Membership" form reads as follows:

The test of admission to the Socialist Party of Canada must be neither more nor less than the acceptance of the essential working principles and policies of Socialism as a class movement. To demand more is to degenerate into a sect; to require less is to invite anarchy and embark on the slippery incline of reformism and compromise. These principles and policies are outlined in the Declaration of Principles of the Socialist Party of Canada. They can be easily understood by the average worker, and they comprise the irreducible minimum of the principles and policies of Socialism, narrow enough to exclude all who are not Socialist, yet broad enough to embrace everyone who is. They form, in consequence, a reasonable and sufficient test.

The form continues: "I, the undersigned, having read the DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES of the Socialist Party of Canada, fully endorse those principles and hereby apply for membership"; followed by the signature, address and date. But that was not all! There followed five specific questions to be answered to the satisfaction of the SPC, before the applicant was finally accepted. He or she was asked if they were, or had been, a member of any other political party; and if so, the applicant's present attitude to such party. Applicants were asked if they agreed that the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation was actually a "capitalist political party working for adjustments to the capitalist system of society". Likewise, they were asked to agree that the Labor Progressive Party (i.e. the Communist Party) was also a "capitalist party working for the interests of Russian capitalism". They were asked if any permanent material benefit "can come to the workers except by the abolition of capitalism", and that the Socialist Party cannot advocate reforms or "immediate demands"; and, lastly, did the applicant agree that a member of the Socialist Party of Canada cannot, either directly or indirectly, support any candidates of parties other than those sponsored by the SPC. Having answered all the above questions, and stating that he or she accepted the Declaration of Principles, the applicant was generally accepted as a member. There were, of course, differences among existing members as to whether an applicant should have a greater understanding of capitalism and socialism before being accepted. Brownrigg, for example, argued that all applicants must attend Marxist economics classes; and, in the past, some had argued that all applicants should first be conversant with, at least, the first volume of Marx's *Capital*. Ahrens, on the other hand, felt that the party would not, and could not, grow if it was too strict. In 1957, Bill Cannon was accepted as a member of the Socialist

Party of Canada. He was 30 years of age when he joined, and had emigrated from Britain. But were Cannon's views on capitalism sound? Was he really a socialist?

Bill Cannon had previously been an active member of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. In 1960, he became Recording Secretary of the re-formed Vancouver Local of the SPC. By October 1962, however he resigned from the local and requested the Dominion Executive Committee for membership-at-large status within the party. This was granted, although Cannon did not reply to the letter sent to him by Jim Milne, the Recording Secretary of the SPC, on 18 October 1962. In June 1964, Don Poirier, the Socialist Party Organiser, writing from Vancouver to the DEC, asked it if Cannon was still a member, as he was speaking "under the auspices of the SPC". If he was not, this should be made public; on the other hand, if he was, then Poirier strongly questioned Cannon's "socialist understanding". Later in the month, Milne replied on behalf of the DEC, saying that as far as he knew, Cannon was a member of the Socialist Party; he also said that the constitution of the party allowed members of the SPC to be members-at-large where a local exists, adding, "The DEC knows no reason why the present policy should be changed. We consider that membership-at-large, as such, cannot be harmful to the party or any of its locals. However, this is a constitutional question and the Vancouver members, feeling as they do in the matter, ought to have submitted an amendment to the Constitution".

In a further letter to the Vancouver Local, Milne said that the DEC was deeply concerned by the report of the resignation from the local of two of its members, Bitting and Woolcock, and the suspension and subsequent expulsion from the party of Bill Cannon. On 6 August 1964, Roy Watkins, Recording Secretary of the Vancouver Local replied that it had expelled Cannon because he:

1. Did not think it necessary to organise politically for socialism;
2. Advocated violence (he thought that capitalists should be shot through the back of the head!);
3. States that Fidel Castro is not a dictator and there is no capitalist class in Cuba;
4. Advocates capital punishment, censorship and anti-hate legislation;
5. Chaired a meeting of an embryo political party (the New Labour Party) as a member of the Socialist Party of Canada, and took part in the discussion.

Watkins noted that the opinions of Cannon had drifted towards a reformist position. He added that Cannon had made no attempt to contact the local when informed of his suspension and was, therefore, guilty in the eyes of the local of the aforementioned charges. The Dominion Executive Committee, however, overrode the Vancouver Local, and wrote to Bill Cannon requesting a statement from him regarding the charges made against him by the Vancouver Local. At its meeting of 28 September, the DEC passed the following resolution:

The DEC agreed that since the trial and expulsion of Com. Cannon occurred under circumstances that ignored the provisions of Rule 5 of the Party Constitution, the expulsion cannot be approved by this Committee. Com. Cannon's continued membership in the Vancouver Local is therefore recognised by the DEC.

The DEC had, in fact, previously agreed that Cannon could be a member-at-large. Milne added that "it is hoped that some way will be found by the Vancouver members

of healing their wounds”. Some hope! On 17 January 1965, the DEC decided that, due to the “strained relationships presently prevailing in Vancouver”, Cannon was officially a member-at-large. In Toronto, the local passed a resolution condemning Cannon for allegedly advocating violence, to which he replied to Milne saying that he was completely baffled as apparently “The members in Toronto must be better informed of my alleged activities than I am. At around the time, Cannon and another member, Dennis Greig, wanted to organise a local garbage workers’ strike and, hopefully, make some of them members of the Socialist Party.”

Another bone of contention was the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association. Formed in December 1962, the Association stated that “It is an association of citizens who affirm a belief in those liberties defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”. It was an organisation highlighting police abuse, attacks on “unpopular groups” and those “in need of civil rights”. It carried on propaganda designed to “promote the preservation of individual freedom”. And it had a panel of lawyers at its disposal who volunteered “to give aid in meritorious cases”. A number of members, including Bill Cannon and Tom Bitting, argued that the Civil Liberties Association was an anti-socialist, reformist pressure group to which SPC members should not be associated. It transpired that John Ahrens, who was one of the most vehement opponents of Cannon, was a member of the Association. And in a letter to the Vancouver Local in May 1964, Bitting demanded that Ahrens be expelled from the party, as membership conflicted with Section Seven of the Declaration of Principles of the Socialist Party of Canada. According to the minutes of the Vancouver Local for 28 May 1964, Ahrens defended himself, saying that he had joined the Civil Liberties Association only because it was concerned with the censorship of books: “It was an economic interest, one of self-preservation due to the fact that he was a bookseller. This was a personal matter, and did not involve the party in any way”. It emerged, however, that Ahrens was not the only member of the SPC in Vancouver who was also a member of the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association. Indeed, there were at least three more members of the party in the city who were also members of the Association. Was this the slippery slope of reformism of which John Ahrens and other members had, in fact, accused Bill Cannon? At the meeting in which Cannon had been accused of saying that he hated the capitalists and that they should be “shot behind the ear”, Bitting further accused Ahrens of stating that he didn’t hate the capitalists as they were equally products and victims of the system, adding “we have more reason to hate the lackey element in the working class”. Cannon and Bitting claimed that “because of this attitude” Ahrens was anti-socialist. He was, they said, preaching brotherly love and class collaboration.

In a letter to the DEC dated 14 August 1965, Bitting commented, among other matters: “I have listened to our speakers, both in Vancouver and Victoria, speak in parks. By no stretch of the imagination could you say they represented an organisation that was organised to introduce socialism, but one that was organised to abolish religion. A question for the DEC: is it permissible for a person who believes in a supreme being to be a member of the party? It is my opinion that religion like the state will fade away once we get rid of the present social relationships of capitalism”. On 17 August, Milne replied on behalf of the DEC at some length:

You ask the question: Is it possible for a person who believes in a supreme being to be a member of the party? I believe the WSP(US) resolved a while ago that a religious person could not be a member of the WSP. This attitude, so far as I know, has never been taken by the SPC.

The members in Canada have different views on the subject which, I suppose, accounts for the lack of a single party attitude...I would make a similar allowance for religious hangovers. Wrong ideas, including religious ones, become dissipated through continued association with our ideas, and where this does not happen, the question to decide, as I see it, is whether and to what extent such ideas cause activities that are harmful to the party's purpose. The party is not hurt necessarily by the fact that some members continue to nurse wrong ideas.

Bitting replied, saying that it was bad policy to concentrate on attacking religion; it was not conducive to prosecuting the class struggle, and should be stopped as it presupposes that religious people cannot be class conscious. In his *History of the Socialist Party of Canada*, Milne has a section on religion in which he states that it had been a controversial subject in the SPC up to around 1912, with some members supporting religion, some opposing and others arguing that the party should be neutral. But Milne did not seem to be aware, either in his history or in his letter to Bitting, that in 1915 the Socialist Party of Canada had officially adopted the Socialist Party of Great Britain's statement, *Socialism and Religion*, first published as a pamphlet in 1910, as the SPC's own policy on the subject. Religious workers are not admitted to membership of the SPGB.

Meanwhile, Bill Cannon ignored all the charges that the Vancouver Local had made against him. On 17 October 1965, Anne Cherkes, the party's General Secretary, wrote to Roy Watkins, secretary of the Vancouver Local: "...Effective at once, the Vancouver Local is expelled from the party".

### **Tantrums and turmoil**

By the end of 1962, the Vancouver Local was down to three active members; and by July, had only two functioning members, Ahrens and Roy Watkins. Brownrigg and Cannon claimed that the local was a sham, and that constitutionally it was not a legal local of the Socialist Party of Canada. Brownrigg, Cannon, Tom Bitting, Ed Watson and a number of other members and ex-members in Vancouver refused to recognise it. In December 1962, Watkins, as the Recording Secretary, wrote to the Dominion Executive Committee requesting clarification of the Vancouver Local's status. On 22 January 1963, Milne replied on behalf of the DEC, stating that it had discussed the situation in Vancouver. Members of the DEC noted that the local had, at no time, "paid per capita tax" (i.e. subscriptions) to the party, and had ignored correspondence requesting same; had maintained practically no contact with the DEC, and took no apparent interest in party activities. Indeed, "in general its conduct had been more that of an independent organisation than that of a party Local". And with a membership of only two, it could not constitutionally be regarded as a local. George Jenkins, the West Coast Organiser of the SPC based in Victoria, wrote saying that he was in favour of recognising the present functioning nucleus, a nucleus that could be built up. Milne requested that Ahrens and Watkins offer their comments, and trusted "that we may hear from you".

Roy Watkins replied to the DEC on 15 March, stating that it had been Bill Cannon's fault that the money had not been sent, as he had been responsible but was at that time "in self-imposed exile from the Local". Watkins claimed that he and Ahrens considered themselves to be a constitutionally recognised local of the Socialist

Party of Canada, as it had been formed, according to the Constitution with the required five members; and he added “there is no provision in the Constitution that states by word or implication that if the membership drops below that figure that a Local becomes automatically unconstitutional”. The local had two members, and could not be dissolved except by a voluntary act of the existing members or by a party referendum, he argued. And, anyway, they had an application for membership by Ross Maley, and they hoped Don Poirier, who was now in Vancouver, could be persuaded to “join the fold”. The members-at-large who were not members of the Vancouver Local were, he claimed, violating the party’s Declaration of Principles. In April, Milne replied to Watkins, agreeing that the Constitution of the party did not provide for the automatic dissolution of a local if its membership fell below five members but, he said, the DEC has the power to rule on its status and to declare it dissolved if necessary. He added: “According to your interpretation a Local could be reduced to just one person who could constitutionally regard himself as a Local”. In June, Poirier wrote to Milne saying that the DEC “will have to recognise the absurdity of allowing disguised anarchists to disrupt and disorganise the organised efforts of the Socialist Party of Canada”. The same month, the Vancouver Local informed the DEC that it now had seven members of whom five were active.

In a letter to Milne dated 10 September 1964, Watkins wrote that Bitting, Cannon and Woodcock had “definite weaknesses in socialist understanding, both in theory and practice”; and if they “were to be given the freedom to run amuck, virtually as individual socialist locals in orbit, it could result in a dangerous level of anti-socialist fallout that could raise havoc with the socialist movement in British Columbia”. In December, Bitting offered to visit members of the DEC in Winnipeg if they thought that “anything could be gained...”

Bitting offered to visit members of the DEC in Winnipeg if they thought that “anything could be gained from a visit”. Milne replied to Bitting on 2 January 1965, confirming his membership-at-large, but did not take him up on his suggestion of visiting Winnipeg. On 11 February, Milne wrote to Don Poirier in which he said that everyone in Winnipeg had “been deeply disturbed by the trends of recent months, and it was becoming difficult to avoid the thought that a break between Vancouver Local and the DEC was inevitable”. Later in the month, Bitting wrote again to Milne in which he stated that he had attended a business meeting of the Vancouver Local, at which he had been informed that he would not be allowed to speak at any of the local’s meetings. Prior to the commencement of the meeting, Bitting was accused of saying: “I only joined the Local to break it up”, which he denied. In March, Jim Brownrigg wrote to Milne saying that, as the original member-at-large in Vancouver, he had neither supported or opposed the local, but had been attacked for not joining it.

Also in March 1965, the Dominion Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Canada published a detailed, four page, *Review of the Vancouver Local – DEC Dispute*, which was divided into four sections: Membership-at-large, Expulsion of W. Cannon, Party Referendum and Statement of Policy. The *Review* noted that the Vancouver Local had consistently objected to membership-at-large being permitted where there was a local of the party as being harmful to the local. But the DEC, in its *Review*, argued that instead of criticising members-at-large, the question should be settled by a referendum. On 2 July 1964, Vancouver Local, with only three persons present, unanimously expelled Cannon from the SPC. The expulsion was overruled by the DEC, who informed the Vancouver Local that “In view of the bitter feeling prevailing among the members in Vancouver, the DEC is not prepared to approve

charges, at this time, against any such members except through the DEC". Following a list of specific charges later provided by the Vancouver Local at the request of the DEC, it stated that it did not believe that disciplinary action, in any of the instances noted, was desirable. The DEC *Review* continued:

Vancouver Local rejected the DEC attitudes expressed above and, although having denied the essential right of a member to a proper consideration of the charges against him, demanded recognition of its own right to place the member on trial with itself as the sole arbiter, and then made several attempts to have comrade Cannon attend a Local meeting to hear and defend himself against the Local's list of charges.

The *Review* added that it is depressing to note that a healthier attitude may be found among representatives of the ruling class whose courts will usually concede that a trial conducted irregularly must be set aside, and a new trial held in another court. In fact, the Vancouver Local, at its meeting of 28 January 1965, held another 'trial' in which, in Cannon's absence, it judged him guilty again on all counts.

The Dominion Executive Committee in its *Review* detailed its criticisms of Vancouver Local's attitude to the party referendum on proposed changes to its constitution, which will be discussed at length in the following section of this chapter. Suffice it to say that the DEC was particularly scathing in its response to the local. Concluding in its "Statement on Policy", it affirmed that party rules and practices must be adhered to by all members and locals and that, where a difference in viewpoint occurs between a local and the DEC on any matter not specifically covered by the party's constitution, the DEC viewpoint must be accepted until such time as a different viewpoint is decided upon by a majority of the membership. The Vancouver Local, during the period under review (that is between 1962 and the beginning of 1965) had disregarded the party's rules eight times, "most of these still being persisted in", it said. "Further, the Vancouver Local has sought to defend its actions in ways often employed by the Communist Party, and always rejected by socialists". Democracy, it would seem, was only accepted by at least some members of the Socialist Party of Canada when it suited them!

On Vancouver Island, the Victoria Local, in response to the activities of the Vancouver Local, expressed its support of the DEC regarding the party's policy on membership-at-large, pending adoption of a different policy by members generally. Jim Brownrigg reported to Jim Milne that the Vancouver Local had recently recruited Mrs Ahrens, Don Poirier's brother, Roy, and two of his girl cousins to the local, and he asked: "Is this nepotism in miniature?" Watkins accepted that the local had recruited three new members in the past two months, and that they had never previously belonged to any political party. Meanwhile, in Montreal and Toronto in the east of the country, the members of the Socialist Party appeared to be thoroughly confused by the whole affair.

### **Referendum on the Constitution**

In May 1963, the Dominion Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Canada proposed a number of amendments to the constitution of the party. It set a deadline for receiving further, or different, amendments by the end of the year. Then, in late January 1964, the DEC extended the final deadline to March of that year. Toronto



Local proposed further consideration to amendments to be postponed because of the status of the Vancouver Local. This, however, was not the end of the matter. Furthermore, the constitution was both complex and, yet in important matters, quite vague.

The constitution of the Socialist Party of Canada was prefaced by the Object and Declaration of Principles, followed by a somewhat wordy paragraph stating that they were simple enough to make them understandable to all who are interested in socialism; and inviting those in agreement to join the party, “and aid in advancing its work”. The Dominion Executive Committee proposed that the preamble be deleted. The Object and Declaration of Principles were to remain, followed by a number of rules, some of which the DEC proposed should be simplified or amended.

As previously noted, all applicants had to fill in and sign an application form and pledge, supplied by the DEC; the form had to be lodged with the secretary of the local, and brought before the local’s next business meeting, to which the applicant would be invited. A majority was necessary in deciding whether the applicant would be admitted to membership of the party. If any member, or members, objected, a two-thirds vote of all present would be required, subject to ratification by the DEC. Any application rejected by the local would have to be forwarded to the DEC, together with the reasons for the rejection. The DEC suggested a few minor alterations in the wording of rule, together with two additional clauses, the first being the more controversial:

Where an application for membership is made directly to the DEC, the applicant shall be required to fill out and sign an APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP form and a QUESTIONNAIRE containing questions designed to assist the DEC in determining the applicant’s suitability for membership. Such applicants shall become MEMBERS-AT-LARGE. The QUESTIONNAIRE may be altered by Party Conference or general vote of the membership.

Indeed, although the DEC did not regard it necessary to alter, or add to, the questionnaire in general, the names of the two political parties mentioned in it had to be altered; the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation had become the New Democratic Party (NDP), and the Labor Progressive Party had reverted to its original title of the Communist Party of Canada. The second addition merely stated that a member of a companion party, on becoming resident in Canada, would be able to transfer membership to the SPC by applying to the nearest local or the DEC, and the secretary concerned contacting the companion party to arrange the transfer.

The constitution forbade a member belonging to more than one local at the same time, although a member could transfer to another local “provided a clear record” was furnished by his previous local. (It should be noted that in all Socialist Party of Canada documents cited, all members and applicants for membership are male, despite the fact that, at the time, probably 25% of the members were female!) The DEC suggested that transfers should be arranged by the secretaries of the locals concerned. It agreed that members may speak at meetings of other locals, but could not vote. It was also emphasised that a member of the SPC must not belong “to any other political organisation or speak from any other political platform” except in opposition. Although not stated, this did not apply to the above mentioned companion parties such as the WSP of the United States or the Socialist Party of Great Britain, of whom members of both had spoken from SPC platforms, and vice versa.

The all important rule (no. 5) regarding party discipline was largely left intact by the DEC, except for part of one sentence. The rule asserted that any violation of the pledge of membership, “or of party law”, shall be considered warrant to charge or expel a member, of which a notice of a special meeting to deal with the charges must be duly given. The charge against a member had to be submitted in writing to the local, a copy supplied to the member within 14 days in order to enter a defence; a majority vote would be necessary to suspend a member, and a two-thirds majority to expel a member, “...but the formal and public expulsion shall be in the hands of the DEC”, which the DEC submitted should be deleted from the rule. The sentence: “All suspensions or expulsions shall be at once reported to the DEC” was, however, retained. It will be recalled that the Vancouver Local had not, and later admitted that it had not, complied with all the requirements of the rule when it first suspended, and then expelled Bill Cannon. The DEC, therefore, refused to accept Cannon’s expulsion.

The constitution of the Socialist Party of Canada required that a local, comprising five or more persons, must be the “unit of organisation” of the party, and must be authorised by the Dominion Executive Committee. All locals had to hold at least one business meeting each month; and the DEC added that the minutes of all meetings must be sent to it. In case of the dissolution of a local, all its property had to become the property of the DEC. After suggested amendment by the DEC, Rule 12 would state that the DEC could suspend, or dissolve, a local “for reasons which it considers sufficient, but must, at the Local’s request, submit for approval its defence of this action, together with a statement of the Local’s case, to a party conference, or a general vote of party membership”.

Rule 15 listed the duties of the Dominion Executive Committee. They were: to carry out the wishes of the party as expressed in its Declaration of Principles, constitution, party conference, and general vote of the membership; to supervise party work throughout the country; to employ, when possible, organisers and other officers to further the work of the party; to establish and maintain communication with socialist parties in other countries; to ensure that members-at-large are provided with DEC minutes and other reports, and are given the opportunity to vote on all party referenda; to receive any proposition relating to party affairs sent from a local and, if necessary, to submit same to a general vote of the party membership. The DEC also proposed that it send the minutes of all its meetings to the locals, and that they contain the names of its members present at such meetings, and how they voted on matters of policy and principle. The Dominion Executive Committee proposed a new rule:

Until such time as is possible for the party to hold regular annual conferences, the DEC shall be required to take a vote of the party membership on amendments to the Constitution or matters in dispute within the party, this vote to be taken not more frequently than once a year, preferably during the month of March, at the instigation of the DEC, or at the request of any Local or five members-at-large.

It was also proposed that locals must hold at least one specially summoned meeting to discuss any referenda; and that voting papers must be returned within six weeks from the date of issue. Interestingly, the DEC proposed a new rule to the effect that the Object and Principles “may be amended only in conjunction with the Companion Parties of Socialism”. Each amendment and proposed new rule had to be voted on separately.

In his thesis, *The Paper War: Conflict and Democracy in the Socialist Party of Canada, 1960-70*, Ronald Elbert argues that, prior to the 1960s controversy, the Socialist Party of Canada's rules and constitution regarding disciplinary matters "was relatively loose and informal", compared with its companion parties in Britain and the United States. Its rules, in fact, did not even have a separate section for discipline or charges like the other two parties. SPC rules, he says, nowhere gave the DEC specific power to initiate disciplinary action; and "the DEC always stood at a distance, its options limited to deliberation, ratification and rejection". Moreover, the SPC rules, before 1967, failed to explicitly mention violation of the Declaration of Principles as grounds for expulsion from the party. Their reference to violation of either "party law" or "the pledge of membership" was vague. It implied an informal attitude toward discipline, but not to theoretical laxness, writes Elbert.

Nevertheless, observes Elbert, the DEC went on the offensive against the Vancouver Local.

On 12 April 1965, the Dominion Executive Committee, after much discussion, drafted a referendum ballot, requesting the general membership of the SPC to affirm or deny by 24 May that Vancouver Local be required to "cease and desist, and deal with the DEC as the Party Constitution provided"; and if it refused to comply, the membership authorise the DEC to discipline the local. Meanwhile, the Toronto members increasingly supported the Vancouver Local, sending resolutions to both the DEC in Winnipeg and to Vancouver. The Montreal members tended to support Vancouver, whilst Milne considered the Toronto and Montreal members to be "confused". Victoria supported Winnipeg. With regard to the DEC's referendum on the status of the Vancouver Local, it decided to bar members of the Vancouver Local, individuals such as Cannon, and its own DEC members in Winnipeg from participating in voting as, it said, they should not vote because they were involved in the controversy. On 6 May, Watkins, on behalf of the Vancouver Local, wrote a letter to the DEC, in which had said, among other things:

It is surprising how quickly the GEC can whip up a referendum when they want to. The Vancouver Local has tried to have a referendum on the membership-at-large question since the beginning of the year, which was the time according to the Constitution when referendum items were to be raised, but to no avail. Because of this, the Vancouver Local referendum should reasonably have prior rights over the GEC's proposed referendum. However the die is cast.

An example of high-handed and undemocratic rulings of the GEC is illustrated in the present GEC referendum. It acts more like a governing body than an administrative committee. The GEC had arbitrarily disenfranchised over a quarter of the party membership by denying their democratic right to vote on a referendum. They have tried to justify this by placing the contending parties in the category of 'the accused' and 'the accusers'.

The Vancouver Local rejects most vehemently any ruling that tries to deprive members of a Socialist Party their prerogative to vote on any issue concerning the welfare of the party. The democratic right to vote supersedes any rule or principle, and indeed is the foundation on which the companion parties rest. A referendum vote is what the name implies – the vote of the electorate within the Socialist Party of Canada. No exceptions. This typifies the kind of GEC rulings that the Vancouver

Local opposes and will continue to oppose from any source. Certainly no socialist could agree to such a ruling.

(It should be noted that GEC in the above is short for General Executive Committee, to which the Dominion Executive Committee had recently been renamed).

The referendum went ahead. And the General Executive Committee got its approval to discipline the Vancouver Local – by just 10 votes to 9, a majority of one! On 28 June, the GEC proclaimed that “The Vancouver-GEC dispute has just been submitted to the members for decision, a majority having stated their position quite clearly”. As noted above, in October the Vancouver Local was expelled from the Socialist Party of Canada. Former members were informed by the GEC that they “may retain membership in the party by rejecting the Local’s conduct as outlined in GEC statements, accepting the party’s terms of membership and advising the GEC to this effect”. But it was all too late.

### **The World Socialist Party of Canada**

Four of the Vancouver members-at-large, Tom Bitting, Jim Brownrigg, Bill Cannon and Ed Watson, formed at the GEC’s request an official Vancouver group, which, after recruiting Cannon’s wife, became the new official Vancouver Local of the Socialist Party of Canada. The former, expelled, Vancouver Local, which by the middle of 1965 had 11 members, and a year later 14 members, continued to consider itself to be the Vancouver Local. Both locals, completely hostile towards each other met regularly within a stone’s throw of each other. Don Poirier, the former SPC and WSP (US) organiser, went over to the expelled local. At the same time, Adam Buick and Gilbert McClatchie of the SPGB visited Canada and members of the SPC, in an attempt to reconcile the warring factions, but without success.

John Ahrens and his comrades in Vancouver accused the GEC of being bureaucratic which, in the view of Elbert, “was another way of saying its members aspired to a leadership role”. And, he adds, the Ahrens group intended to supplant the SPC by a new, anti-hierarchical Impossibleist party. By the end of 1966, relations between Toronto and Winnipeg had completely collapsed. In October, John and Margaret Ahrens travelled to Montreal, Toronto and finally to Boston. In Toronto, they attended the local’s propaganda meetings in Allen Gardens, and a special meeting of members, at which Ahrens read them Vancouver’s indictment of the General Executive Committee. He also proposed the formation of a ‘parallel’ party to be called the World Socialist Party of Canada (WSPC). The local unanimously endorsed Ahrens’ proposal, resigned from the SPC, closed its SPC bank account and declared Toronto and Vancouver locals to be the WSPC. On 21 November, Toronto Local wrote to the GEC informing it that it had resigned from the Socialist Party of Canada. In Boston, John Ahrens did not inform the WSP(US) that the two locals had seceded from the SPC and were in the process of forming a new party. Members in Montreal also resigned from the SPC and joined the WSPC, although one member, Trevor Goodger-Hill, changed his mind nine days later, hoping that he could reconcile the two hostile socialist parties.

According to Elbert:

...the new party’s Constitution was intended to serve as a model of democracy: the highest body in the party was the membership, not a

committee or conference; referenda were processed immediately; the party's Canadian Administrative Committee had notably diminished discretionary powers; all expulsions required a two-thirds majority, and could be appealed by referendum; and members-at-large were clearly subject to Local jurisdiction.

Throughout 1967, the WSPC aggressively sought recognition by members of the companion parties, particularly in the United States and Great Britain. In the United States, the veteran socialist Bill Pritchard, who lived in California but visited Vancouver regularly, actively encouraged the breakaway World Socialist Party of Canada; he was a close friend of the Ahrenses, and the Vancouver Local's mentor. A number of members of the WSP(US) were also sympathetic towards the WSPC, but the American party did not officially recognise it.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain was in a bind. The World Socialist Party of Canada had, immediately upon its formation, adopted the same Object and Declaration of Principles as the Socialist Party of Canada, which were, in fact, based upon the original Object and Declaration of Principles of the Socialist Party of Great Britain. Furthermore, founder members of the WSPC had, before moving to Canada, been members of the SPGB. Buick and McClatchie had visited Canada, and had attempted to reconcile the various SPC factions; Phyllis Howard (George) was the General Secretary, and had been involved in correspondence with the SPC; Arthur George, a member of the Executive Committee, had written a lengthy report, based on official documentation, for the SPGB's Executive Committee, which was distributed to that party's 1967 Annual Conference. Long time members of the SPGB, such as Arthur George, James D'Arcy, Edgar Hardcastle and Harry Young, strongly opposed the formation of a breakaway party in Canada even if it did accept the same Object and Declaration of Principles as the SPC. Two parties with the same Object and Principles, within the same country, was ludicrous. Nevertheless, the only concrete outcome of the SPGB's 1967 Conference was a resolution advising the Canadian socialists to work out a solution, suggesting that "The dispute is an issue which should be resolved by the Canadian comrades themselves", which was not very helpful in the circumstances. The World Socialist Party of Canada was on its own. Interestingly, the WSPC was more active propagating socialism than the SPC's three official locals. For a few months, it probably had slightly more members. By the beginning of 1968, however, the WSPC was willing to negotiate some kind of reunion with the SPC.

On 13 November 1967, the General Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Canada held what was to be a crisis meeting. Only John and Anne Cherkes, and Jim and Greta Milne were present. Bill Jenkins had died; Alex Sheperd was over 70 and no longer active; two other members of the GEC, Sherman and Stanger, were ill, the former going into hospital and the latter having just left hospital. And John Cherkes was by then almost blind. The four members present decided that they would have to discuss the future of the GEC. At least the constitution of the SPC had, at last, been amended during the year. According to the minutes of the November GEC meeting, under the title "Future of GEC", the subject was of the desirability of the Winnipeg members continuing to function as the GEC. The desire to be relieved of "the central party office" had been discussed unofficially many times by the Winnipeg members over the previous few years. It was the desire of the members of the committee, several of whom had served continuously for up to 30 years, to make room for younger members "with the stability and competence needed to take over". But, continues the GEC minutes:

The party became engulfed in conflict, stimulated and dragged on by the action of comrades who should have known better, compelling the GEC to continue in office through one crisis after another, hoping that a quieter moment would give a new Committee a reasonable chance to find its footing. The party conflict finally ended, although not in the way the members wished...The GEC has waited, to give ample opportunity to the members to draw attention to possible errors requiring attention...The quieter moment has come.

The four members of the General Executive Committee agreed unanimously:

1. That the GEC resign as such from office;
2. That the members be advised as soon as possible and asked to nominate a new location for the GEC;
3. That eligible locations are Montreal, Vancouver, Victoria and Winnipeg;
4. That it is not the intention of the Winnipeg membership to accept nomination;
5. That the present GEC will remain in office until its successor has been elected;
6. That nominations for the new GEC will be received not later than December 5.

Nominations were duly sent out to the members. There was, in fact, only one possible location for a new committee – Victoria. There were insufficient members in Montreal or Vancouver. Indeed, by the beginning of 1969, neither city had more than a group of members, whereas in Victoria there was a solid, functioning local with around ten active members. At the start of the year, the GEC was elected and organised in Victoria. Its members were: Dave Emery, Dan Holliday, George Jenkins, Bill Johnson, Jim Lambie, Pat Thompson and Larry Tickner. When the new GEC met on 20 February 1968, it announced that it intended to organise a National Conference – the SPC's first! – for 18 to 20 May in Victoria.

At the opening of the conference there were 16 representatives, six from Vancouver of whom four were from the local plus two members-at-large, six from Victoria all of whom were members of the new GEC, three from Winnipeg, and Trevor Goodger-Hill from Montreal, whose bus fare had been paid by the new GEC, otherwise there would have been no representatives from the east of the country. Somewhat surprisingly, the World Socialist Party of Canada was represented at the conference by Roy Poirier, although the WSPC did not give him any specific instructions. Roy Watkins and Gladys Catt sent letters to the conference, advising it that the WSPC required the SPC to make changes in its constitution before it would consider getting together again with it. A number of delegates soon began to wish that Goodger-Hill had not been able to attend the conference. He persistently pressed for various resolutions to bring the SPC constitution into line with that of the WSPC; he also introduced a lengthy five-point resolution acknowledging overtures of reconciliation between the WSPC and the SPC, sent by Gladys Catt and Roy Watkins. Goodger-Hill proposed that the WSPC locals could rejoin the SPC as locals; this was opposed by Larry Tickner, who argued that if members of the WSPC wished to rejoin the SPC, they would have to apply as individuals. There were further amendments, resulting in a referendum asking party members which of the two approaches they preferred, or a

third choice of refusing to have any further contact with the World Socialist Party of Canada or any of its members. Two days after the end of the conference, Tom Bitting resigned from the SPC; Bill Cannon, who had been at the centre of most of the controversies, also resigned about the same time.

Larry Tickner, and a number of other members of the SPC in Victoria “begged” members of the WSPC to “come back into the SPC”, but individually, not as an organisation or as locals. The Conference referendum was sent out to SPC members. When the ballot papers were counted, 13 had voted to permit the former members to apply individually, 7 for them to rejoin as locals, and 4 were in favour of breaking off all contact with the WSPC. In March 1969, Milne sent the GEC in Victoria a resolution from Winnipeg “instructing it to maintain correspondence, or contact, with such persons as express an interest in joining the party, only to the extent needed to encourage and spread party views”. On 15 March 1970, the GEC passed a resolution “that the WSPC be informed it is unacceptable they join the SPC as anything other than new members”. The resolution continued, that the applicant no longer belongs to the WSPC, or that the WSPC no longer exists. It was the beginning of the end for the World Socialist Party of Canada. It had few friends, except Bill Pritchard and a handful of Canadian old-timers some of whom probably vaguely remembered the Socialist Party of North America, also in Toronto earlier in the century.

The Toronto Local of the WSPC, already in decline, completely collapsed. Its secretary, without any discussion, closed the local’s bank account and, according to Ronald Elbert, “then spent the money on a restaurant dinner for everyone”. The Montreal Local disintegrated and Trevor Goodge-Hill, Maurice Spira and Henri Massé left the socialist movement completely disillusioned, although there is no evidence they became anti-socialists. Don and Dixie Poirier rejoined the SPC as individual members in 1970 and 1971 respectively. Don Poirier, who spent many years in the logging industry, became an active organiser of the International Woodworkers of America. Gladys and Sid Catt eventually rejoined the SPC. Sid, after three painful years of cancer, died on 26 November 1993. At the time of writing, Gladys (who now calls herself Marie) is still active in the SPC. The WSPC slowly faded away. In conversation with Bill Pritchard, in Vancouver in 1975, Margaret Ahrens jokingly said: “I’m a member of the World Socialist Party of Canada yet; I still pay my dues!” John Ahrens was probably the only other member. Some time later, he too rejoined the Socialist Party of Canada. Steve Shannon, who visited Vancouver and stayed with Ahrens prior to the formation of the WSPC, says he considered that John Ahrens was wrong to split the SPC, although he liked him personally. Others, however, thought that John Ahrens was a phoney. Many sympathisers, claims Shannon, were put off by the controversy; and, in Toronto particularly, the dedication was just not there.

Meanwhile during the ‘Paper War’ within the socialist movement in Canada, in the real world outside the conflict in Vietnam and Southeast Asia was raging, and millions of people were opposing and demonstrating against American involvement in it. Millions were also dying in yet another of capitalism’s wars.

## Chapter Ten

### AFTERMATH: THE SEVENTIES

In the last paragraph of his thesis *The Paper War: Conflict and Democracy in the Socialist Party of Canada, 1960-70*, Ronald Elbert notes that even with the World Socialist Party of Canada “out of the picture”, things did not return to normal for the Socialist Party. The waves of protest that rocked the 1960s, and that had shown so much promise for regenerating a depleted SPC, petered out as the 1970s wore on. Interest in the party’s objective “returned to levels comparable to the 1950s, and it struggled on in very low gear for the next two decades, with perhaps two or three dozen members”. Jim Milne, in the last two paragraphs of his *History of the Socialist Party of Canada*, is a little more optimistic:

The party has carried on the message of socialism through the years, exploring all avenues available in spreading its view. Meetings indoors and outdoors have been held. Radio talks have been arranged. On rare occasions it has managed to be on television. It has contested elections, funds permitting, in Winnipeg, Vancouver and Victoria. It has steadily circulated the *Socialist Standard* and *Western Socialist*, and published some pamphlets, including a sixth edition of the *Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada*, the name changed to *The Socialist Manifesto*. It has published many leaflets, a series of these during 1957 to 1959 being produced in hundreds of thousands by the SPC and WSP(US), some later produced in pamphlet form by the SPGB...

The party is small and lacking the glamour of the old party...The movement’s numbers are small but growing, and its influence is growing, as it must. It has a world to win.

Indeed, despite the SPC’s self-destructive conflict and ‘paper war’ during the mid- and late 1960s, some of its members, including a few involved, continued to propagate socialist ideas. It was not all doom and gloom. In March 1965, Don Poirier, as SPC National Organiser, visited Port Alberni on Vancouver Island where he contacted, and spoke to, a number of sympathisers who said that they accepted the party’s Principles. He hoped that a local would soon be formed; but nothing came from it. During May, a member, Ed Watson, distributed hundreds of leaflets; but except for meetings addressed by Bill Pritchard on his occasional visits to Vancouver, there was little positive socialist activity in the city during this period. Throughout the 1960s, however, Victoria Local held regular meetings, weather permitting, in Beacon Hill Park with a number of different speakers. Members of the local distributed hundreds of leaflets at anti-Vietnam war meetings between 1966 and 1968. A member, Larry Tickner, spoke and debated with various speakers at the University of Victoria, and at the Student Union. Larry Tickner represented the SPC as a candidate at the British Columbia Provincial by-election in Victoria; he received 54 votes. In July 1968, Jim Lambie participated in a two-hour discussion on a CKDA radio show. Nevertheless, there was very little socialist activity elsewhere in the country between 1965 and 1970.



## Canada: an Emerging Society

Canada was changing. The workers were mostly becoming better off. Canadians had largely been incorporated into the new North American lifestyle of the automobile, superhighway, shopping mall, fast-food restaurant and the suburban bungalow with its neat backyard, family room and glowing television screen. The suburban bungalow might well be heavily mortgaged, but most Canadian workers did not consider themselves to be largely propertyless wage-slaves, instead thinking of themselves as part of a vast middle-income group that included most of the population.

But if class difference appeared to be muted, there were large divergences in both income and lifestyle. As elsewhere, there were highly paid surgeons, managers and lawyers and architects. But even these were not at the top of the heap in terms of wealth. For above them were the superrich – those 2,000 or so individuals who formed a plutocracy that ran the country's government and business. Private planes, chauffeur driven luxury cars, polo ponies and private ranch were the perquisite of the superrich.

So the Socialist Party of Canada was not so wrong when it declared that forty five years of relative full employment has made no basic difference to working class dependency on their masters for survival; and that the so-called progress for everybody "turns out to have been only for the powerful and privileged few" (*Socialist Fulcrum*, vol. 14, no. 3/4). Some of the superrich were 'old money', but following the Second World War, a new, flash superrich also began to emerge in Canada. These nouveaux riches were mainly found among the property tycoons of Calgary and Vancouver. Other capitalists grew rich from oil and natural gas, and, of course, the exploitation of the workers who actually created their wealth. Quite often, the 'old rich' of Toronto looked down with distain at the 'new rich' of the West, but were more than happy to supply the capital that financed the ranches, mines and oil wells of Western Canada.

Quebec was also changing. The French speakers are mainly concentrated in Quebec Province and, to a lesser extent, in New Brunswick. Quebec's identity is largely rooted in the French language, although there has been virtually no fresh French immigration since 1763. Not only have the Quebecois been isolated from France, and historically from the rest of Canada, but their language has become very different from that spoken in France itself. In fact, the colloquial French traditionally spoken by rural Quebec peasant farmers is almost incomprehensible to a Parisian. As a pre-capitalist society, rural Quebec was conservative and dominated by the Catholic Church, basically a feudal institution transported to North America from Europe. In the one important city, Montreal, the Province's business community was of British origin, whilst the workers spoke French. Not surprisingly, the Quebecois considered themselves to be a subject people. However, with the development of a capitalist mode of production spreading into Quebec during and after the Second World War, French Canadian society began to fall into line with the rest of the country.

In 1949, the workers at the John Manville Company in the mining town of Asbestos went, for the first time, on strike for better pay. The Provincial government, led by Maurice Duplessis, brought out the police on the side of the company. A young Pierre Trudeau, as well as a number of leftist Liberal Party 'intellectuals', supported the strikers and marched with the workers. They, and others, took advantage from the successful outcome of the dispute. When Duplessis died in 1959, the leader of the

Liberals, Jean Lesage, took control of the Provincial government. His government first nationalised and reorganised the electricity utilities in the Province under the aegis of Hydro-Quebec. More important in the long run, was Lesage's vast programme in education, which broke the Catholic Church's monopoly in the classrooms and brought the Province into line with that required to run and administer a modern industrial capitalist society. In 1977, the French language became Quebec's official medium of communication. But it was not the French, the joul, of rural Quebec. Since 1960, the Quebecois have drawn closer to France. French movies and television shows began to be imported, as well as French orchestras and theatre companies. And increasing numbers of French Canadians began to take vacations in France with the growth of air travel across the Atlantic.

They also became politically more active. This largely took the form of separatism, encouraged to some extent by French politicians. Many of the Province's so-called intellectuals became identified with the Parti Québécois, formed in 1968, which sought independence for Quebec through peaceful, reformist parliamentary activity. Other separatists used terrorist methods. The first bombing campaign began in 1963. In 1970, the Quebec Liberation Front kidnapped a British diplomat and Quebec's Minister of Labor. But the QLF suffered a setback and lost support. Most Quebecois preferred the Liberals or the Progressive Conservatives. The Socialist Party of Canada had never made any headway in Quebec. During the First World War, the short-lived Social Democratic Party was supported by some working class women because of its opposition to conscription. But, as previously noted, the reconstituted Socialist Party did not have a functioning local in the Province until 1966, when one was founded in Montreal. And that did not last very long.

By 1970, there had been further oil and mineral discoveries in the north and west of the country; and this encouraged the western Provinces to demand greater autonomy. Unemployment was also rising. Not only that, but pollution from both Canadian and United States industries was seriously affecting the Great Lakes. Writing in the *World Socialist* (No. 4, Winter 1985-86), George Jenkins of the SPC argues that "Pollution and class-divided social systems co-exist; they form two sides of an equation. Exploitation by a dominant class of a subject class leads to despoliation of the natural environment". In the same issue, another SPC member, Ray Rawlings, asserts that for years large companies have been dumping pollution in the lakes – "This is the way Lake Erie was killed; not killed meaning dead of course. It was alive, but with plenty of the wrong things". The Great Lakes are used for water supplies, power generation, navigation and sewage disposal. The capitalist solution to the various problems, says Rawlings, is to use the Great Lakes with no care for the consequences. Returning to the subject in the *World Socialist* in 1987 (No. 7), Ray Rawlings notes that 15,000 to 20,000 lakes in Eastern Canada are considered to be acidic, and 180,000 are considered to be at risk in the next couple of decades. He adds: "The US and Canadian governments, as well as the various State and Provincial governments, are constantly at loggerheads over pollution of the Great Lakes and acid rain. For the US to stop pumping acid rain into Canada, it would have to shut down half the heavy industry in the north-east states. Some likelihood!"

Since the 1960s, there have been considerable changes to, and within, the Canadian trade union movement. In 1900, fewer than 5% of Canadian workers were regularly organised in unions; and, except for the formation of the One Big Union in 1919, almost all organised unions belonged to international unions – which, in fact, were merely Canadian branches of American unions, especially those affiliated to the American Federation of Labor. By the late 1970s, around 40% of Canadian workers

belonged to unions, and there have been many breakaways from the American dominated unions. Indeed, more than 100,000 Canadian workers split off from the United Auto Workers of America in the mid-1980s. One of the reasons is that, over the last half century, Canadian workers have tended to be more militant than their American counterparts. An additional factor was the rising strength of public-sector unions, which have been growing at a time when manufacturing unions have remained static or have shrunk. The public sector unions are overwhelmingly national – what government would be willing to have its civil servants controlled by foreign union bosses? By 1980, for the first time the majority of Canadian workers were in unions with their headquarters in Canada.

### **“In a very low gear”**

According to Ronald Elbert, the Socialist Party of Canada, following its self-destructive ‘Paper War’, struggled on in a very low gear for the next two decades.

It had already lost some of its most active, and best known, members to the Grim Reaper years before. James Pritchard, founder member of the Revolutionary Socialist Party, died in 1952. George Armstrong, born in Ontario in 1869, died in Winnipeg in 1956. Alex Paterson, who had written the controversial passage in the January 1935 issue of the *Western Socialist*, died in 1961. In 1968, Jack McDonald, born in 1889, died in an automobile accident in Oakland, California.

A particular loss was Alex Sheperd, who died in Winnipeg in March 1970. He had joined the Socialist Party in 1919, the same year that he became a member of the strike committee of the Winnipeg General Strike. He had been an active member of the Machinists’ International Union, and for many years was a delegate from his union to the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council. According to Jim Milne, Alex Sheperd was frequently referred to as the delegate from the Socialist Party of Canada, as he always examined all issues from the socialist standpoint. During the early 1920s, he fought the Communists and exposed the Comintern’s infamous Twenty-One Conditions as anti-working class. He assisted in the founding of the *Western Socialist*, and defended the Declaration of Principles in their entirety during the controversy and split between 1935 and 1938. He was an editor of the *Western Socialist* for many years, as well as a member of the Executive Committee of the SPC. His death was a considerable loss to the Socialist Party of Canada.

Syd Earp, who had joined the SPC in 1915, died in November 1970. Greta Milne died in 1972. Jack Burrough, who had been an editor of the *Western Clarion* during and after the First World War, and a regular contributor to the *Western Socialist* in the 1930s and ‘40s, died aged 97 in 1973.

And in July 1974, Jim Milne died. Milne, a former IWW activist, after hearing George Armstrong and Fred Neale soap-boxing in Market Square, Winnipeg, joined the Socialist Party of Canada in 1931. He had been an editor of the *Western Socialist*, had written many of the party’s leaflets which had been reproduced in a number of countries and distributed in their hundreds of thousands throughout Canada, and had written the history of the Socialist Party of Canada cited in this narrative. He was the author of the pamphlet *The Russian Revolution...Its Origin and Outcome*. He had been a regular party lecturer and soap-box orator, and an able administrator. His death was, therefore, also a great blow to the Party.

In April the following year, John Sherman died, aged 75. He had joined the SPC in 1945 and was, for many years, its Literature Secretary. Sherman had also done

valuable service for the party, translating documents and articles into French. The Socialist Party stated at the time that his death left a breach in the socialist ranks that would not easily be filled.

In the 1974 election, the main contenders were the Liberals and the so-called Progressive Conservatives, although the previous two years had witnessed an increase in New Democratic Party (formerly Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) influence, who now held the balance of power as the Liberals were unable to govern alone. With the inevitable decline of the Communist Party, thousands of mainly young people had turned towards various Leninist, Maoist and Trotskyist groups for salvation. The Socialist Party of Canada, severely weakened, was unable to participate. It issued a leaflet, in which it explained that “due to very limited working class support, the Socialist Party of Canada is not practically able to field any candidates in this election”; admitting that there would be no socialist alternative to the present society on the ballot, it urged “those who have seen through the hopelessness of today’s society” to “show their opposition by *writing in* SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA across their ballot”.

The following year saw an election in British Columbia. Once again the SPC issued a leaflet, explaining:

Not only has this snap election reduced the possibility of running candidates, but because of the minuteness of the SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA, there are not enough socialists to sign the nomination papers in any one constituency. In this election, anyone wishing to express opposition to capitalism and support for the practical alternative can do so by writing SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA across the ballot. Some people have regarded this action as quaint. But when the ballot is loaded with nothing but candidates for capitalism, should anyone who is opposed to it vote for them? By voting for any one of the candidates for capitalism, a socialist voter would be speaking against his own conscious interests and would be mis-using or spoiling his ballot. This would be decidedly against the respect socialists have for the franchise as a mechanism for registering majority support for socialism some time in the future.

In 1975, the *Fulcrum*, which was the journal of the Victoria Local of the SPC, was renamed *Socialist Fulcrum*, and became the official publication of the Socialist Party nationally. The *Western Socialist*, which was printed in Boston, became the sole responsibility of the WSP(US).

Despite the above noted decline of the Communist Party of Canada, the SPC continued to be concerned with the support, by many workers, of the ideas of Lenin as well as the proliferation of various Leninist groups. In 1978, the Socialist Party decided to publish a pamphlet on Lenin and Leninism. Edited by Larry Tickner, and entitled *Lenin Distorts Marx*, the pamphlet reissued 23 articles published in the *Socialist Standard* between 1920 and 1970. It largely reiterates the views and arguments that socialists had espoused for decades: that Lenin was merely an anti-Czarist and anti-feudal Russian revolutionary, who used and often distorted the ideas of Marx and Engels for his own purposes; that his advocacy of a vanguard party of professional revolutionaries leading discontented masses, was in contradiction to Marx’s view that the masses must emancipate themselves. Lenin’s views on the state were completely opposite to those of the mature Marx and Engels, in as far as Marx

argued that the working class must, through its own political parties, capture the state before establishing socialism, while Lenin distorted Marx's claims into saying that the state must be smashed. Unlike Marx and Engels, Lenin, at least after the Bolshevik coup in 1917, introduced a distinction between communism and socialism, claiming that socialism was a lower form of communism. Yet another distortion. This is hammered home in an article, "Lenin Twists Marxism" by ALB, reprinted in the pamphlet. In the view of the Socialist Party of Canada, as demonstrated in *Lenin Distorts Marx*, and in previous publications by the party, Lenin was neither a democrat nor a socialist, but a harbinger of a particularly dictatorial and despotic form of state capitalism. Indeed, in 1916, he had said: "The majority is always stupid, and we cannot wait for it; a resolute minority must act and then it becomes the majority."

Also in 1978, there was a British Columbia by-election at Oak Bay. The Socialist Party was, on this occasion, able to field a candidate, Larry Tickner. In its election leaflet, complete with a photograph of Tickner, the SPC states:

SOCIALISM MUST MAKE ITS START SOMEWHERE. And why not in Oak Bay? One socialist in the Legislature will give more volume to socialism's presently small voice. A greater number will learn and begin to understand socialism, many for the first time. A socialist in the Legislature will have greater access to research avenues which will indicate the technological potential that can be realized when human needs are served.

DO NOT WASTE A VOTE ON NOTHING NOW. VOTE FOR A SOCIALIST FUTURE. FOR SOCIALISM. LARRY TICKNER. SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA X.

He was not elected. He received 54 votes. Of the by-election, Samuel Leight of the World Socialist Party of the United States speaking on behalf of that party in a radio broadcast from Tucson, Arizona, noted that, on March 20, the SPC ran a candidate, adding:

Our socialist candidate in Canada advocated peaceful, democratic methods in order to attain an objective that would exemplify democracy in all its many aspects. The 'means' we use are *related* to the objective that we wish to achieve. And yet our Canadian comrade was *presenting a case for revolution* – a revolution that would introduce a totally different economic system which would replace the one under which we presently live.

The Socialist Party of Canada, in this recent election, was not interested in obtaining votes *unless* they came from socialists. We are the only political organization putting forward such a position – it is unique because it places a priority on the knowledge of the socialist case.

(*World Without Wages*, 1980)

## The Young Tour

In 1970, the Socialist Party of Canada invited Harry Young to speak on its behalf at various cities throughout the country. Young arrived in Canada via Boston in the United States.

Born in London, England, in 1901, Thurston Horatio Edwin “Harry” Young was a larger than life character. At the age of eight, he attended a Socialist Sunday School. In his teens he joined the British Socialist Party, formerly the Social-Democratic Federation. In 1921, he chaired the founding conference of the Young Communist League of Great Britain, becoming its first national organiser and writing its first pamphlet, *No More War?*. In 1922, a Swiss agent of the Comintern ordered Young to go to Russia; travelling illegally via Paris and Berlin, he arrived in Moscow just in time to be a delegate to the Fourth Congress of the Communist International. Shortly after, he was appointed to the secretariat of the International Young Communist League. In Soviet Russia, he met Lenin, Trotsky and Zinoviev; and for a while was Ho Chi Minh’s ‘minder’. He travelled widely in the Soviet Union, and on one occasion addressed a Congress of the Chinese Young Communist League. In 1929 however, Harry Young returned to London where he worked for some time for the Communist Party. But during the 1930s, he began to lose faith in Leninism and Stalinism; and after fighting against Franco in Spain, he resigned from the Communist Party. In 1940, he joined the Socialist Party of Great Britain, and became one of its most active speakers. He probably had the loudest voice of any orator in the English language – stronger, in fact, than that of Charles Lestor in his prime or the legendary Tony Turner!

The Socialist Party of Canada set about making arrangements for Young’s visit to the country. The job of contacting the media and arranging an itinerary was left too late. Circulars were produced, first in Boston, and then by Larry Tickner, who was then the General Secretary of the SPC, in Victoria. Both circulars were considered to be well-designed and well-produced. But the party admitted that sending circulars to universities, radio and TV stations, and newspapers was not particularly productive. Long distance phone calls, which proved to be costly, were made as a last resort. In retrospect, it was agreed it would not have been much more expensive, and would have been more effective, had the party delegated a member to travel in person to the various institutions and organisations. However, despite the above problems, Young’s tour proved to be quite successful.

Harry Young, accompanied on his tour by Steve Ross, went first to Winnipeg, where Anne Cherkes arranged a meeting at the University of Winnipeg, and for which Young and the SPC were paid a fee of \$250. Young was also interviewed on a local radio show by “the most hide-bound host”. From Winnipeg, Harry Young travelled on to Edmonton, where he was interviewed on the radio by “the most sympathetic person”, one Fil Fraser. The radio appearance in Edmonton was, up to the last moment not an air-tight commitment, and some of the members had feared that Young was being sent on a fruitless wild goose chase. But they need not have worried. Following the radio broadcast, Fraser sent Young over to the University of Alberta where he was introduced to a number of contacts, including “some real Marxist professors” according to Harry Young. Fraser sent a testimonial with Young to Jack Webster in Vancouver, just in case Webster was hesitant about the abilities of his “unknown guest”. Jack Webster was considered to be very professional, and his show was the most listened to and popular in British Columbia. He was supposed to interview Young from 8.30 p.m. until midnight; the show was, however, shortened to one and a half hours, minus a few minutes for commercials. There had been rumours that the radio station had attempted to cancel it. But it went ahead. And Webster’s

eyes were said to have “popped open” as he listened to Young who later remarked: “I can handle 10 Jack Websters any Sunday afternoon in Hyde Park”. Bill Roddy arranged a two hour session for Young at Vancouver City College, which was an outstanding success. And at Vancouver Community College he had a large and enthusiastic audience, followed by a discussion after in the cafeteria with students for an hour or so. Young was also interviewed by a local weekly newspaper.

In Victoria, Harry Young addressed a well-attended meeting in the University. For the first time, there was a lively opposition, particularly from a Maoist and “an articulate anarchist”. And a press photographer took some pictures. About 40 students at the Camosun College meeting, held at noon, listened to Young followed by a rather formal discussion. The one appearance that the SPC thought would be easy to arrange was an invitation to Victoria’s only radio chat show. But surprisingly, it turned out to be impossible, despite the fact that both Lambie and Tickner of the SPC had previously been guests on the show, and with the same interviewer – maybe this was the reason why. Despite advertising on the local cable television station, plus a number of display and classified newspaper advertisements, a meeting organised by the Victoria Local was a disappointment as there were only three non-members present; and these were Communists.

At Esquimalt High School, Young was invited to address the students by their teacher, a former National Democratic Party parliamentary candidate. Whilst in Victoria, Young had a couple of short television interviews. And Larry Tickner arranged for him to speak to the Victoria Labor Council, which was open to the public; but a NDP ‘heavy’ on guard at the door was busy turning reporters away. Indeed, Young upset a number of NDP members present by describing how British trade union leaders were cooperating with the Labour government’s attempt to keep workers’ wages down. Before returning to England, Harry Young spoke at the university in Lennoxville, Quebec. He did not speak at any outdoor or street corner meetings as his tour had been arranged for October and November, when such meetings were not practical in Canada. Nevertheless, his visit to the country was something of a fillip for the Socialist Party of Canada following the self-inflicted and destructive upheavals of the previous decade. Young did not, however, visit Toronto.

### **Socialism: A Simple Exposition**

Although no longer living in Canada – he was then resident in Los Angeles – Bill Pritchard also visited Vancouver fairly regularly during this period. He also continued to write articles, essays and one important pamphlet, *Socialism: A Simple Exposition*. In it, he compares capitalism with the previous society of feudalism, and the possibilities for a future socialist society.

Says Pritchard:

A few centuries old, capitalism emerged from a static, clerical, feudal society into one of voyages of discovery, of exploration and conquest of foreign lands, into one of burgeoning trade. Following the voyages of discovery of Da Gama, Columbus, De Soto, Magellan and others, trade bloomed tremendously and the initial steps were taken for the development of regional markets into a world market, and the capitalist system from a European (chiefly) restricted economy into an ever-expanding world-wide system.

It must be admitted that capitalism, historically considered, is a higher, superior social system than any of its predecessors. It broke the restraints that feudalism placed on society's productive forces and thereby developed the increasing productivity of labor.

One could enter many areas to show how capitalism rapidly improved industry, providing an ever-increasing volume of useful vendible goods. Without doubt this was a great social advance. It should be noted here, however, that this increasing volume of goods, while useful, was not primarily with usefulness in mind, but for sale on an ever-expanding world market with profit as the ultimate objective. The main question before any promoter of a new article, etc, is: will it sell?

From simple factories powered by windmill and water-wheel to the use of steam, capitalism has developed huge plants with fast-moving assembly lines, employing thousands of workers in each plant. Today this mere mechanical production is giving way to the electronic and the use of the computer. All this means, as time goes by, more and more wealth will be produced with less and less labor. The button-pusher replaces the skilled mechanic.

Problems which once confronted society, observes Pritchard, have now disappeared. Capitalism has developed the forces of production where over-abundance now becomes the source of human distress. "Famine and want are with us today as a result of too much production", argues Pritchard. "Those in greater need invariably lack the purchase price. Yet the fact stands out: society can with its present means of producing useful goods, supply an abundance for all." But this is prevented by the very structure and nature of the capitalist system. "Production for Sale" is the obstacle.

In Bill Pritchard's view, as with the Socialist Party of which he had been a member, a higher and better organised social system, a system of "Production for Use", is not only desirable but possible. In such a society, he concludes, poverty as we know it will have gone; and industry – whose technological development has produced world-wide pollution – could be so organised and operated that further pollution could be avoided, and present pollution eliminated.

*Socialism: A Simple Exposition* was written in 1972. Bill Pritchard, like many early members of the Socialist Party of Canada, was not only influenced by the writings of Marx and Engels, but also by Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Joseph Dietzgen and various scientific writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He was, he claimed, a "scientific socialist".

### **A World of Abundance**

In 1973, the SPC published a pamphlet, *A World of Abundance*, a collection of articles from the *Socialist Standard*. Introducing the articles, the pamphlet states:

The power, the materials and the techniques, as well as much of the industry, for producing an abundance of all the things that are needed by the people of the world are now a reality, but their development is being held back by the economic and social restrictions of our present system of society.



Of course, continues the pamphlet, the supplies of what humankind needs are not limitless, but they are more than enough to meet what is needed in the foreseeable future. Present-day capitalism is both inefficient and wasteful. The writer cites *The Waste Makers* by Vance Packard, first published in 1960, which was crammed with details of what was “succinctly called planned obsolescence”. In order to “maximise profits”, although Packard does not actually use that phrase, companies make inferior goods designed to wear out relatively quickly so that there may be a market for new ones. Portable radios, car silencers, television sets and much else could easily be produced to last a lot longer. Moreover, says Packard, manufacturers regularly change styles merely by stimulating the market and persuading buyers that their present models are no good because they are “out of fashion”. One might add that the situation is now far worse than it was when Vance Packard wrote his book.

Capitalism, notes *A World of Abundance*, is torn by one major contradiction: that the socialisation of wealth-production has developed to an extent undreamt of in former epochs; yet the ownership of the means of production is concentrated in the hands, not of society as a whole, but a minority. The fetters of this private ownership keep the majority of the world’s population in poverty. Moreover, the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) estimated, in 1963, “that up to half of the population of the world continues to suffer from undernutrition and malnutrition in varying degrees”. (The situation is much the same now, more than 40 years later!) Yet the FAO estimated, again in 1963, that the world potential for increasing food production was “very substantial indeed”. The socialist pamphlet also claims that the belief that the world is overpopulated is a myth. Essentially, the socialist case against the population scare is that what manifests itself as an overpopulation problem is really a misuse of resources problem. The last section of *A World of Abundance*, entitled “A framework For Socialism? World Administration”, demonstrates how a socialist society would function, although not a detailed blueprint.

World government, says the socialist writer, is an idea that most people understand. Socialists, however, do not stand for a world government, but for “a world administration of things” – the planned production and distribution of wealth to meet human needs. A number of international agencies are cited which, democratically controlled and administered, could be used. They include: the International Telecommunications Union; the Universal Postal Union; the International Civil Aviation Organisation; the Inter-governmental Maritime Consultative Organisation; the World Meteorological Organisation; the International Labour Organisation; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation; the Food and Agricultural Organisation; the World Health Organisation; and the International Atomic Energy Agency. The writer concludes:

It is true that none of these bodies is involved in the actual production of wealth...But some of the information which even these have gathered could be useful for planning production on a world scale to meet human needs. Planning in a socialist society, remember, will essentially be a statistical exercise, correlating estimated human needs with known world resources.

The pamphlet says that the basic framework for a world administration already exists. (It is even more relevant today, in the 21st century; see, for example, the article

“Long live the (electronic) revolution!” in the June 2004 issue of the *Socialist Standard*).

### **Socialisme Mondial**

As previously noted, unlike in the west of Canada, the Socialist Party made little headway in French-speaking Quebec. Apart from a few Quebecois who moved to the centre and west of the country, the majority of members were English-speaking monoglots; and, again as previously noted, almost all the SPC's literature was in English, particularly from the 1930s to the 1960s.

However Milne notes in his *History of the Socialist Party of Canada*, that the police prevented two French-speaking members of the Socialist Party of Manitoba, Louie and Pettit, from holding outdoor meetings on 7 September 1903, in Saint-Boniface, a French-speaking suburb of Winnipeg. And the *Western Socialist* of September 1934, in its obituary of Harry Crump, a founder-member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, who had moved to Canada, noted that he had carried on activities on behalf of the SPC “in Montreal, always a difficult city for socialist educational work, but he has done his share in paving the way for the formation of a Local in that city”. Indeed, for a very brief period in 1933-34, a local did exist.

One Quebecois, and active socialist, was the already mentioned Henri Massé who, in 1919, was in Winnipeg and who participated in the general strike. Returning to Montreal, he remained a staunch and active socialist. He was vehemently anti-religious, and distributed atheist and anti-Catholic publications from France, which was a dangerous activity, since the long-running, corrupt, despotic regime of the wily Maurice Duplessis was militantly Catholic and violently ‘anti-communist’. Nevertheless, Massé lived to see the demise of the Duplessis regime, with his death in 1959. In 1967, Massé assisted in the formation of the Montreal Local of the Socialist Party of Canada.

In 1972, a young Quebecois socialist, Serge Huard, of Pointe-aux-Trembles, Quebec, joined the SPC. He soon persuaded the GEC in Victoria to allow him to bring out and edit a party journal in French. At about the same time the SPC began to call itself the Socialist Party of Canada/ Parti Socialiste du Canada. The publication, which first appeared in 1973, was called *Socialisme Mondial* (World Socialism), and was subtitled “périodique international publié par le Parti Socialiste du Canada”. The front cover of the first issue proclaims: “PROLETAIRES DE TOUS LES PAYS UNISSEONS-NOUS POUR LE SOCIALISME”. And the editorial begins:

NON, PAS ENCORE UN AUTRE JOURNAL SOCIALISTE? Pour bon nombre des ouvriers qui liront premier numéro, la réaction sera: ‘Non, pas encore un autre journal socialistes’? Cependant la lecture de cette première édition et des éditions subséquentes prouera, nous l’espérons, que tel n’est pas le cas, que SOCIALISME MONDIAL n’est pas encore un autre journal socialistes, mais plutôt *le* periodique du socialisme scientifique en langue française.

Although *Socialisme Mondial* is published by the Socialist Party of Canada, it will appeal to other “pays francophone”, including Belgium and France, says the editorial. The first issue includes a statement, published by the Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Great Britain in August 1969, on socialism, the way to socialism

and the reform of capitalism. There are other articles on Lenin, the principles of world socialism and socialist planning. Also included are the Object and Declaration of Principles of the Socialist Party of Canada, and a list of socialist publications in Canada, Austria, Jamaica, Ireland, New Zealand, Great Britain, Sweden and the United States.

Most of the articles in *Socialisme Mondial* were translations from English language socialist publications, with occasional short pieces and articles by Serge Huard, and by some sympathisers in France. The SPC published an English-language *S.M. Newsletter* by the Coordination Committee of *Socialisme Mondial*, in which are outlined articles published in the periodical, as well as listing numerous publications in various languages, and from different countries, received by *Socialisme Mondial* and often exchanged with the publication. According to *S.M. Newsletter* no. 3 of 1976, the original print runs were 2000 per issue, but for no. 5 of *Socialisme Mondial* it was reduced to 1000 copies. After a few weeks, however, only a score or so copies were left, and many orders had to be cut or unfulfilled. It was, therefore, decided to increase the number to 2000 copies again. Although edited in Point-aux-Trembles, Quebec, *Socialisme Mondial* was initially printed in Victoria, British Columbia.

As time went by, the proportion of articles sent from Europe, which naturally dealt with political events in Belgium and France rather than in Canada, increased considerably. Almost from the start of publication of *Socialisme Mondial*, Serge Huard collaborated with Adam Buick, who was resident in Luxembourg. An informal socialist discussion group was active at that time in Paris, France. So, in effect, *Socialisme Mondial* was developing into the French-language journal of the World Socialist Movement or “movement pour le socialisme mondial” as it was in French. In the end, it was agreed that, from issue no. 14 in 1980, publication and printing would be transferred to Europe, where it was printed in Arlon, Belgium. At the same time, the subtitle was changed to “bulletin occasionnel pour un monde sans classes, sans argent et sans Etats”. Therefore issues 1 to 13 were edited and published solely by the Socialist Party of Canada; further issues being the collective responsibility of socialists in Canada and Western Europe.

Between 1973 and March 1987, there were a number of special editions and French language pamphlets. No. 10, in 1978, was a special issue with a preface by the General Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Canada, entitled *Comment le capitalisme de'Etat est arrivé en Russie*. In 1981, a 50 page booklet *Pour le socialisme mondial* was published which dealt in some detail with the socialist attitude to parliament, reforms and reformism, trade unions, Russia, war and the Parti Communiste Française (PCF). Also in the same year was published *F. Engels sur l'abolition du salariat* (Engels on the Abolition of the Wages System), a reprint, translated into French, of Engels's 1881 articles in the *Labour Standard* with a modern introduction. In 1986, a record and analysis of the failure of various leftwing governments in the first five years of the Mitterand presidency, entitled *La Gauche au pouvoir en France: pourquoi elle devait échouer*, was published in pamphlet form. The last issue of *Socialisme Mondial*, also in the form of a pamphlet, and devoted to the theme of socialism and ecology, was no. 30 and appeared in March 1987.

### **The SPC – Old and New**

During the 1960s, and into the 1970s, a number of mainly older members and supporters of the Socialist Party of Canada discussed, mostly by correspondence, the

'pros' and 'cons' of the pre-1931 SPC and the SPC post-1931. Harry Morrison, a member of the WSP(US) had claimed that the early Socialist Party had been something of a hodgepodge of revolutionaries and reformers; and this upset a number of old-timers, resulting in a controversy as to whether the SPC post-1931 was a continuation of the old, original party formed at the beginning of the century, or a completely new one.

In March 1960, Isaac Rab, a foundation member of the WSP of the United States, wrote a letter to Roy Watkins in Vancouver, in which he said that he had a strong hunch that all the 'Companion Parties of Socialism' will, in due time, refer to themselves as World Socialist Parties, such as the World Socialist Party of Canada. It would be no cause for a schism. Rhetorically he asked: "How can there be two separate socialist parties in the same country with the same socialist principles?" Of the Canadian party, he says:

The Socialist Party of Canada was reorganized in 1933 (actually it was in June 1931 – PEN). At NO time has it ever supported Russia or reforms. It should not be responsible for the earlier history of the SPC. However, I for one, speaking for myself only, pay tribute to the earlier SPC. There were a lot of confused and unsound statements in the old *Western Clarion*, but they established a real tradition of socialist work. They were the products of peculiar social circumstances which made it possible to carry on a great deal of valuable socialist work that was very inspiring indeed. There was a hodge-podge of all kinds of rubbish permeating through elements of the old SPC, but the valuable work of revolutionary socialists still dominated the scene, and we owe a great debt to them. We should pay tribute to the groundwork they laid down. It has left its mark on Vancouver.

In a letter to both Roy Watkins and John Ahrens in May of the same year, Rab was critical of the prefaces to the 1914 and 1920 editions of the *Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada*, the former because of its emphasis on such concepts as a peaceful socialist revolution as being illusory, and the later edition for its enthusiasm for the Russian Revolution and Bolshevism. Rab adds that the socialist majority has no need for violence: "We surely do NOT advocate violence". Of course, the SPC did not advocate a violent revolution, but many, or some, of its members were certain that the capitalists, or some of them, would certainly resort to violence in defence of their system. And, as previously noted, there were a few members, as late as the 1930s, who would advocate or, at least, condone violence against those who merely opposed the establishment of a socialist society.

Writing to George Jenkins, of Victoria, from San Francisco in the summer of 1966, Jack McDonald said that when he first joined the Socialist Party of Canada, there were about a dozen locals in British Columbia alone; and there were four members of the British Columbia Legislature who also belonged to the SPC. "Of these", he claimed, "there was not one that could be called a socialist in the sense that we use the term today." All of them would fit in nicely with the program of the New Democratic Party. Theoretically, he argued, "We had a revolutionary Platform; politically, we were reformers in practice".

Bill Pritchard, writing in the December 1968 issue of the *Socialist Standard*, warmly mentions "such stalwarts" as Jack Burrough, Jack Harrington, H.J. Fitzgerald, E.T. Kingsley, W.W. Lefaux and G.D. Morgan. He adds, however, that he and

McDonald, with other young members “came to be known as the Young Turks, and through our efforts caused the withdrawal throughout of the Province of British Columbia (outside of Vancouver) of certain reformist elements which appeared in the Party”. He adds: “In time, we the Young Turks found ourselves in the position of having to carry on most of the propaganda and McDonald and I, starting from scratch (with a few others), became speakers and writers”.

In 1975 and 1976, Jim Brownrigg wrote three lengthy statements on what he called *Socialist Party History*, in which he says that “I think that we should avoid entering into a controversy with Morrison”, adding that there had been friction between Milne and Morrison on the matter of the history of the Socialist Party of Canada.

Brownrigg argues that “we are not *claiming* to be the successors to a ‘hodgepodge’. We are *in fact* the *continuation* of the old Party”. He admits that the old SPC was often more

enthusiastic than knowledgeable, and could not restrain the weaker members in the face of the cry: ‘throw away your books, the revolution is HERE!’ They swelled the ranks of the Communist Party. Previously the SPC had quantity, not quality. It was a bitter lesson. However, all the [companion] parties, including the WSP(US) tightened up standards for admission to membership later.

It is easy *now*, remarks Brownrigg, to see the weakness from hindsight, but it is not so noticeable that the tradition, the experience, which we inherit, was hard won.

So, there can be no question of our descent from the old Party. Milne would not have endured pain or wasted his remaining time if he had thought so. We have expanded, then declined in membership; but association and mutual discussion, and the realization of common interests, will compel workers to obtain an understanding of the cause of their problems. So, while we look back at our past, so, too, we can regard our future with confidence.

In Brownrigg’s view, it is not true to say that the New Democratic Party, the Communist Party and the Socialist Party are merely different branches of the same tree. The only thing that they have in common is the use of the word “socialism”. In a letter to George Jenkins, dated 7 January 1976, he refers to the 1920 and 1944 editions of the SPC’s *Socialist Manifesto*, copies of which he had in front of him as he wrote the letter. Brownrigg says that the preface of the 1944 edition which, incidentally, quotes at some length from the preface of the 1920 edition, “contains internal evidence on the continuity and identity of the ‘old’ and ‘new’ parties”. Comparing the 1920 and 1944 editions “word for word”, he says, the only variation is the section on politics in the 1944 edition, “dictated by Canadian political developments”. In conclusion, he writes:

Note, the Party was re-organized, not founded. The Dominion Executive Committee was now in Winnipeg...It seems only logical to conclude that only the locality of the DEC was changed – the plant came to life. There can be little doubt that the ‘new’ Party was the outgrowth of the ‘old’ one: activities resumed, same position, same procedures, fewer members, more enemies.

However, R.M. Roddy, in a paper entitled *Is the Present SPC a Revival of the Old SPC?*, takes a different view. He is far more critical of the Socialist Party of Canada pre-1931 than is Jim Brownrigg. In his opinion, the original SPC was a remarkable political phenomenon for its time and place, and made valuable contributions towards working class education. Most members of the party post-1931, always felt an attachment to the pioneering organisation. But this does not prevent us from an objective assessment and awareness of its deficiencies. "And so, although impressive as much of its record was, we have no desire to identify ourselves with it." But what shocked him most was the knowledge that the Socialist Party of Canada had violated socialist principles by supporting the trade union demand for the blocking of Asian immigration, thus lending itself to charges of racism. Roddy is not quite correct here. The SPC, between its formation in 1905 until around 1910, did have some members, such as Hawthornthwaite, who supported such union demands, but this was not party policy. Opinions were mixed; and most of the anti-Asian elements were also reformers who, increasingly after 1910, left the party or were expelled. Roddy also criticises the Socialist Party for "allowing dual membership with another organization claiming to have a revolutionary objective, such as the One Big Union (OBU)". But, again, Roddy must have been aware that it was SPC members who founded the OBU in the first place. They drew up its constitution and rules.

In reviewing the history of the pre-1931 Socialist Party of Canada, says Roddy, the new one seemed anxious to learn from the mistakes of its predecessor. In his view, the main cause of the party's problems could be traced to a lack of discipline and democratic control. But the most damaging laxity was probably the careless attitude generally prevailing regarding qualifications for membership. The new party endeavoured to adopt a somewhat more vigilant concern for the procedures for admitting new members. Moreover, the acceptance of the SPGB's Object and Declaration of Principles helped to clarify the Socialist Party of Canada's political stance and attitude to modern society. He concludes by saying that the group that the SPC of the 1970s most closely resembles was the Toronto-based Socialist Party of North America of 1911, although he omits to mention that, after a few years, that party dissolved and that most or, at least some, of its former members rejoined the Socialist Party of Canada.

In December 1996, the late George Jenkins told this writer that he considered that the pre-1931 Socialist Party consisted of a minority of activists, of whom some were revolutionaries and others who were reformers. Certainly, there were thousands who voted for party candidates who were not socialists. Nevertheless, Steve Szalai, the then general secretary of the SPC, writing in July 1997, says that Jenkins seemed to be taking the position that the post-1931 Socialist Party of Canada is basically a continuation of the old Socialist Party. "This seems to be an interesting change," notes Szalai. He adds: "Although there is significant reason to believe that there were sound socialists in the old party, and that the Dominion Executive Committee was sound, there is also good reason to believe that the majority of the membership was not sound." Moreover, several non-socialists were elected (on the SPC ticket) in the early days of the party. "I occasionally am asked why people should believe that once elected, socialists will not behave like other elected officials and pursue the reformist path." If the 'old' and 'new' socialist parties are one and the same, then Szalai admits to some difficulty in responding to this question.

The two viewpoints have never been reconciled.

## *Chapter Eleven*

### IN CONCLUSION?

During the 1970s and 1980s, a number of socialist speakers and lecturers from Britain, Ireland, the United States and elsewhere, including Adam Buick, Steve Coleman, Arthur George, Cyril May, Gilbert McClatchie, Richard Montague, Bill Pritchard and Harry Young, visited Canada and spoke at various venues, and on radio and television, on behalf of the Socialist Party of Canada, all of which assisted in keeping the flame of socialism burning or, at least, flickering in the country.

Like the Harry Young tour of 1970, the visit by Cyril May was quite successful. May did not have the colourful past of Harry Young. Nevertheless, in the words of *The Times* obituary of 8 October 2003, “Cyril May was one of the most formidable orators of the 1940s and 1950s, when outdoor speaking was at its peak. He was one of the main voices for the Socialist Party of Great Britain, and could command audiences in Hyde Park of more than 1,000”. Born in 1920, May was brought up a Methodist, but joined the SPGB in 1940 and became a conscientious objector during the Second World War, spending some time in Wormwood Scrubs jail, “on the grounds that he would not fight fellow workers”. Visiting North America in September 1979, Cyril May first went to Boston, where he spoke to an audience on Boston Common. He arrived in Victoria, British Columbia, on Friday, 21 September, and spoke that evening on an SPC sponsored program on local cable television, which was followed by a question and answer session where the viewers phoned in their questions. The following day, May had a lengthy interview with a reporter from the *Victoria Daily Times* which, together with his photograph, appeared in that paper the day after. The article accurately stated that socialism would be a classless, moneyless world without leaders, where all would be equal. On Sunday, he addressed a public meeting at the Union Center, followed by a general discussion and questions. On Tuesday, he spoke at a noon-hour meeting at the University of Victoria on the subject of world starvation. The next day Cyril May went to Vancouver, where he was interviewed on a radio show and taped a talk for the Channel 21 (CKVU-TV) show. He then flew east to Toronto where he spoke to an indoor SPC public meeting, and ‘soapboxed’ at Allen Gardens before returning to England.

While Cyril May was in Toronto, he was, with almost every other ‘leftist’ and socialist in the city, invited by a wealthy SPC sympathiser to a party in his mansion (Marie and Sid Catt could not attend as they were down in Florida). Steve Shannon recounts how he got into a heated exchange with a Trotskyist who attacked the Socialist Party over aspects of its principles. May and “a good looking girl”, he was chatting to, together with other people, came over to Shannon and his critic.

Turning to Shannon, the girl demanded: “What is your view of IS’s attitude to lesbianism?”

He replied: “I don’t know anything about that, but if it makes someone happy, it should be tolerated”.

She then gave forth with a mouthful of insults and profanities, and walked out of the party.

“What’s the matter with her?”, Shannon asked May.

“She was in IS, and all the guys tried to get her into bed. She told them she was a lesbian, but they persisted. So she quit”.



“What is IS?”, asked Shannon.

“The International Socialists”, May replied.

“What, Tony Cliff’s mob in England?”

“Yes, they are here too”.

Apparently, they called themselves “The New Socialists”.

The SPC, however, had considerable difficulty in placing its, and its companion parties’, publications in bookstores. For example, during 1973, the University of Victoria bookstore banned the *Western Socialist*, the *Socialist Standard* and the *Socialist Fulcrum*. The bookstore manager told the *Victoria Express* that if several students requested the journals, they would be allowed in the store. *Martlett*, the Victoria University student paper, published a photograph of an SPC member, Larry Tickner, displaying a sign reading: “WESTERN SOCIALIST & SOCIALIST STANDARD BANNED AT UVIC BOOKSTORE BUT YOU CAN GET THEM HERE.” The caption read: “This poor schmuck stood in the cold for several hours sighing softly. The bookstore says they won’t stock the *Socialist Standard* because it won’t sell, but the socialists say they won’t sell because the bookstore won’t sell them. Only the shadow knows for sure.” A few copies of the *Fulcrum*, *Socialist Standard* and the *Western Socialist* were sent to the Simon Fraser University on a trial basis. Attempts were also made to get SPC journals into the University of British Columbia bookstore, but they no longer sold periodicals, which the Socialist Party found surprising as the UBC had more than 22,000 students. The reason may have been that the Trotskyists had got control of the student union.

In 1979, Jim Brownrigg, who had been recently involved in the debates with other members over the ‘pros’ and ‘cons’ of the pre-1931 SPC died. He was almost 80 years old. He had joined what was known as the Marxist Group in 1930, at 666 Homer Street, Vancouver. Later the group became members of the Vancouver Local of the Socialist Party of Canada. During the 1930s, he was an active speaker as well as contributor to the *Western Socialist*. He also lectured on economics. Indeed, as has already been noted, he had argued that all applicants to membership of the SPC should first attend Marxist economics classes. In the words of *Socialist Fulcrum* (vol. 12, no. 2, 1979):

He was critical of newcomers joining the Party without adequate grounding in the basics of theory, as sometimes happened, particularly in the case of the group of young people who were booted out of the CCF, and made up the majority of the new 1236 Granville Street Local about the beginning of the 1950s. At least the event was graphic proof of the uselessness of ‘boring from within’ to try to make a non-socialist organization into a party with working-class emancipation as its sole objective. Which is what the group of young individuals generally tried to do with the CCF before they were expelled by the Provincial Executive. This ‘reform’ group of the SPC, as it later became known at times, developed speakers, and with the more fundamental work of some older members, carried on feverish activity for a few years, including running a candidate in a Provincial election. It folded, with the former CCFers drifting away into oblivion. Jimmy, who helped found the initial group, dropped out when the decision was made to hurriedly form a Local of the Party without first going through a season of economics and history classes.

In 1961, he became a member-at-large, but in 1965 with the formation of the breakaway World Socialist Party of Canada he became a member of the official reconstituted Vancouver Local of the Socialist Party of Canada.

### **The Socialist Fulcrum**

The *Socialist Fulcrum*, originally *Fulcrum*, was first published in 1968 as the journal of the Victoria Local of the SPC. In 1975, it became the official English language journal of the Socialist Party of Canada. It never achieved the success or the circulation of either the *Western Socialist* or *Socialisme Mondial*.

It was generally agreed that the standard of writing in the *Fulcrum* was high, and most of the articles interesting. Contributors as far afield as Peter Furey in New Zealand wrote for the journal, as did Sid Catt in Toronto. But a letter from Sid and Marie Catt, and Ray Rawlings, in Toronto, dated 22 July 1982, which they sent to the General Executive Committee of the SPC, and a report by Steve Coleman on behalf of the Executive Committee of the SPGB in September of the same year, to the Socialist Party of Canada and other socialist parties, details the problems of the *Socialist Fulcrum*.

The Toronto members discovered that, not only was the *Fulcrum* “a spasmodic publication”, but that “more *Fulcrums* are sold in England than in Canada, when the reverse should be the case”. They also mentioned the “exorbitant cost of producing the *Fulcrum*”. Coleman notes that the SPC only prints between 350 and 500 copies of the *Socialist Fulcrum* per issue, at the cost of approximately 450 dollars. 500 copies of the 50th anniversary issue were printed, but this was untypical. Of the 350 copies of the previous issue, fewer than 300 were distributed. And of these, virtually no individual copies were actually sold in Canada. Coleman lists the distribution as follows:

Libraries (sent free):	75 copies
Subscribers (in Canada):	20 copies
Bookshop (in Vancouver):	1 copy
Winnipeg members:	5 copies
Toronto members:	5 copies
Victoria members:	5 copies
SPNZ:	5 copies
SPGB:	90 copies
WSP(US):	5 copies

Seven copies were sent to individuals in Britain, and a few extra copies were occasionally sent elsewhere. But that was all. And in December 1981, the SPC paid for an advertisement of the *Fulcrum* in the *Canadian Dimension*. Not a single enquiry came in for the *Fulcrum* from the advertisement. No copies were sold in Vancouver.

Coleman reports that:

The *Socialist Fulcrum* is produced mainly by two members and a member’s wife. One member sets up or strips the pages, gathers or draws the graphic material or modifies it, writes some articles, does some of the proof reading and arranges the reproduction. Another member, with his family’s aid, collates the pages, staples them, addresses and mails them.

This member's wife typesets the journal for 150 dollars per issue, about half the cost of having it typeset outside, meaning that he and his wife are subsidising the *Fulcrum* to the extent of 150 dollars per issue. They own a typesetting machine (IBM Compsetter).

Generally, the *Socialist Fulcrum* was published four times a year; but not always. Steve Coleman observes that "The *Socialist Fulcrum* is a lively and informative journal which is attractive to look at, and easy to read". Nevertheless, in 1984 it ceased publication.

In their letter to the Executive Committee in July, the three Toronto members say that they are greatly concerned about the state of the Socialist Party of Canada. "Without new members we will eventually be defunct in Canada and this alarms us, as we know it does you." To them, it seemed dangerous to the socialist movement in Canada to have more members scattered across the country than in Victoria, where the *Fulcrum* was published and where the Executive was situated. They argue that it is imperative that concentration in propagating socialism should be made in Victoria. "We must get new blood into the Party or eventually we will cease to exist." They claim that prior to the disbandment of the Toronto Local, "due to the dispute with Winnipeg, whose behaviour, to say the least, was undemocratic", they had some experience in winning workers over to the socialist case, adding, "perhaps our experience will help you in your efforts".

In the view of the Toronto Three, the Socialist Party of Canada should hold regular indoor meetings on topical subjects. These meetings, which the SPC had not held anywhere in the recent past, should be, firstly, held in a hired room and later in a small hall. The meetings should be advertised by flyers. Literature should always be sold at such meetings, and the names and addresses of all those who have purchased literature should be taken in order to follow up, and enable them to become subscribers. Indoor meetings, they say, are not like the hurly-burly of outdoor meetings. "Do not antagonize anyone who asks what may appear to us to be a stupid question, but deal with it logically and calmly; in that way you will encourage discussion." Indeed,

Over a period of time, and if your meetings are lively, you should have some regular attenders. These you keep informed of any social functions, e.g. rambles, corn roasts, and/ or parties. You have to practically live with these contacts to combat the deluge of capitalist propaganda to which they have been subject during a lifetime. A few social functions keeps the party together, and will show that socialists also have a sense of humour, and are not living in not-so-splendid isolation. Eventually you will have new blood in the Party by these well-tried methods. Do not be discouraged by your first efforts. Regular meetings will bring results.

Arrange debates. "Debates help to keep the Party's name in front of the public and promote enthusiasm among the members", say the Toronto group. Steve Coleman, in his report, adds that halls should be booked for meetings in Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver and Victoria; radio and television stations should be contacted well in advance, so that phone-ins and interviews can be secured. Phone-in programmes can be used to great effect, and only a few regular participants can make quite an impact, he contends. Contact all opponent organisations, and ask them if they wish to debate; contact universities, colleges, trade unions and debating societies, offering to send a

Socialist Party speaker. It should also be possible to organise a few educational classes. "It must be emphasised that these proposals are only those which seem to be good ideas from a distance", writes Coleman. "At the end of the day, it is up to the SPC to decide what measures are most likely to stimulate the growth of socialist consciousness in Canada".

## Victoria

As suggested by the Toronto Three in their letter of July 1982, the Socialist Party concentrated its efforts on the Victoria area, mainly because it had very little choice to do otherwise.

Members in Victoria concentrated largely on distributing leaflets during 1983 and 1984. At a large march and demonstration of unemployed workers, hundreds of SPC leaflets were distributed; and, shortly after, more than 2000 SPC anti-war leaflets were handed out at an 'anti-nuke' demonstration. The Victoria members set up a literature stall in the Old Age Pensioners' Hall in front of a large banner, stating: "Socialism, World Without War, Wages and Want – Socialist Party of Canada". The 1983 British Columbia Provincial election campaign was the shortest to date, being barely one month in duration. Fewer indoor meetings were held by competing parties. Two quite small rallies were held in the Esquimalt Curling Rink. In previous elections, however, the rallies in Victoria had been held in the Memorial Arena, a much larger venue, with far larger crowds. In addition, candidates' meetings in schools and various clubs had smaller attendances than in the past. There was little interest in campaigning. The SPC was unable to field a candidate, but hurriedly prepared a leaflet, of which 1500 were distributed. The leaflet commenced by stating:

It matters very little which of the two big parties wins the election and becomes the government; there will be no fundamental changes in our lives. Things will be basically the same as before. The lesser parties, ranging from extreme 'left' to the extreme 'right' have nothing better to offer in dealing with the serious problems of insecurity, poverty, conventional wars, and fears of nuclear annihilation, and other problems facing the 'ordinary' people in society.

In conclusion, the leaflet says that "To register their opposition to the cause of their problems in this election, since, sorry to say, there are no Socialist Party candidates, workers can use a write-in on their ballot: SOCIALISM".

There were no SPC candidates in the Federal election the following year either. As with the Provincial elections, Federal elections were changing. There were fewer party-sponsored meetings; but the number of all-candidate meetings, sponsored by various 'protest' groups increased dramatically. There were 15 all-candidate meetings, and four meetings sponsored by individual political parties, in the Victoria area. The four party meetings excluded 'fringe' candidates. Most included the Green Party however. George Jenkins, reporting on SPC activities during the election, notes that had the Party fielded just one candidate in the Victoria riding, the socialist case could have been presented, at least briefly, at six or more of the all-candidate meetings, each with audiences of between 400 and 600 people. And the SPC would have been represented, again at least briefly, on one television programme. Had the Socialist Party fielded two candidates, its representatives could have participated in two-thirds

of all the meetings and radio and television broadcasts. In the event, the SPC challenged the Libertarian and Green Parties to debate; both accepted, but changed their minds once the election campaign had started. Nevertheless, the SPC produced more than 2,500 leaflets. These were handed out at most of the meetings in Victoria, and 1,000 were distributed in Duncan and the Chemainus area, as well as some in Alberni. At one outdoor rally addressed by a Liberal Party minister, one SPC member, Jim Lambie, put leaflets on the cars for about 20 minutes before he noticed that Liberal Party workers were following him, and removing them! Jenkins concludes his report, saying: "There is a big percentage of the working class which is fed-up with the political spectrum parties, and it is regrettable that the SPC couldn't have made a bigger splash in Victoria."

Again at the British Columbia election of 1986, the Socialist Party prepared and distributed a large number of leaflets, mainly in the Victoria area, but did not field a candidate. In its leaflet, the SPC notes that poverty is inevitable in "a civilisation where the producers hand over most of what they generate to a small class of parasites". And under the heading "REFORMISM", the leaflet argues that:

*Social* services are really anti-social. They are basically subsidies on wages. The fact that a first class swindle job had been done to fatten profits at the expense of workers' income is evidenced by growing consumer debt, private and state charities, soup kitchens and homeless street people. Entrenched privilege thinks little of workers' mentality when it offers crumbs for votes through its political spectrum representatives, while it keeps the bakery, itself, produced and operated by the servants of capital.

The owners of the earth, it continues, consider it of supreme importance that the world's workers never hear what socialism means; indeed, falsifying socialism is a multi-million dollar industry, a form of censorship through misrepresentation. The Socialist Party of Canada, in its leaflet, admits that the voice of "real socialism" is small, but that the present system is its own slow-motion gravedigger. However, the cult of leadership is essential for the preservation of capitalism. "Bad leadership is a convenient excuse that something other than capitalism causes a government's failure to deliver, or a reform that doesn't meet expectations. And always there are new leaders, promising the never-never land." In fact, market forces of the existing system are uncontrollable by any government; political leaders can't stop depressions, wars or the arms race. "All they can do", concludes the leaflet, "is to try to run the system in the interests of their masters, the dominant class. And in the process, betray their naïve and trusting followers". The workers of British Columbia and of Victoria, as elsewhere, continued to put their trust in their political leaders.

### **Leaflets Galore**

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Socialist Party in general and the Victoria Local in particular, published and distributed hundreds of thousands of leaflets on many different subjects, not just during Provincial and Federal elections, but at demonstrations and meetings between elections. Most were well-produced, interesting and topical.

Some of the leaflets were reprints from articles in, for example, the *Socialist Standard*. One leaflet, reprinted from the *Standard* of September 1991, asks the question: “What about Russia?”. It was written after the coup against Mikhail Gorbachev, but before the collapse of the Soviet Union. The leaflet asserts that nobody believes any more that Russia is socialist (although actually some simple souls still did!); and that, since 1917, Russia had state ownership, not common ownership. However, by the 1950s, the centrally planned state capitalist economy, completed after Lenin’s death by Stalin, began to show signs of stagnation. Then came Gorbachev. “So what was perestroika about then?”, asks the leaflet. In essence it was an attempt to restore the rate of profit in Soviet Russia, and make the economy more competitive. Gorbachev proposed abandoning the central command economy, and allowing enterprises more freedom to respond to market forces. Gorbachev was later replaced by Yeltsin who was prepared to go further along the private capitalist road. Socialists, says the SPC, have a different, socialist, agenda.

Another leaflet reprinted from the *Socialist Standard* (May 1993) was a review of a book, *The Brighter Side of Human Nature*, by Alfie Kohn. He argues that competition, selfishness and egocentricity are popularly overstated, and the opposites, pro-social behaviour and cooperative activities, generally understated. In Kohn’s view, ‘human nature’, that is human behaviour, is pro-social rather than competitive. This is emphasised by the SPC leaflet.

Most of the leaflets, however, were written by members of the Socialist Party of Canada. One such leaflet asks: “What is the Socialist Party?”. It asks and answers such questions as “What is capitalism?”, “Can capitalism be reformed in our interests?”, “Is nationalization an alternative to capitalism?”, “Are there any socialist countries?” and “What is the meaning of socialism?”. All the answers are in short, precise paragraphs. Another leaflet asks: “Is the Socialist Party utopian?”. Although this leaflet does not specifically answer that question, another leaflet, “What is socialism?”, answers the question in some detail, stating:

Socialism will not be some utopian dream, although compared to our lives today it may seem like it. Socialism will allow humanity to find its full potential, unhindered by the requirements of profit. Socialism is not a magic formula that will make all our problems disappear.

The leaflet defines socialism as a wageless, moneyless society of voluntary production, which will involve the satisfaction of self-defined needs. Socialism will provide more leisure time and entail the elimination of useless jobs such as bankers, tax collectors and cashiers. It will, continues the leaflet, be a world without wars or crime; and violence will be significantly reduced. And in socialism, the value of the environment will be part of everyday life. Humanity needs a healthy planet.

Almost all the other leaflets produced by the SPC during this period deal with specific subjects discussed only briefly in the above mentioned examples. They include:

Vote for yourself for a change  
How to change society  
Insecurity  
What about the truth?  
What is freedom?  
Common ownership?

The rich get rich by hard work – ours  
Class struggle – bullshit or what?  
The media bias  
Did you know?  
Marxists vs feminists  
Can society meet the needs of women?  
One Green world

The Socialist Party of Canada has always been concerned by the effects that industrial capitalism has had on the environment. As long ago as 1910, the first edition of the *Manifesto of the Socialist Party* notes that with the “onward march of capitalism” everywhere mills and factories sprang up, their smoke and fumes turning once fertile green fields into “desolate, uninhabitable wastes” which “poisoned and polluted the rivers until they stank”. It is now far worse.

As mentioned briefly in this work, SPC members, George Jenkins and Ray Rawlings, highlighted the problem in a number of articles in the journal *World Socialist* (No.4, Winter 1985-6 and No.7 Winter 1987-8). Jenkins asserts that the expansion of production in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries brought about the defilement of nature; vast areas of England and Europe were blackened by soot. Pollution controls, he says, have been enacted by governments, but these are the minimum levels thought to be necessary to protect the profits of the owning class, not the health of the population. Laws against gross desecration are about as effective as the laws against bank robbery.

Pollution control means governments issuing permits to industries to sell ‘safe’ pesticides, food additives and to dump chemical wastes harmlessly. Such control means a Canadian government without enough money to conduct its own tests on new pesticides and additives coming on the market. The average crusader against ecological degradation sees the private and state system as a basically static arrangement which can be improved through a gradual process of reform for the common good. Ecologists are ill-equipped; and if they come to power would be trapped by the economics of the system. Ray Rawlings describes in considerable detail the pollution of the Great Lakes through the dumping of industrial waste.

At around the time that these articles were being written, the Socialist Party produced, and distributed, a pamphlet entitled “One green world” in which it states, in the first paragraph:

All over the world the present economic system plunders and wastes the Earth’s non-renewable mineral and energy sources. All over the world it pollutes the sea, the air, the soil, forests, rivers and lakes. All over the world it upsets natural balances and defies the laws of ecology. Clearly, this destruction and waste continue indefinitely, but it need not, it should not, and it must not.

According to “One green world”, it is quite possible to meet the material needs of every man, woman and child on this planet without destroying the natural system on which we depend, and of which we are a part. Such methods are: farming that

preserves and enhances the natural fertility of the soil; the systematic recycling of materials obtained from non-renewable mineral sources, such as metals and glass; the prudent use of non-renewable energy sources, while developing alternative sources based on natural processes that continually renew themselves, such as solar energy, wind power and hydroelectricity; the use of industrial processes which avoid the release of poisonous chemicals, or radioactivity into the biosphere; and the manufacture of solid goods made to last, not to be thrown away after use, or to deliberately break down after a calculated period of time.

So, asks the Socialist Party, what stands in the way? Why isn't all of this done? The simple answer is that, under the present economic system, production is not primarily geared to meeting human needs, but rather the accumulation of monetary wealth out of profits. The result is an economic system governed by blind economic laws which oblige decision-makers, whatever their personal views or sentiments, to plunder, pollute and waste. If human needs are to be met, says "One green world", while at the same time respecting the laws of nature, then the present system must go. And what is the alternative?

If we are to meet our needs in an ecologically acceptable way we must first be able to control production – or, put another way, able to consciously regulate our interaction with the rest of nature – and the only basis on which this can be done is the common ownership of the means of production.

Shortly after, in a further leaflet entitled "Saving the planet", based on an article in the august 1990 issue of the *Socialist Standard*, by C. Slapper, much the same is written. The writer notes the emergence of a "green" movement that raises the same issues as those raised by the socialists; and he asserts that those involved in both the Green Party, as well as ecological pressure groups, are trying to avert ecological crisis through legislation within the framework of capitalism. But within this social structure, says Slapper, any concessions to such concerns will be "too little, too late", and will only then take place if and when it appears to fit with the dictates of profit.

The Socialist Party of Canada justly claims that it is the only party in the country which has consistently concerned itself with, and advocated a lasting solution to, the ecological effects of world capitalism. It does not, however, minimise the problem. Indeed, Naomi Klein, writing in the *Nation* (and partially reprinted in the *Guardian* of 1 June 2007), reports on "North America's biggest resources boom since the Klondike gold rush" – the mining of northern Alberta's vast deposits of bitumen; black, tarlike goo that is mixed up with sand, clay, water and oil. There are approximately 2.5 trillion barrels of the stuff! Huge machines dig out the black goo and load it into the world's largest dump trucks. It is then turned into oil. Most of the major oil companies, including Exxon-Mobil, Chevron, Total and Shell, are in on the act, paying just one percent in royalties to the Canadian government.

Not surprisingly, this is destroying trees and wildlife. Says Klein: "The industry is contributing to climate change more than any other; the \$100 billion in projected investments from the tar sands have turned Canada into a global climate renegade."



## NAFTA

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was first announced, by George Bush Snr. for the United States, and President Carlos Salinas de Gortari for Mexico, in 1990, and was signed in 1992. On New Year's Day 1994, Canada joined, after asking to join the negotiations in 1991. The three countries are involved in an unstoppable and rapid process of economic integration. NAFTA envisioned a continent without tariffs, quotas and investment restrictions. Washington saw the opportunity to use free trade, first with Mexico, and then with Canada, as a springboard for trade agreements with other countries of the Americas. Canada, therefore, had little choice but to join.

Canada had previously opened up its markets to US corporations with the US-Canada Free Trade Agreement in 1988. Automobiles and petroleum gave Canada a \$14 billion trade surplus with the United States. Canadian corporations producing capital goods and high technology industries feared ceding the potentially important Mexican market to US competitors if Canada stayed out of NAFTA. The original 1988 US-Canadian Agreement created a free trade area, which, whilst it only increased the consumer population available to the US multinationals by 10%, gave the United States access to the vast mineral wealth of Canada. This was Reagan's real objective, effectively giving the USA its own version of the Soviet Union's mineral rich Siberia.

In 1990, George Bush Snr. empowered his Council on Competitiveness, headed by Vice President Dan Quayle, to review all existing and new regulations for their 'anti-competitive' impact on US business. The Council forced changes in the Environmental Protection Agency, and pressed the heads of the Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration to reconsider consumer safety rules, and also sought to overhaul the civil justice system to reduce the lawsuits against business corporations. In the words of Harry Brown in *For Richer, For Poorer*:

The same deregulatory juggernaut swept through Canada in the wake of its free trade agreement with the United States. The country moved away from its strict standard for pesticide safety toward the weaker US version. Social programs were cut back or attacked, as with unemployment insurance and the minimum wage, both of which were more generous than in the United States. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce challenged its Federal and Provincial governments to adopt the standards applied by Quayle's Council, demanding that "all Canadian governments must test all their policies to determine whether or not they reinforce or impede competitiveness. If a policy is anticompetitive, dump it".

Furthermore, Canadian and US corporations used the Free Trade Agreement to attack environmental and other reformist programmes through the Bilateral Commission set up to rule on trade disputes. Indeed, United States companies sued to overturn Canada's efforts to reduce acid rain through subsidised pollution control equipment, claiming that the subsidies constituted unfair governmental assistance. Likewise, Canadian companies attacked the US ban on asbestos, arguing that it illegally blocked their exports to the country.

The Bush, Salinas and Mulroney administrations in the US, Mexico and Canada campaigned to convince 'their' workers that NAFTA would create jobs and significantly raise living standards in the three countries, as did the Clinton administration after it took over from Bush. Opponents of the North American Free Trade Agreement in the US and Canada contended that the pact would accelerate deindustrialisation in their countries by encouraging companies to move to Mexico, where labour costs were far lower. In hearings and television documentaries across Canada and the United States, many workers expressed fear for their jobs. NAFTA opponents also argued that removing the barriers to competition would increase the downward pressure on wages and working conditions that workers in Canada and the United States had been facing since the 1970s. Canadian workers had already experienced the 'free trade' slide following the US-Canada Free Trade Agreement of 1988. Many Canadian facilities had moved south to the US, where labour laws were generally more favourable to employers than in Canada. According to the Canadian Labor Congress, almost 250,000 jobs had been lost because of the Agreement in the first two years alone. A total of 460,000 manufacturing jobs had vanished between June 1989 and October 1991, representing nearly a quarter of Canadian manufacturing employment.

The Socialist Party of Canada issued a statement on the North American Free Trade Agreement, and distributed leaflets. The statement and leaflets say that the politicians want us to argue about the North American Free Trade Agreement on the basis of whether it is a good deal or not. The right wing tells us that it is a good deal, and will mean more jobs – a familiar refrain. The left wing tells us that it is a terrible deal that must be stopped, or replaced, because it will cost Canadian jobs. But, says the Socialist Party, two important facts seem to get ignored in the claims that surround the NAFTA debate: free trade cannot be stopped merely by wishing it away; and the alternative for any nation foolish enough to attempt to avoid free trade is to maintain or, more likely, increase trade barriers – “a two-way street”.

Canada, continues the SPC, is always at economic war with every other nation, and as in any war, working people are casualties. With or without a formal agreement with Canada, free trade is going to happen, unless Canada erects stronger trade barriers, and then faces retaliation from the United States and probably many other countries as well. Such retaliation would at least be as destructive as any free trade deal; and Canada is not likely to withstand such retaliation for very long. And the result? Free trade! Says the Socialist Party:

What this means to you and me is that the NAFTA is not really relevant. The long relatively good ride that the Canadian workers have had is over, and no amount of wishing, no agreement, no trade barrier is going to change that.

The NAFTA debate is a diversion. As in any supposed solution within capitalism, some workers may benefit, and for others they will suffer. Then the tables will turn. Not surprisingly, the Socialist Party of Canada says that “The option is socialism”.

### **Again Elections**

Once again, in the 1997 Federal Election, the Socialist Party of Canada produced a large number of leaflets – two different ones in fact. One of them, entitled “It's time

for working people to make a real change”, concentrates mainly on criticising other parties. The Liberals, claim the SPC, with their ties to the corporate world, pass themselves off as a party of the centre; but while trying to maintain the Welfare State, they have resorted to “cutting and slashing of programs, laying off workers – all in the hope of keeping the system profitable”. Likewise the Progressive Conservative and Reform Parties, have also downsized the Welfare State, again in the interests of profit. The New Democrats, the party of the left and supposed ‘friend’ of the workers, have not been averse to breaking union contracts and strikebreaking. And the other parties, of the extreme left, the Communists and Trotskyists, call for nationalisation and support China or Cuba. The Socialist Party says: “Don’t spoil your ballot by voting for capitalism – write Socialist Party of Canada on your ballot”. On the other leaflet, the SPC states:

Liberal, PC, Reform, Block Québécois, NSP, Marxist-Leninist, Communist, Natural Law, National, Canadian Action, and many others, all want you to vote for them – and more capitalism, no matter what they call it.

The leaflet adds:

The Socialist Party isn’t running candidates in this election. Write “World Socialism” or “Socialist Party of Canada” on your ballot. It won’t elect a single socialist today. But if you don’t start now, when will you start?

But why did the Socialist Party of Canada just produce and distribute leaflets? Why didn’t it field any candidates?

To recap: In the early years of the last century, the SPC’s main propaganda outlets were street corner meetings, when not broken up by the police, Mounties or anti-socialist opponents. Meetings were also held on market squares and, sometime later, in parks or open spaces where permitted by local authorities. Such meetings continued at least up to the Second World War, and much later in parks. For many years, the Socialist Party had a number of travelling orators and soapboxers who generally relied on collections and the generosity of members and sympathisers for their food and accommodation, particularly in small towns and rural areas. Meetings, at least in cities such as Vancouver, were regularly held on Sunday evenings in large theatres, often with audiences of 2000 or more; meetings, lectures and debates with opposing parties, were held on other evenings of the week in party headquarters, trade union and community halls. May Day rallies, parades and marches were held once a year.

The Socialist Party of Canada published a regular journal, such as the *Western Clarion* and the *Western Socialist*, generally on a weekly or monthly basis, although, when short of funds, these papers did not always appear regularly. There were also other journals sympathetic towards the SPC such as, for many years the *One Big Union Bulletin*. Occasional pamphlets, such as the *Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada* and *The Slave of the Farm*, were printed, often in editions of many thousands. Leaflets, again in many thousands, were distributed, generally during the Party’s election campaigns, these latter reprinting the election manifesto and often featuring a photograph of the SPC candidate. Leaflets on specific subjects were printed and distributed, especially in the latter part of the twentieth century at the increasing number of ‘peace’ and ‘protest’ rallies.

As the century progressed, there were fewer and fewer opportunities for soapboxing on streetcorners, particularly with the increase of automobile traffic. Meetings in theatres and trade union halls drew smaller and smaller audiences with, first, the emergence of cinemas and dance halls and, then, for home consumption, radio and television. People in increasing numbers merely became, not active participants at meetings, but passive listeners and watchers to be informed and entertained. Such developments, and with it more comfortable homes, affected organisations like the Socialist Party, which had always relied on cheap forms of communication. The distribution of leaflets, of course, remained as a fairly inexpensive form of propaganda. Contesting elections, however, became more difficult and costly.

As in many countries, political parties that wish to contest elections, national or local, Federal or Provincial, in Canada, have to be registered. The Socialist Party of Canada is not at present a registered party. It is not, and has not been, alone. The law has affected other parties, including the Communist Party which had been campaigning against registration since 1993, when registration was made more difficult for small political parties.

Just prior to the Federal Election of 1993, the Canadian Parliament passed a number of amendments to sections of the Canada Elections Act which severely undermined the electoral activities of small parties such as the Communist, Green and Socialist Parties, as well as limiting workers' 'rights' to so-called free political expression and association. The amendments did not affect the main parties, such as the Conservative, Liberal or New Democrats. The main amendment was that a political party, to be registered, had to field a minimum of 50 candidates in a Federal Election, otherwise it would be deregistered and have its assets sequestered. A party fielding fewer than 50 candidates would not have its name listed on the ballot. On 27 September 1993, the Communist Party was prosecuted for not fielding 50 candidates, deregistered, forced to liquidate its assets and cash, and had its desks, typewriters and computers seized. Over a number of years, the Communists and others, campaigned to reverse the amendments. One bone of contention to smaller, financially strapped parties, including the SPC, has been the \$50,000 sum required to nominate the 50 candidates.

After 10 years, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the sections of the Canada Elections Act – the sections imposing a 50-candidate threshold for political parties to gain, and maintain, Federal registered party status – was in fact unconstitutional, and violated Section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and ordered Parliament to nullify the legislation accordingly within 12 months. The Supreme Court added that, forcing political parties to field a minimum of 50 candidates in order to register, did “great harm” to smaller, fringe parties and threatened democracy by putting them on an uneven playing field in fundraising and, hence, their ability to communicate their ideas. Registration has a number of benefits, such as party retaining its funds during an election campaign, while an independent, non-party candidate must turn the money over to the Federal treasury. So-called phoney, or bogus, parties face criminal penalties of up to five years in jail, and a \$5,000 fine. Registered parties must file annual financial statements for each constituency contested, and the party as a whole, as well as a statement attesting that its purpose is to participate in “public affairs”. The ailing Communist Party considered the Supreme Court's ruling to be a victory.

A new Parliamentary Bill, however, proposed that, for a party to be registered, it must have at least 250 members, whereas only 100 were previously required. Again,

this seemed quite inconsequential for the larger, establishment parties, but debarred smaller parties, and particularly the Socialist Party of Canada which has always restricted its membership to socialists. Another section of the proposed legislation, to which the Communists objected, was that a political party would be proscribed from giving qualified support to another party, or parties, if that party was not fielding candidates in a particular election or by-election (such as, for example, the Communist Party supporting the New Democrats). This would not concern the SPC, as it is opposed to all other parties in the country. Nevertheless, the contesting of elections, Provincial or Federal, has proved to be far more difficult for the Socialist Party in recent times than in the early decades of the twentieth century.

### **Consumerism Gone Mad**

Meanwhile American-style capitalism continues to dominate the Canadian landscape – literally.

The West Edmonton Mall in Alberta is the self-styled Eighth Wonder of the World. It is currently the world's second largest shopping centre after the one in Dubai, covering more than five million square feet, with over 800 stores, 110 eateries and restaurants, numerous bars and nightclubs, 20 cinemas and an indoor golf course; it has the world's largest car park, the world's largest indoor bungee jump, the world's largest indoor lake (replete with dolphins and four submarines) and the world's largest indoor amusement park. It has a full-size replica of Christopher Columbus's 'Santa Maria'. And, yes; there is also a fully consecrated chapel.

The Mall cost about one billion dollars to build and continues to expand. It uses the same amount of power as a town of 50,000. And it attracts 20 million people a year. Of the visitors, more than 60% come from outside the Edmonton area, and 5% are from abroad. They take a taxi direct to the mall from the local airport, only emerging to return to the airport a week later. Many stay at the 360-room Fantasy Hotel.

The West Edmonton Mall was the brainchild of Jacob Ghermezian, a Persian immigrant and former rug salesman. He began building the mall in 1981, on the back of the Alberta oil boom, which created more millionaires than any other time in Canada's history. The oil boom bust, but not the West Edmonton Mall. Comments Mike Carter in *The Guardian* (5 January 2005):

Jacob's four sons now run the business, dreaming up new attractions for the mall, to keep the punters in; to keep the tills ringing. The recent acquisition of three sea lions from a safari park in Scotland has attracted condemnation.

And he concludes:

What strikes me as I wander around the cavernous shopping areas, is how deplorable an environment it is for human beings. The glassy-eyed hordes shuffle through the halls and ride the escalators with Sisyphean torpor, stopping occasionally to point and contemplate whether their lives could be enriched by new towels, or a doughnut. Noise is everywhere. Colour, movement, no space to think or be still. Every element of the real world extirpated. Choice and consumerism as a panacea for the existential void. The cure for life itself.

Not surprisingly, the Canadian socialists hope to see, and are striving for, a more rational and sane society and way of life – in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, and worldwide. They would also like to see a much less stressful society. According to “Take Back Your Time” ([www.timeday.org](http://www.timeday.org)) *Overtime*, Cleveland, OH, March 2005), Canadian workers, although they enjoy longer vacations and paid family leave than American workers, “are also working more now than a generation ago, and are feeling the pressure of time stress and hurried lifestyles”. All in the interests of the employers.

Canada also supplies the United States with vast quantities of illegal drugs, although this is not entirely a one-way traffic. Much of it emanates from British Columbia, which produces a particularly potent form of marijuana known as BC Bud. More than 2 million pounds of BC Bud reaches the US market every year from more than 50,000 ‘grow-ops’ located across British Columbia. Indeed, 85% of cannabis grown in British Columbia is exported to the United States, where it can fetch more than \$3000 a pound; as much as cocaine, which is bartered, together with guns, for the cannabis, the cocaine and guns moving north and east throughout Canada. The industry, both ways, is probably worth \$10 billion a year. Most of the dope cultivated in British Columbia finds its way first to Portland and Seattle, being transported by small planes, helicopters or in backpacks across the mountain forests. All this business is, of course, not sanctioned by the Canadian or American governments. Far from it! But, to date, the Homeland Security patrols appear to be fighting a losing battle with the well-organised smugglers. It is a multibillion dollar drug war. But very profitable.

Not all businesses are, or remain, profitable. Every so often, as with the oil boom mentioned above, some go bust. On Thursday, 10 March 2005, notes the *Monthly Report/ Newsletter* (SPC, 1 April 2005), on the eve of the country’s second busiest weekend for travel, Jetsgo Airlines, the third largest in Canada, suddenly ceased operations at midnight. This stranded 17,000 passengers around North America, many waiting to board planes to travel to destinations for which they had pre-paid. The company was taking bookings up to the last hour before the airline closed down; all the would-be passengers had to find alternative transportation, and pay again, or return home. But the real losers, says the *Report*, were more than 1,300 employees who were shocked to find that they were now out of a job. Some were expected to move to Europe in the hope of finding similar work there. Coincidentally, the shares of Jetsgo’s main competitor, WestJet, soared. So quite a few capitalists were able to turn this fiasco into a ‘winning hand’. Suspiciously, WestJet’s share trading activity was unusually high during the two days preceding the fall of Jetsgo. Indeed, Wednesday, 9 March, saw three million WestJet shares traded, and on Thursday another million, compared with an average of 410,000.

### **Scam**

At the beginning of September 2000, Sergey Novikov of Kiev, Ukraine, writing on behalf of the ‘International Young Workers’, contacted the Socialist Party of Canada and other socialist parties in the World Socialist Movement via e-mail, requesting information and hoping for “fruitful cooperation”.

Novikov explained that he represented a Marxist group of workers and students in Kiev, and other workers in Ukraine. He said that, in 1994, when they called themselves the Marxist Group of Ukraine, they had had contact for a short time with a “Sparktivist Tendency”, but broke with them and other Stalinist and Trotskyist

groups. In 1996, he continued, their organisation endured a deep crisis, but had survived. They had had illusions regarding Stalinist and Trotskyist parties and groups. Now, however, having discovered the Socialist Party of Canada, the Socialist Party of Great Britain and the World Socialist Movement, the International Young Workers of Ukraine wanted close cooperation with them.

Steve Szalai, replying on behalf of the Socialist Party of Canada, stated that the party would like to send the IYW its introductory package and, after reading it, if the IYW required more information, the SPC would send a second package; but the SPC would need a postal address. He added that he hoped that the IYW would find themselves in complete agreement, and would soon be members of the World Socialist Movement. There was a similar exchange between the IYW and the SPGB. Sergey Novikov then sent the Socialist Party of Canada a document entitled “Analysis of current political situation in Ukraine”, which he had written in March 2000. Steve Szalai’s reply to Novikov was friendly, but also critical. He criticised Novikov for advocating a “termless political strike”, the “unconditional dismissal” of the chauvinistic government of Viktor Yushenko, the formation of a “worker government”, the denouncement of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the nationalisation of the means of production and the State Bank, and “worker self-government”. Not surprisingly, Szalai on behalf of the Socialist Party of Canada, replied by stating that such propositions were basically reformist and pro-Bolshevik. Nevertheless, he hoped that dialogue between the SPC and IYW would continue. Novikov replied in a conciliatory tone. And on 11 September, Szalai replied yet again in some detail and included the Object and Declaration of Principles of the Socialist Party of Canada. By 12 September, Novikov and the IYW appeared to accept the SPC’s Object and Principles and to reject a programme of reforms. They were, said Novikov, preparing a leaflet to distribute to workers in Kiev. He also praised the *Socialist Standard*. An English-language translation of a leaflet was then sent to the Socialist Party of Canada.

The January 2001 issue of the *Socialist Standard* published an English translation (by the IYW) of two leaflets said to have been distributed recently in Kiev, the first to coincide with anti-IMF demonstrations in Prague in September 2000, and the second in November on the 83rd anniversary of the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia. In the main, both leaflets reflected the socialist viewpoint. By the beginning of 2001, the SPGB had largely taken over corresponding with Novikov.

By early March 2001, Sergey Novikov had begun writing to the Socialist Party of Great Britain and other socialist parties on behalf of the World Socialist Party (Ukraine). The Executive Committee of the SPGB decided to look into the background of the group in Ukraine. Apparently, some members of the SPGB Executive Committee were wary, suspecting that Novikov may have been some kind of joker – and not e-mailing from Kiev. Others felt that the person was certainly from Ukraine, and that the leaflets published in the *Socialist Standard* did show an understanding of socialism. A report was submitted to the Executive Committee of the SPGB by two members delegated to report; and they suggested that the Ukrainian group be included in the *Socialist Standard* as a contact. Shortly after, the Ukrainians were sent a questionnaire regarding the socialist case. The reply from Kiev was positive.

Later in the year, two members of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, Danny Lambert and Vincent Otter, were delegated to visit Kiev and contact the members of the Ukrainian group. In December, they reported their findings to “the Companion Parties of the World Socialist Movement”, including the Socialist Party of Canada.

They considered their visit to have been very successful. They stayed in a flat provided by the Kiev group, which appeared to have about 12 or more members. There was also said to be a member from Lvov in the west of the country and another from Sumy in the east. The group were very hospitable, and most of them could speak good English. After detailed discussion involving many questions and answers, the SPGB delegates considered that the Ukrainians had a good understanding of socialist ideas. They recommended that the Ukrainian organisation be admitted to the World Socialist Movement as a companion party. It subsequently was.

At the beginning of 2002, the Socialist Party of Great Britain invited the World Socialist Party (Ukraine) to send two delegates to its annual conference to be held at Easter. 400 dollars were sent towards the cost of the airfares from Kiev to London. Sergey Novikov said that he was unable to obtain a visa. One member, Semyon Schevchenko, came and addressed the conference as a fraternal delegate from the Ukrainian party. There was, however, some concern within the World Socialist Movement that the Ukrainians had not submitted a rule book, committee minutes or a conference report by the middle of 2003.

And then the bomb burst!

On 22 July 2003, both Adam Buick and the SPGB received an email from Vasya Petrov on behalf of a group of "Proletarian Revolutionaries Collectivists", a Left Communist Russian group, entitled "Potemkin Villages in Kiev", in which Petrov alleged that a man called Oleg Vernik and a group in Kiev, Ukraine, had been conducting an ongoing scam against mainly leftist and socialist groups in the West since 2000. The objective apparently was to secure funds for Vernik and his associates. The accusations from Vasya Petrov were initially treated with caution. Nevertheless, the then General Secretary of the SPGB, Darren O'Neil, and the other recipient of the email from Petrov, Adam Buick, decided to investigate the matter. The truth was soon revealed.

O'Neil attempted to contact Sergey Novikov twice, but his emails bounced back undelivered. But a search on Google found a photograph of Vernik which described him as the leader of an organisation calling itself Robitnychiv Sprotiv (Workers' Resistance). And the man who had passed himself off as Semyon Schevchenko at the SPGB's annual conference was, in fact, Oleg Vernik. And Robitnychiv Sprotiv? Who were they?

They were the official Ukrainian section of the Committee for a Workers' International, first set up in 1974 by a British Trotskyist group, led by Ted Grant, known as the Militant Tendency which had, for many years, infiltrated the Labour Party until finally expelled in the early 1990s. The CWI was, and is, dominated and controlled by the man who ousted Grant from the organisation by the name of Peter Taaffe. The Militant Tendency was one of scores of competing Trotskyist sects worldwide. Over the years it has used a number of different names, (confusingly) including most recently the Socialist Party.

Darren O'Neil contacted a number of individuals and groups, including John Thompson, the then General Secretary of Socialist Party of Canada, regarding the Ukrainian situation. Julien Vandermissen, a leading Militant Trotskyist in Belgium, embarrassingly admitted the scandal and promised to investigate further and keep the socialist parties informed. Members of an American organisation, News and Letters, were contacted by a Ukrainian Workers' Group (actually the same people who called themselves the International Young Workers, Workers' Resistance and, no doubt, many more). The Americans gave the Ukrainians money for a computer, more than 800 dollars; gave one of them the money for a plane ticket to Warsaw and another to



Amsterdam, before realising that they had been conned. About the same time a pro-Maoist group was said to have been turned over by the Ukrainian Security Service. The American News and Letters group said that at least 15, and probably more, leftist groups and socialist parties had been swindled by the Ukrainian Militant Trotskyist group. These included the SPGB and the Socialist Labor Party of America. News and Letters were convinced that it was basically a British-run racket. Other groups and organisations held similar views of the scam. More than one group apparently paid the rent of the flat used by visitors to Kiev. Over a couple of years, the scam cost the SPGB and a number of its members a few thousand pounds. The Socialist Party of Canada seems to have emerged from it largely unscathed, other than a few of its members having wasted their time corresponding with and sending literature to the Ukrainian gang.

Commented the *Socialist Standard* of September 2003: “We know that vanguard groups resort to underhand tactics as a matter of principle, but this is a particularly scandalous example”. For Leninists and Trotskyists it was par for the course. And the Militant Tendency in Britain had always been crooked and thoroughly dishonest. Indeed, this writer, in a letter to the *Socialist Standard* of April 1997, stated that they were “an anti-socialist clique of political gangsters”.

### **Conference and Constitution**

On 18 and 19 April 1992, the Socialist Party of Canada held a conference in the Watters Building, Quadra Street, Victoria. All the delegates, which included George Jenkins, the General Secretary, Bill Johnson, Jim Lambie, Don Poirier, Steve Szalai and Larry Tickner, and two visitors, Julien Prior and Brian Tocher, came from the SPC’s traditional heartland of British Columbia. Nevertheless, the conference was seen as “a limited success”. Greetings were received from John Ahrens, Marie and Sid Catt, Adam Buick in Luxembourg, and Samuel Leight of the WSP(US) in Tucson, Arizona.

The Socialist Party decided that it was about time that it revised its constitution. Steve Szalai submitted a document, which was partly amended by the conference delegates, suggesting the following changes to be voted on in a referendum of the entire membership:

- Change the name of the General Executive Committee to the General Administrative Committee
- Create a ‘National Local’ to encompass all the members-at-large
- Provide a mechanism to terminate membership if a member does not keep in contact with the party
- Provide a clearer definition of the powers of the party conference and the membership generally

It was agreed that a referendum upon these lines would be submitted to the members nationally. There then followed a general discussion on the party, its finances and its image. It was felt that previous expenditure had not always produced satisfactory returns. Better planning was necessary. It was emphasised that the party should produce better quality pamphlets, something which had not been done for many years. The image of the party needed improving. Its message was fine, delegates felt, but its presentation and the presentation of the party was not good.

However, the Socialist Party was attempting to contact people who were searching for alternatives. They included environmentalists, feminists and other reformers. The delegates argued that there was no implication that the SPC should embrace reformist politics, but it seemed clear that those who had recognised one or two major problems with society should be nurtured to move beyond knee-jerk reform reaction. They should not be alienated.

The last session of the conference discussed the Object and Declaration of Principles of the Socialist Party of Canada. There was no suggestion of changing the Object. The members discussed and asked themselves two main questions: leave the form and content of the Principles basically the same, but change a few words here and there to modernise the language; or undertake a major rewrite with significant change of content, although not the intent. There was, however, no consensus and no decisions were taken.

A referendum was held in November 1992. The General Executive Committee was renamed the General Administrative Committee. A number of changes were made to the constitution: two thirds majority of all the members of a local would henceforth be required to officially suspend or expel a member; a member who had been suspended or expelled from a local would have the right to appeal to the general membership by a referendum, which would have to be organised by the GAC within three months of the date requested, and a member suspended for withholding dues would be automatically lapsed from the party after one year's suspension. A party conference should be held annually, or a referendum may replace the conference at the discretion of the GAC, or by request of at least 10 members. Only party conferences or referenda would be authorised to amend the constitution of the SPC. There were a number of minor amendments to the constitution during the following two years.

On 4 July 1995, the Socialist Party of Canada published its amended and updated constitution which has not, to date, been amended or altered again. It begins with the Object and Declaration of Principles, and adds that these may only be amended in conjunction with its "Companion Parties of Socialism". It reiterates the long-established rule that an applicant for membership must express agreement with the Object and Principles, and answer a questionnaire to determine the applicant's suitability for membership. As previously, it states that a member of the SPC shall not belong to any other political party. Again, as in the past, the constitution rules that a local must be the unit of organisation, and that it must be formed with five or more members. Interestingly, the last rule (no. 26) states: "In the event of the dissolution of the Party, all assets shall become the property of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, 52 Clapham High Street, London, England, SW4 7UN".

On 1 January 1993, Steve Szalai replaced George Jenkins as General Secretary of the Socialist Party of Canada. He updated and increased the size of the party's introductory package and, importantly, set up a party website – the first of any of the 'Companion Parties'. He also compiled a frequent "In the News" column. When a World Socialist Movement website was set up a few years later, the SPC website was transferred to it. Steve Szalai was the General Secretary until December 2000, when Don Poirier was elected. The latter remained in the post, despite suffering from cancer, until his death in November 2001, aged 63. His death was a great loss to the Socialist Party.

Don Poirier became a socialist while serving in the Royal Canadian Navy, contacting the SPC when on shore leave in Victoria in 1956. He read volume one of Marx's *Capital* three times during his next naval tour in 1959. On leaving the navy shortly after, he joined the SPC in Vancouver, and soon became an active outdoor

speaker and organiser. (Members of the armed forces and the police were not permitted to be members of the Socialist Party.) He ran as the party's candidate in the 1961 Esquimalt-Saanich Federal by-election. He pressurised the Winnipeg City Council to establish a 'Speakers' Corner' in Beacon Hill Park, where he frequently spoke, as well as doing likewise in Vancouver, for the Brockton Oval in Stanley Park. In the mid-1960s, Don Poirier was the paid organiser for both the SPC and the WSP(US), touring North America in a van with the socialist slogans "Production for Use, Not Profit" and "One World, One People" painted prominently on its sides. For a short time, he was a member of the breakaway World Socialist Party of Canada, but rejoined the Socialist Party of Canada in 1970. He worked much of his life in the forest industry as a logger, and was a long-time active member of the 50,000-strong Industrial Workers of America union, where he was instrumental in getting pension rights for loggers and other workers. In the 1970s, Poirier ran against Jack Munroe for the presidency of the IWA. Later he managed or worked in a succession of bookshops in Duncan on Vancouver Island.

A further loss was the death of (John) George Jenkins, aged 83, in January 2003. He joined the SPC in the late 1950s, becoming an active speaker in Victoria and Vancouver, as well as a writer. Over much of the time he was a member of the party, he held various administrative posts including General Secretary. His principle occupation was that of an artist, both abstract and realist, and he was recognised by the Canada Council of Artists.

With the death of Don Poirier, John Thompson became, first, the Acting General Secretary and, later, General Secretary of the Socialist Party of Canada. He had been a member, had resigned, and then rejoined recently. Almost immediately after, he became Acting Secretary. He did not, however, seem to be happy or in tune with the party. He asserted that two or three members had "got religion" and had resigned; but he was accused by the previous General Secretary, Steve Szalai, of "chasing away" a number of members and potential members, of whom some have since joined the party. Thompson was critical of the Socialist Party's companion party in the United States, alleging that it had softened its views on religion and on its 'hostility clause'. He claimed that the SPGB was reformist with "idealistic leaders". Even members of the SPC made him cringe. In correspondence with this writer, he appeared to sympathise with, and support, two renegade socialist groups, one in England and the other in India. Not surprisingly John Thompson soon resigned as General Secretary.

In February 2004, John Ayers of Cobourg, Ontario, was elected General Secretary of the Socialist Party of Canada, the first time that post had been filled by someone from the east of the country. He soon began to produce a *Monthly Report and Newsletter*.

Following the invasion of Afghanistan, and then of Iraq, by the United States and Great Britain, the Socialist Party of Canada issued a statement which it also distributed as a leaflet. It states:

### **STOP ALL WARS**

Wars never solved any problems of the ordinary people such as hunger, poverty, proper health care, access to education, housing, etc. In fact, they have brought the opposite – death, deprivation and the necessity to rebuild war-torn lands. That's because wars are never about ordinary people. We have no quarrels with the common people of Iraq or Afghanistan, or any other area. We actually have a lot in common. We all

want peace and security for our families and a chance to participate and share the production of wealth. Nobody wants to see starving or homeless people.

### WHAT WAR IS ABOUT

War is the natural and inevitable consequence of the economic system under which we live and toil. Its competitive nature, its greedy necessity to accumulate capital, to continually grow and expand wherever there is a chance to profit, leads to conflict over strategic territories, areas rich in resources and rights and trade routes. This has created a series of armed camps with boundaries of countries used as the line in the sand. It has also necessitated huge expenditures on armed forces and their equipment – close to \$800 billion last year – to protect the interests of those who own the means of production but do not produce – the capitalists. When those interests are sufficiently threatened, or perceived to be, war usually results. When we have a system that works for everyone, when the means of production and distribution of all wealth are owned and operated by and in the interests of all, we will be able to use the huge sums that are now wasted on war, for human needs.

The leaflets were distributed in Toronto and elsewhere during the anti-war demonstrations in 2003. After many years of little or no socialist activity in the Toronto area, a few members have been active since 2002, and this has resulted in the formation of a new Toronto Local of the SPC in the summer of 2005.

And for those who imagine that poverty no longer affects members of the working class, the Toronto *Globe and Mail* of 13 September 2005, states that the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada report that between 1994 and 2004 rent increased in Ontario 75% relative to the rate of inflation; and that David Peters of the ONPHA estimated that in 2005 “250,000 families in the Province spend more than half their household income on rent”. The *Toronto Star* of 13 January 2007, in its ‘War on Poverty’, reports that there are 70,000 people in Toronto “waiting for affordable housing” and 14,150 living (sic) in homeless shelters. Almost seven million Canadian workers earn less than \$20,000 a year, just half the national average. As in much of the capitalist world, the rich in Canada are getting richer, while the poor are getting relatively poorer. Furthermore the *Toronto Star* (5 October 2006) reports that officially 1.2 million people in Canada live in poverty, which is three times the rate of Scandinavian countries, and that 770,000 Canadians, 40% of whom are children, rely on foodbanks. Of a population of just over 32 million, five million Canadian workers, again officially, “survive on poverty incomes”. In an article in the *Toronto Star* of 14 October, the plight of “Permatemps”, the workers who never get a permanent job, is highlighted. The increasing number of “temps”, workers without “benefits”, on contract, as seasonal, casual, or agency workers, replacing permanent employees, increased in Canada in 2006 to 1.7 million or 13% of the workforce.

In a related report, “Handouts for the Rich”, the *Toronto Star* of 5 October, 2006, reveals that the Canadian Oil and gas companies made a record \$31 billion profit during the previous financial year, a 53% increase.

Furthermore, Toronto, throughout 2005, witnessed a record surge in gun violence, related to the illegal drugs trade noted previously, with more than 50 deaths – twice that of the previous year. The Prime Minister, Paul Martin, promised that, if re-elected, he intended to ban handguns. He was however defeated in the January 2006 General Election.

Another increasing problem, in Canada as elsewhere, is prostitution, particularly involving under-18s, and associated with drugs. This was highlighted in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* of 21 February 2007.

In Alberta, since the protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act (PChIP) came into effect in 1999, 1,038 under-18s have been arrested, and 744 detained or voluntarily sought to leave the so-called sex trade. Nevertheless, many teenage prostitutes in Calgary are driven to the ‘profession’ through drugs. Detective Constable Eduardo Dizon of the Toronto police sex crimes unit says that there are hundreds of girls, in the city, under 18 working as prostitutes, of whom many are forced to work in strip joints or massage parlours. One girl started when she was only 11. Winnipeg police Sergeant Kelly Dennison reports the Provincial Government as believing that 400 young people are victims of sexual exploitation, while other agencies put the numbers in the thousands. Much of the abuse occurs in the hidden sex trade, rather than on the streets. Many teenagers work in crack houses, and are addicted to drugs. In one instance, reports the *Globe and Mail*, “police broke up two sex dens that had 30 teenage girls selling sex. The girls ranged in age from 12 to 17”. In Vancouver, there are hundreds of girls and boys involved in the sex trade. One area in Vancouver is called Boys’ Town.

None of this is new. Such problems were confronting social reformers and socialists at the beginning of the last century. Prostitution ‘flourished’ in Calgary, Edmonton, Montreal, Port Arthur, Toronto, Winnipeg and in the logging camps of British Columbia. The reformers generally concentrated their efforts on changing both men’s and women’s moral behaviour. The socialists, on the other hand, blamed capitalism for prostitution; women were forced by economic necessity upon the streets and into brothels, and were “hunted from place to place”, because they did not earn a “living wage”. Prostitutes were not “fallen women”, who should be punished or reformed. Janice Newton notes that

“The SPC rejected social purity reforms as it did any other reforms that might be construed as immediate demands. Consistent with its platform, the party press emphasized that the cause was capitalism, and that unless the reformers were prepared to oppose it, they would never eliminate prostitution.”

The Socialist Party of Canada has never been moralistic regarding sex or prostitution. Neither did it blame the men, particularly in the logging camps, as “evil beasts”. Socialism, however, would give women “sexual autonomy through economic independence”, claims the SPC.

### **A Pro-Bolshevik Critique**

At a “Marxism 2004 Conference” in Toronto, in May 2004, Ian Angus gave a talk marking the 85th anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919, entitled “What Socialists Learned from the Winnipeg General Strike”. He was particularly critical of the Socialist Party, arguing from a Leninist viewpoint.

Angus commences by saying that Canadian mythology holds that it is a peaceful country, that there is no class struggle, that there is no violent crime, and that there has never been a revolution in the country. “The Canadian way is discussion, compromise and mutual respect. We have evolution, not revolution. We don’t fight, we have Royal Commissions.” Moreover, he says, the history of the Winnipeg General Strike has been rewritten by social democrats, who describe the strike as just an attempt to win collective bargaining. But, claims Angus, the strikes in 1919 led a majority of Canadian socialists to recognise the need for a *new kind of party*. Revolutionaries must participate in the struggles of the workers; but it was not, he adds, the common view in the socialist movement in Canada, or elsewhere, a century ago. Comments Ian Angus:

Leftwing organizations typically treated political action and economic action as separate, unrelated activities. Socialists promoted socialism, which meant organizing educational programs and running elections, while unions and other organizations dealt with day-to-day issues.

Angus argues that, in Canada, this was exemplified by the Socialist Party, a party before the First World War with about 3000 members in the four western provinces. And in his criticism of the party, he continues:

The SPC viewed itself as a revolutionary Marxist organisation. It prided itself on its doctrinal purity. It was for socialism, and nothing less. The SPC even refused to join the Second International, on the grounds that the British Labour Party was a member. The party’s leading spokesman, E.T. Kingsley, argued that the conflicts between employers and workers were not part of the class struggle at all – they were mere ‘commodity struggles’, disputes over the division of wealth in capitalist society, and hence of no interest to socialists.

Now this was not a unanimous view in the SPC. Many of the party’s leaders were also union activists and even union leaders, and obviously believed that labor struggles were important. But even for them, there was a disconnect between their political views and their activity as militants.

Angus admits, however, that in 1918, and in 1919 during the General Strike, members of the Socialist Party of Canada won the leadership of the labour movement from Vancouver to Winnipeg. Furthermore, in March 1919, the Western Labor Conference, which voted to create the One Big Union, was dominated by Socialist Party members. But again he criticises the SPC by stating that it played little or no role in the founding of the OBU, *as a party*. The SPC refused to take a stand on the grounds that “the comparative merits of various forms of industrial activity do not come within the field of SPC activity”. Meanwhile the SPC’s weekly newspaper (the *Western Clarion*) devoted to the routine of the exposition of Marxist theory it had published before the strike. In Ian Angus’s view, therefore, the Socialist Party of Canada had no political strategy; it failed to lead the workers, and that was a critical

weakness. It did not prepare for a clash with the Canadian state or attempt to turn the strike into a Bolshevik-style insurrection, but restricted itself to the educational activities of ‘making socialists’. The assumption most socialists made, argues Angus, was that their movement would grow until it encompassed a majority of the population who would take power peacefully, and through parliamentary means. The new kind of party was, according to Angus, a Communist Party, affiliated to the Third International. He then asserts:

In May 1921, the Canadian communist groups – including some that were working within the Socialist Party – united to form the Communist Party of Canada. By the end of 1921, a majority of the Socialist Party had been won over. The SPC itself went into rapid decline, eventually dissolving in 1925.

He concludes by saying that the experience of 1919 taught Canadian revolutionaries two lessons: that workers’ power is possible in the country, and already existed in Winnipeg in 1919; and that a new kind of party, a pro-Bolshevik, Communist Party was needed.

Inevitably, some of what Ian Angus says is true. But it is obvious that he does not understand, or possibly want to understand, the role and function of the Socialist Party of Canada or, indeed, of any democratic socialist party. He criticises the SPC for adopting a non-interventionist attitude towards the strike. And he attacks socialists, and social democrats, who said that the Winnipeg strike was “just an attempt to win collective bargaining”. But despite the Red-scaremongering at the time, it *was* just that. A Bolshevik coup or uprising was really not on the agenda. And neither was socialism.

Angus claims that the strikes in 1919 led a majority of socialists to recognise the need for a Communist Party; and that by the end of 1921 a majority of Socialist Party members “had been won over”, and that “most of the leaders of the Winnipeg strike were in favour of forming a new revolutionary party, the Communist Party of Canada”. This was not so. None of the members of the Strike Committee who were jailed joined the Communist Party. They either became Labour politicians or remained socialists. As we have previously noted in this narrative, the Bolshevik coup d’état seriously affected the SPC; and many of its members, at least for a while, were sympathetic towards the Russian Bolsheviks. And with the formation of the Communist Party (actually the so-called Workers’ Party) some of the younger members of the Socialist Party joined that party. But most of them soon became disillusioned, and either resigned or were expelled. They soon discovered that the ‘new kind of party’ was, in reality, elitist, totalitarian, basically reformist and, above all, anti-working class. It was not a new kind of party at all. They, moreover, refused to accept the 21 conditions for affiliation to the Third International.

The Socialist Party of Canada was also right to insist on the separation of itself from the trade union movement. It never fell into the trap that the DeLeonist Socialist Labor Party did. Its objective was, and still is, socialism; the unions, whether craft, general or industrial, exist as organisations within capitalism for the protection of workers’ interests with regard to wages and working conditions ‘on the job’. The SPC existed, and exists, to propagate socialist ideas, to ‘educate’ workers, with the objective of conquering the ‘reins of government’ as a means to establishing socialism. Unlike people such as Ian Angus, it has never confused the two. Moreover, it proved to be correct in not affiliating to the Second International. In fact, it did not

refuse to affiliate merely because of the membership by the British Labour Party, but because the SPC considered that most, if not all, of the affiliated parties were reformist and anti-socialist. With the commencement of the First World War, the so-called Socialist International collapsed with almost all of its affiliated parties supporting their own governments.

Angus says that the Socialist Party of Canada failed to lead the workers, and that this was a weakness. Not so. Unlike the Bolsheviks and the Communist Party, but with Karl Marx, it held the view that the workers should emancipate themselves, and not support self-appointed or even elected leaders.

Writing in his *Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way*, Peter Campbell sums up the views of socialists on the subject:

The Soviet experience confirmed what Marxists of the third way had suspected all along, that socialism could only be constructed under favourable material conditions and the combined efforts of an educated, organized, and politically mature proletariat. Not surprisingly, Communists took this affirmation of the leading role of an educated rank and file as a 'reactionary' rejection of the importance of leadership and the vanguard party. In fact there was nothing reactionary about their emphasis on the absolute majority, because it had always been the very *raison d'être* of Marxism of the third way.

The real lesson of the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 was well stated by one of the jailed socialists, Bill Pritchard, in an article on the strike's 50th anniversary in 1969:

Strikes may result in changes and even so-called improvements, but this is but superficial. This will continue until the workers in sufficient numbers free themselves from the concepts of this society, from ideas that bind them to the notion that the present is the only social system, and recognize that under this system 'the more things change the more they remain the same'; that even now in their struggle over wages and conditions, like the character in *Alice in Wonderland*, they have to keep running in order to stay in the same place. But the Winnipeg Strike will go down in history as a magnificent example of working class solidarity and courage.

(*Western Socialist*, no. 3, 1969)

The May 2005 issue of *Imagine* features an article ("Bolshevik Bullshit") criticising Ian Angus's views of the Socialist Party of Canada, and its role during the Winnipeg General Strike in further depth.

### **Imagine**

For quite some considerable time, the Socialist Party of Canada had not published its own journal, relying instead on such publications as the *Socialist Standard* from Britain, and the *World Socialist Review* published in Boston by its companion party in the United States.



The impetus for the SPC to recommence publishing a journal first came from John Ayers who with encouragement and assistance of a friend, Tristan Miller, put the proposal to the General Administrative Committee in Victoria. After a number of titles were put to the whole membership, the party democratically decided to name the new paper *Imagine*, adding the phrase “Official Journal of the Socialist Party of Canada”. The first issue was put on sale in January 2002. It included, as with all SPC publications (except some leaflets), the Object and Declaration of Principles of the party, together with a question and answer article on socialism, an article on terrorism, and a number of other articles on Toronto and working class life in Windsor, Ontario. A second issue, later that year, exposed the fact that at least 2.5 million Canadians suffered from malnutrition and hunger, with other articles explaining the logo, “One World, One People”, of the Socialist Party of Canada and (unofficially) of the World Socialist Movement. Says the *Imagine* article, the “logo of the World Socialist Movement embodies many of our beliefs, and seeks to put our case before you”. The phrase “One World” signifies that the socialist movement sees the world divided into competing sectors or countries. “Socialists see a world without boundaries, where co-operation and mutual help will take place between autonomous and largely self-sufficient regions.” The “One People” part of the logo refers to the fact that “we are all members of one race – the human race – and share the planet along with multitudes of other species.” And, continues *Imagine*, we all have similar needs – food, water, shelter, health, education, security, etc. Socialists hold that the planet’s resources, if managed properly, can provide more than all the essential needs for a full and productive life for everyone.

The July 2003 issue of *Imagine* featured a letter from a reader in India, Asok Chakrabarti, who wondered why the SPC had adopted the title *Imagine*, instead of a title featuring the word “Socialist”, such as, for example, the *Socialist Standard* or the *World Socialist Review*. He was critical of various individuals such as Bob Dillon, Herbert Marcuse, Rezis Debre, Franz Fanon and John Lennon, whom he said were opportunists and not socialists. And, writes Chakrabarti, “They never undertook the day-to-day strain of socialist organization, education and propaganda within the working-class. They went on selling their wares in the market. Like capitalist publishers who take advantage of Marx’s writings, not from consideration of a socialist cause, but from profit motives, they never tried to come out of the ghetto of capitalism”.

The editors of *Imagine* reply by saying that they agree with much of the letter, the most salient point being that the emancipation from capitalism will be the work of the working class itself, without the need of leaders to show the way. They add, however, that although many ‘protest singers’ did not profess to be socialists, it did not mean that we should not listen to them, and even appropriate their words in that context. The title *Imagine* for the Socialist Party’s official journal took its inspiration from the words of John Lennon’s song, which it then reprinted in full (it is also at the start of this present work). The editors conclude: “We couldn’t have said it better ourselves!”.

At the time of writing the Socialist Party of Canada continues to publish *Imagine*.

## *Postscript*

### **Summing Up**

Formed in 1905 by a disparate group of parties, the Socialist Party of Canada was however an anti-reformist, 'Impossibilist' party. Ross McCormack comments that by refusing to demand reforms or palliatives, it became "unique in North America". Its objective was socialism, and nothing else. Nevertheless, in its early days it had reformers in its ranks, but over a period of years, almost all of them resigned or were expelled from the SPC.

Considering the opposition by many Canadian workers, including trade unionists, to immigrant workers from Asian countries, most of the members of the party at the time of its foundation were anti-racist. Indeed, it considered itself to be an internationalist organisation, calling on the workers of the world to unite. Critics of the SPC, such as Janice Newton, have claimed that the party was hostile to women, and opposed to women obtaining the vote. This was not true, although inevitably most of its members were men; in fact, in many areas where the party was active and influential there were few women.

Life was never easy for the Socialist Party. Even before the founding of the SPC, the police often broke up socialist street meetings, often quite brutally. Meetings were banned in Winnipeg and Vancouver, and in Toronto. Speakers were fined or were jailed. The Socialist Party of Canada, however, contested numerous Provincial and Federal elections for many years. In the early part of the last century, the SPC did not have a particular view on religion. After 1915, however, the party officially adopted a materialist and anti-religious policy.

On 6 August 1914, two days after Britain declared war on Germany, the Dominion Executive of the SPC issued its *Manifesto to the Workers of Canada*, in which it stated that it opposed the war as not being in the interests of the workers of Canada, Britain, Germany or any other country. And it called upon the workers of the world to unite. Few did. Almost alone, except for the Socialist Party of Great Britain and a few other groups, it steadfastly opposed the war to the end. The party suffered greatly for its anti-war stand. Its meetings were broken up, many of its members went on the run, some were imprisoned and, towards the end of the war, its publications were also banned. It was not actually suppressed or destroyed, but it never really recovered. As has previously been mentioned the Bolshevik coup in Russia also adversely affected the Socialist Party of Canada, as did the formation of the Communist Party. With the post-war rise of mass unemployment and the emergence of reformist labour and social democratic parties, the SPC rapidly declined. In 1925, it was officially dissolved by its Dominion Executive Committee.

It was a bleak time for the Canadian socialists. Nevertheless, socialist activities did not entirely cease. And in June 1931, the Socialist Party of Canada was reconstituted. Almost all the members had been members of the 'old' party. It was, of course, a lot smaller than the party formed in 1905. After some discussion, the members decided to adopt the Object and Declaration of Principles of the Socialist Party of Great Britain rather than the original *Platform* as most of them felt that, on balance, they were better statements of their views. The decision was not, however, without controversy; and the party was soon split over clause six of the Principles, resulting in two parallel SPCs for a number of years. Unity was finally established prior to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. Again, as in 1914, the Socialist Party opposed the war,

publishing an anti-war *Manifesto*. The party was not suppressed or outlawed by the Canadian authorities; but, as in the previous conflict, its publication, the *Western Socialist*, was banned. The SPC emerged from the war, still quite small, but largely unscathed.

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the Socialist Party of Canada made little headway; but during the early 1960s it enjoyed a brief revival and was particularly active, for the first time in decades, in the Toronto area. During the latter '60s, as we have chronicled in some detail, the SPC almost destroyed itself, not over doctrine, but over organisational matters and, to some extent, personal animosities. And, yet again, the party was split into two separate socialist organisations, both with the same Object and Principles. 'Normality' did not return for almost ten years, and by then the SPC had lost, mainly through death of older members and resignations, many of its members. In the words of Ronald Elbert, the Socialist Party struggled on "in very low gear for the next two decades".

At the time of writing this, the Socialist Party of Canada *appears* to have moved up a gear or two. Only time will tell.

## *Appendix One*

### **DeLeonism**

Was the Socialist Party of Canada influenced by Daniel De Leon, DeLeonism and the Socialist Labor Party of America? The subject does not seem to have been discussed in any great detail, within or without the SPC, although there have been claims that its companion party, the Socialist Party of Great Britain, at least in its early days, may have been influenced to some extent by De Leon and the American SLP; a few of its members certainly were according to David A. Perrin (see *The Socialist Party of Great Britain*, pages 9, 14-15, 31-32 and 58). But DeLeonist influences have been denied by some former members of the SPGB associated with the journal *Socialist Studies*. No mention of the SPC has been reported, however.

As has been noted in Chapter One of this work, the first political party in Canada to be formed claiming to be socialist was the Socialist Labor Party, an offshoot of the SLP of America, formed in 1896.

By 1875, the First International was defunct. In 1876, in the United States, various mainly German-speaking former groups of the International of whom most were followers of Marx's rival, Ferdinand Lassalle, met in Pittsburgh and issued a call for the founding of a socialist labour party. In July of the same year, four groups, said to have 3000 members came together to found the Workingmen's Party of America. Although its programme called for the "abolition of class rule", the "emancipation of the working classes" and the "abolition of the wages system", it also included a platform of reforms amounting to, in the words of Paul Buhle, "municipal socialism". In December 1877, the name of the group was changed to the Socialistic Labor Party of America, later to become the Socialist Labor Party.

The new party's support of, and involvement in, the great railway strike of 1877 resulted in a rapid increase of membership. During the next couple of years, it also had a number of electoral successes. "In fact", say Frank Girard and Ben Perry, "SLP political success was sufficient to cause the Greenback Labor Party (GLP), a cheap-currency reaction to the prolonged depression of the seventies, to look on the SLP as a possible junior partner". The SLP fusion with the Greenbacks was a disaster. Many members deserted the party. Yet after 1886, the SLP once again fused with various parties, in different localities, including the Labor Party, the United Labor Party, the Union Labor Party and the Industrial Labor Party. In the election in New York, the SLP supported the United Labor Party, which had the single-tax advocate, Henry George, as its candidate for mayor. Buhle notes that "despite these formidable efforts, the SLP itself did not prosper in the 1880s". Girard and Perry conclude:

Looking back as the pre-1899 SLP, party leaders spoke of the German beer drinking and singing society the SLP had been, a foreign transplant isolated from the American working class. In later years they were even unwilling to admit that the pre-1890 SLP with its history of fusion and confusion was the same organization. For them the Socialist Labor Party dated from the advent of Daniel De Leon in 1890 and the birth of *The People* in 1891. Socialist history before that was an embarrassment.

Frederick Engels was particularly critical of the Socialist Labor Party:

Here in England, one can see that it is impossible to drill a theory in an abstract dogmatic way into a great nation, even if one has the best theories, developed out of their conditions in life, and even if the tutors are relatively better than the Socialist Labor Party. (Engels to Sorge, London, 7 December 1886)

...the German Party over there [in America] must be smashed up *as such*; it is the worst obstacle... (Engels to H. Schluter, London, 11 January 1890)

In my opinion we hardly lose anything worth counting by the going-over of the official socialists there to the Nationalists. If the whole *German Socialist Labor Party* went to pieces as a result it would be a gain, but we can hardly expect anything good...I consider the decay of the specifically German Party, with its absurd theoretical confusion, its corresponding arrogance, and its Lassalleanism, a real piece of good fortune. Not until these separatists are out of the way will the fruits of your work come to light again. (Engels to Sorge, London, 8 February 1890)

### **Daniel De Leon**

Daniel Loeb (De Leon) was born in 1852, on the island of Curacao in the Netherlands Antilles, into a wealthy Sephardic Dutch-Jewish family, although he later pretended that he was descended from a Spanish-American family of Venezuelan Roman Catholic grandees. He was taken to Europe where he was formally educated, but not at the prestigious Leyden Academy from which he later claimed to have graduated. He did, however, become conversant in a number of languages including English and German. De Leon emigrated to America, from Europe, during 1872. He first taught at a secondary school in Westchester County, New York, attended Columbia Law School, graduating with honours. He then opened law offices in Texas and New York, finally becoming a lecturer in International Law at Columbia University, from which he was later dismissed as a radical (some say that he resigned as he was denied a professorship). In 1886, De Leon became interested in Henry George's mayoralty campaign in New York. According to Patrick Renshaw, by 1889 he had begun campaigning for Henry George's single-tax "as an economic panacea". At that time, he had not read any of the writings of Marx, but was familiar with Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, first published in 1888. Indeed, he regarded Bellamy's Nationalist Movement as "one of the most important of the forces of progress in the United States". As late as October 1890, he was still being introduced to audiences as a Nationalist. In September or October 1890, according to Girard and Perry, he joined the Socialist Labor Party, although Buhle (*Encyclopedia of the American Left*) says that De Leon joined the SLP the following year).

In 1892, De Leon was appointed editor of *The People*, the SLP's English-language weekly paper which became the official organ of the party. Although only the editor of the paper, he soon became the de facto leader of the Socialist Labor Party. His impact on the party was immediate. After Henry George and Edward Bellamy, De Leon was influenced by the evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin and the anthropological ideas of Lewis Henry Morgan. He also began to study some of the writings of Marx and Engels, a number of which he translated into English.

Of Daniel De Leon, Patrick Renshaw, in his *The Wobblies*, writes that he was “a dedicated doctrinaire who used his pen not merely for propaganda but to heap vituperative abuse on political opponents and allies alike”, who even “excommunicated his own son, Solon, for daring to question his interpretation of Marx’s theory of value”. Not surprisingly, he was known as ‘The Pope’. He split every organisation to which he belonged. He never saw the distinction between differences of opinion and political treason, and rarely knew when to make a compromise, argues Renshaw. Indeed, De Leon was a Leninist before Lenin.

Although there were differences within the SLP, the party generally supported the trade unions, and urged its members to join them, although many of its members were dissatisfied with the unions as ‘pure and simple’ economic organisations. Nevertheless, the SLP considered that the unions could be shaped along ‘revolutionary lines’, while its members referred to their activities as ‘boring from within’. De Leon, however, attacked the leaders of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) as “labor fakirs”.

### **The Knights of Labor, Trade and Labor Alliance, and the Split**

The Knights of Labor was founded in 1869. It was strongly supported by Catholic Irish-American workers. Unlike the AFL, the Knights of Labor accepted both African-American and female workers, and both skilled and unskilled into the organisation. But, like other trade union organisations of the time, it was anti-Asian, and particularly anti-Chinese. Yet, first under the leadership of Grand Master Workman, Uriah Stephens, and then the ‘mystical’ Roman Catholic Irishman, Terence V. Powderly, the Knights of Labor grew rapidly; by 1885, the organisation had recruited more than 700,000 members out of a total of less than one million union members. Moreover, the Knights helped found the Bellamyist Nationalist Clubs.

The Knights of Labor, however, placed little, if any, emphasis on collective bargaining, union rules or any other feature of labour organisations. Its main interests were general education, cooperation (with the employers), temperance and the land question. Both Stephens and Powderly opposed socialist influences; and in 1886, Powderly opposed the strike of May the First for an eight hour day. Nevertheless, early in the 1890s, De Leon and the Socialist Labor Party decided to infiltrate and, hopefully, take over the Knights of Labor.

In 1893, the pro-SLP United Hebrew Trades joined the Knights of Labor, thus enabling the DeLeonists to control the New York District Assembly 49. And that year, DA49 sent a number of pro-SLP delegates, including Daniel De Leon, to the Knights of Labor annual convention. There, they joined anti-Powderly, pro-Populist delegates (who they actually opposed politically) to oust Terence Powderly, and install James R. Sovereign as Grand Master Workman. At the 1895 fall General Assembly, the DA49’s credentials were challenged, and its delegation refused admission. De Leon’s attempt to get control of the Knights of Labor came to nothing, much to his annoyance. But the organisation was already in deep decline, and was soon to disappear from the scene.

In February 1896, De Leon gave a lecture in Boston, in which he rejected a programme of reforms. He called for nothing less than the overthrow of the capitalist system. However:

The workers are exhorted to support a revolutionary union whose primary task was to educate the workers, and secondarily to play a defensive role in resisting the encroachments of capital. The ultimate goal continued to be a somewhat nebulously conceived commonwealth in which the means of production would be nationalized. (Girard and Perry)

Instead of infiltrating, and attempting to control other organisations, De Leon and the Socialist Labor Party of America decided, therefore, to found their own union. On 10 December 1895, former members of the DA49 joined with the SLP-dominated Central Labor Federation of New York City, the Newark Central Labor Federation and the Brooklyn Socialist Labor Federation, in order to found the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance (STLA). The United Hebrew Trades also agreed to join. The STLA was not an industrial union. Like the Knights of Labor before it, it was merely organised by trades or groups of trades. Of it, Girard and Perry note:

The STLA was an active and militant labor organisation, but it suffered from a schizophrenia that was to affect the Industrial Workers of the World later. Officially, it did not believe that workers could gain any real benefits under capitalism and would do best by putting their energies into establishing socialism, but simultaneously the union *had* to fight for immediate gains with weapons at its disposal such as the strike. Many workers who joined the STLA lacked the long view of the SLP members and concluded that the more established AFL, even with its evident shortcomings, gave more promise of immediate benefits.

According to Renshaw, from the very beginning, Daniel De Leon saw the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance as merely the industrial wing of the Socialist Labor Party. Its purpose, he contends, was to serve as a supplement of the SLP in contacting “those masses who cannot be reached by the party organization”. But the STLA never became an effective organisation. Its critics asserted that it was still-born. Girard and Perry say that its membership between the beginning of January 1896 and 1898 was about 15,000; but Renshaw writes that at no time could the STLA claim more than 10,000 members, with many of them only on paper, and none outside the New York area. By 1905, it was, on its own admission, down to 1,500, and according to some estimates fewer than 600, almost all of whom were SLP members. And that year it dissolved, its remaining members joining the IWW.

By 1898, there was considerable dissension within the Socialist Labor Party of America. Many German-American members had become skilled workers, more sympathetic towards the AFL than the STLA, and a few had even become lawyers and the like. A number of members, including Morris Hillquit, a one-time industrial worker who had become a lawyer, claimed that a small clique including De Leon controlled the SLP and the STLA; and he began a campaign against them. On 10 July a group of dissidents attempted to take over the party headquarters just before midnight. Considerably outnumbered, according to DeLeon, the party loyalists fought off several attacks against their opponents armed with iron bars and wooden clubs before the police dispersed the raiders. Nevertheless, De Leon and his supporters moved out, taking everything with them, the following day. Each side claimed to be the legitimate Socialist Labor Party, and each published its own version of *The People*. In February 1900, the dissident SLP held a national convention, claiming

4000 out of the original 5500 members. In July 1901, the anti-DeLeonists held a convention, and the Socialist Party of America was formed with a membership of around 10,000. Daniel De Leon controlled the rump SLP.

### **The Industrial Workers of the World**

In Newark, New Jersey, in April 1904, Daniel De Leon gave his famous “Burning Question of Trade Unionism” speech, in which he indicted craft unionism and its attendant corruption. He did not mention industrial unionism; but in one section, describes “the historic mission of unionism” which is to support the political victory of the working class. The following year, De Leon proposed that workers elected to parliament “would represent industries, and not regions”.

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) was founded by 200 delegates, in Chicago on 27 June 1905. Daniel De Leon was one of the most active and enthusiastic founders of the organisation. Of the IWW, Joyce L. Kornbluh, writing in the *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, says:

The IWW sought to create ‘one big union’ through which workers would own the means of production and distribution. This transformation of society would stem from a process of non-political revolution and on-the-job actions that would wage effective war on the great combinations of capital.

The objective was direct action and a general strike which, claimed the IWW, would overthrow capitalism. The Industrial Workers of the World, nicknamed ‘the Wobblies’, sought to recruit unskilled, immigrant, non-white and women workers who were largely excluded from craft unions of skilled workers, organised by the AFL. Neither De Leon nor the other IWW leaders envisaged or advocated a majority revolution, although De Leon argued, in opposition to the anarchists who were vocal in the IWW, that the workers should have a political wing, and use the vote.

Girard and Perry, in their history of the Socialist Labor Party, outline De Leon’s views thus:

When the revolution had occurred, the SLP would disband, handing power over to the industrial union. This picture of future society was a syndicalist one. However, in combining the concept of industrial government with a political movement that would legitimize it, he launched the ideology that would become known as DeLeonism.

The Socialist Labor Party was not formerly represented at the founding convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, although Daniel De Leon brought 12 delegates from the SLP’s Trade and Labor Alliance. Although by 1905, De Leon claimed to be a Marxist, he had also been increasingly influenced by anarcho-syndicalist ideas. Nevertheless, he did not completely accept syndicalism. As late as 1904, he dismissed the idea of a general strike as a trifle. At the convention, De Leon was able to get the IWW to accept a pro-political amendment to the Preamble. In return, he accepted the idea that the IWW would be an industrial union. But the anarchists, who increasingly controlled the organisation, merely bided their time.



And, moreover, Daniel De Leon, who was not considered to be a proletarian by the IWW, was unable to run for office in the organisation.

The growing direct action wing of the IWW opposed to any political action, failed to defeat De Leon at the 1907 convention, but a year later the anarchists and direct actionists were well-organised. Daniel De Leon was denied a seat at the 1908 convention in Chicago on the pretext that he was not a wage-worker. The SLPers promptly walked out; De Leon took his supporters to Paterson, New Jersey, and founded his own Industrial Workers of the World, which later set up headquarters in Detroit. It had a few minor successes, but the Detroit IWW (or De Leon's IWW as it was scathingly referred to), was composed almost exclusively of SLP members. Surprisingly, De Leon lost interest in his own IWW, which became less of a genuine industrial union and, in the words of Girard and Perry, "more of a propaganda organization, composed mostly of SLP members, to espouse industrial unions". After Daniel De Leon died in 1914, it changed its name to the Workers' International Industrial Union, before expiring completely in 1924. The official IWW abandoned the political clause in 1908.

Between 1909 and 1914, when he died, De Leon and the Socialist Labor Party modified their rigid opposition to reforms and immediate demands. De Leon argued that if reforms brought relief, and were not merely tactics, then they should be supported.

### **The Socialist View**

The Socialist Labor Party never really established itself in Canada. In 1896, when it was formed, it only had four sections and fewer than 100 members. By 1909, it had become an inconsequential sect. It had no publications of its own until the Second World War, when for a short time the Canadian SLP, with fewer than 50 members, published a monthly journal, the *Socialist Press*, which later became a mimeographed bulletin. By 1979, the party had largely faded away. A few of its early former members joined, first, the Socialist Party of British Columbia and then the Socialist Party of Canada. Generally, they were hostile towards Daniel De Leon, although one-time member of the SPC, Charles Lestor, appeared to be sympathetic to "old Dan De Leon", as he called him, in 1920.

The Socialist Party of Canada does not seem to have said, or written, a lot about De Leon or DeLeonism, which is not surprising as the Socialist Labor Party of Canada never really got established in the country. It is true that, between 1939 and 1965, the *Western Socialist* published 15 articles, news items or parts of articles on De Leon, DeLeonism or the SLP of America. However, after 1940 the *Western Socialist* was the joint publication of the Socialist Party of Canada and the Workers' Socialist Party of the United States, the latter, of course, having more interest in the subjects.

The May 1940 issue of the *Western Socialist* published, under the title "S.L.P. Evades Issue", an acrimonious exchange between *The Weekly People* and the *Western Socialist* regarding the nature of Soviet Russian society, followed by a further, and longer, exchange as "The S.L.P. and Russia" in the September-October issue. The *Western Socialist* writer argues that the Socialist Labor Party has always been completely confused regarding Russia since the beginning of 1918. The *Western Socialist* reminded the Socialist Labor Party writer that, in November 1917, the SLP had contended that a socialist revolution was impossible in Russia as the country was too backward economically, and the population, which was mainly composed of

illiterate or semi-literate peasants, lacked socialist consciousness. But a few months later, the SLP had changed its position because it had been informed that Lenin was a great admirer of Daniel De Leon; and that it was Lenin's opinion "that the Industrial State as conceived by De Leon will ultimately be the form of government in Russia". The Bolshevik coup d'état immediately became, for the SLP, a "Proletarian Revolution" and Russia a "Proletarian Republic", the "first Workers' Republic". In the view of the *Western Socialist* and, indeed, the SPC and WSP(US) the DeLeonists had absolutely no idea as to what the social relationships were in the Soviet Union. At times they had been sympathetic and at others somewhat critical of the Soviet government. Indeed, as the *Western Socialist* states, the SLP was particularly critical of the Russian attack on Finland in 1940. For the DeLeonists, the Soviet Union became a "bureaucratic despotism"; not a state capitalist dictatorship. Rather like the Trotskyists, but less vigorously, they blamed Stalin or Stalinism. The July-August 1940 issue of the *Western Socialist* states:

The Socialist Labor Party is caught in a great contradiction. It claims that Russia has the essentials of socialism (an absence of 'wage slavery and capitalist exploitation'), and yet refuses to support it when it is fighting for its life. If Russia has abolished wage slavery and capitalist exploitation, as the SLP claims, then it is worth fighting for; it is worth defending at all costs. Not to do so would be a cowardly desertion of working class interests.

The July-August 1948 issue of the *Western Socialist* features a long, and critical, analysis of "The Socialist Labor Party" wherein it notes that, since the beginning of the twentieth century, the SLP has continually denounced the advocacy of reforms, yet "seems to be forever petitioning Congress for the redress of wrongs against the working class, committed by that body in the interests of the class it represents". In other words, the SLP attacks reforms on the one hand, while on the other seeks to instruct the capitalist class on how to operate its legal apparatus.

The Socialist Labor Party's policy on industrial unions also comes in for criticism. The SLP, says the socialists, became in 1905 a completely dualistic organisation, advocating a so-called revolutionary industrial union of the workers as the economic arm, and a political party which should arise from it, and be supported in its seizure of the state by the industrial union. But, continues the *Western Socialist* writer, "Originally the accent was placed on the Industrial Union with the political party relegated to a minor role. Today, the procedure seems to be reversed, at least in practice".

Although not mentioned by the *Western Socialist* writer, the so-called industrial unions supported, and/ or created, by the DeLeonists since the beginning of the last century, had little or nothing in common with the One Big Union organised by members of the Socialist Party of Canada in 1919. They did not found a union which was subordinate to the SPC, or a union which would dominate the SPC. They created a predominately industrial organisation which they considered to be superior to the American-based craft unions which, at that time, dominated the Canadian labour movement. They saw the OBU as an organisation which would enable Canadian workers to "more successfully carry on the everyday fight over wages, hours of work, etc, and at the same time prepare for the day when production for profit shall be replaced by production for use". The DeLeonists of the Socialist Labor Party, however, did not advocate a worldwide, international system of production for use as

did the SPC, but a national “Industrial Republic” based on a system of “labour vouchers” as proposed by Karl Marx in his critique of the Gotha Programme of the German Social Democratic Labour Party, in 1875 (see *The Gotha Program*, translated by Daniel De Leon, and published on 7 January 1900 in the *Daily People*, Section One, Part Three).

In an article entitled “SLP Labor Checks vs. Social Ownership” in the *Western Socialist* (1961 – no. 5), George Jenkins of the Socialist Party of Canada takes a Mr J. Minal of the SLP, writing in the 29 May 1961 issue of the *Weekly People*, to task over labour vouchers. Jenkins notes that Minal, in reply to a Socialist Party critic of the SLP, quotes from the *Critique of the Gotha Program* in which Marx seems to equate “the cooperative society, based on the common ownership of the means of production” to the inequality of “compensation and labor vouchers”. And, moreover, Minal states: “We have here Marx’s own word for it that socialism can exist with a system of labor vouchers...” But, says Jenkins, we must relate the above quotation to other parts of the same work, and other parts of the science of socialism as a whole in order to discover what is meant by socialism as a system of society. In this regard, it does not seem to bother Mr Minal that Marx qualified his “own word” in the paragraph following the one to which Minal refers:

What we are dealing with here is a communist [socialist] society, not as it has *developed* on its own basis, but, on the contrary, as it is just *issuing* out of capitalist society; hence, a society that still retains, in every respect, economic, moral and intellectual, the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it is issuing. Accordingly, the individual producer gets back – after the deductions – exactly as much as he gives to it.

(*The Gotha Program*, De Leon translation)

Jenkins writes that, at an earlier period, Marx and Engels advocated a graduated income tax, not as a socialist measure, but as one “to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible”. But unlike Mr Minal and the SLP, Marx and Engels did not stand still, “and graduated from such tactics”. Indeed, says Jenkins, Marx later points out in *The Gotha Program* that

...after the enslaving subordination of the individual under the division of labor has disappeared, and therewith also the opposition between manual and intellectual labor has become not only a means of life, when, with the development of all the faculties of the individual, the productive forces have correspondingly increased, and all the springs of social wealth flow more abundantly – only then may the limited horizon of capitalist right be left behind entirely, and society inscribe on its banners: ‘from everyone according to his faculties, to everyone according to his needs’.

Later, as the means of production developed to a stage where the needs of the population could be satisfied without such measures as labour vouchers, neither Marx and Engels, nor the Socialist Party of Canada, advocated them. Indeed, John Ayers, the present SPC General Secretary, writing in the November 2005 *Newsletter/ Report*, mentions that the latest topic on the World Socialist Movement Forum was the use of labour vouchers at the beginning of socialism. The idea being that free access, at that

stage, would bring chaos to the supply chain, as greedy people would take too much and lazy people would not contribute enough. Thus “to each according to his work”, would be the maxim. In the view of John Ayers, this had many flaws. Ayers comments:

It’s an idea developed by De Leon and the Socialist Labor Party when, perhaps, it may have been difficult to implement free access. That does not apply to any great extent today. Secondly, it’s not socialism. Thirdly, it ignores the World Socialist Movement view that socialism will not take place until the vast majority understand and want socialism. Why would they want it to fail? Fourthly, it uses the capitalist argument that people are inherently lazy, or that they wouldn’t know what to do. Workers will know exactly what to do because they do it all now. This doesn’t preclude problems and possible rationing (in the early stages of socialism) of some items. If everyone wants a big screen TV right away, it may be a problem. But the basics of life? Why the hell would I cart home 100 cans of beans and fill every cupboard with them when I know I couldn’t possibly use them and someone else could? The same reason I don’t turn on the tap and drink from it for 24 hours, because I know it will work later when I need another drink.

In the view of the SPC, the SLP was an organisation holding ideas which seemed to be similar to its own, but with differences strong enough to preserve a separate existence. According to Socialist Party member Jim Milne, writing in the *Western Socialist* (1965 – no. 2), the SLP’s views

...on Russia, the last war, the structure of socialist organisation and the nature of socialism, for example, are different from ours, and the proper groundwork for the ultimate existence of the united movement for socialism can only be laid by attacking differences such as these and effecting clarity needed for the job to be done. Wrong ideas are not less harmful by being advocated in the name of socialism.

The Socialist Party of Canada, and its companion party in the United States, considered that the DeLeonists were not so much socialists as confusionists. It should be mentioned, however, that beginning with its 30th National Convention in 1977, the SLP began to question and, to some extent, correct some of its errors regarding Soviet Russia, its dogmatism and extreme sectarianism. Nevertheless, even in 2004, the Socialist Labor Party’s idea of socialism varied considerably from that of the Socialist Party of Canada.

Under the heading “What is Socialism?”, the SLP (*The People*, July-August 2004) states:

Socialism is the collective ownership by all the people of the factories, mills, mines, railroads, land and all other instruments of production. Socialism means production to satisfy human needs, not, as under capitalism, for sale and profit. Socialism means direct control by the workers through a democratic government based on their nationwide organisation.

The Socialist Labor Party claims that under socialism “all authority will originate from workers, integrally united in Socialist Industrial Unions”. There will be a “socialist government”. Whilst the Socialist Party of Canada also argues that under socialism production will be organised for the satisfaction of human needs, it states, with Marx and Engels, that government will be replaced by an administration of things; that states will have, to use Engels’s words, been relegated to “the museum of antiquities”; that there will no longer be a need for unions, industrial or otherwise; that with the abolition of wage-labour and capital, the category “worker” will no longer be relevant; that society will in fact be classless, and that, like capitalism, socialism will not be national but global, worldwide. The land, the means of production, communication and all transportation will be owned and administered by society as a whole. With the establishment of socialism, says the Socialist Party of Canada, it and all its companion parties worldwide will no longer be necessary and will disband.

## *Appendix Two*

### **Socialist Party of Canada Pamphlets**

The Socialist Party of Canada has produced hundreds of different leaflets, and probably more than forty pamphlets, over the last hundred years. A leaflet was generally of just one page, or sometimes a sheet folded into two, three or four pages. A pamphlet was usually of at least four separate pages, and in one or two instances more than 60 pages. The exact number of pamphlets published by the SPC is not known. Some were dated; many were not. The authors of some are known, or were printed on the pamphlets. Others were written anonymously, or even collectively, and published under the name of the Socialist Party of Canada.

The following list of pamphlets known to the author includes those listed by Ian McKay; those listed in the Canadian National Archives; a few in the catalogue of the University of Toronto; and the pamphlets discovered or located by Peter Campbell of Queen's University of Kingston, Ontario, Adam Buick, Keith Scholey or this writer. Some are titled as leaflets, but in this writer's view are best described, due to their length, as pamphlets.

#### *Workingmen Get Wise, Vancouver (1901-10?)*

Described as "leaflet number 6". If first published in 1901, this was probably produced by the Socialist Party of British Columbia or the Revolutionary Socialist Party, as the SPC was not founded until 1905. The *Statement of Principles at Vancouver, October 3rd, 1901*, was probably published by the SPBC.

#### *What's the Matter with Canada (1908)*

Originally written for H. Sherman, apparently the SPC candidate for Calgary in the 1908 Alberta Federal Election. The Socialist History Project notes that across the top of this publication is written: "Workers of the World Unite, You have nothing to lose but your chains: you have a world to gain. – Marx". At the bottom of the second page is: "A vote for a Socialist is a vote for yourself". And at the bottom of the third page is: "A vote for a Liberal or a Conservative is a vote for your master".

#### *The Proletarian in Politics: The Socialist Position as Defined by C.M. O'Brien, M.L.A., in the Alberta Legislature, by F. Blake, Vancouver (1910)*

For more on O'Brien see earlier chapters.

#### *The Slave of the Farm, by Alf Budden (1910?)*

There are two versions of this pamphlet. This earlier and shorter version may have been written and published as early as 1910, as apparently noted by Ian McKay. It is largely theoretical and there is no indication in the text as to when it was written or published. There is an undated microfilm copy in the National Library of Canada. A later, longer version was published in 1914.

#### *The Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada (1910)*

First published in 1910, with five editions, featuring slight alterations, issued to 1920. Altogether 25,000 were sold. The pamphlet was anonymous, although the

writer is known to have been Donald G. McKenzie. This was the Socialist Party's most popular and influential publication. A sixth edition, under a new title, was published in 1944.

*Socialism and Unionism*, by Donald G. McKenzie (1911)

*Struggle for Existence*, by Gerald Desmond, Vancouver (1911)

*State and Government*, by Gerald Desmond, Vancouver (1911?)

*Wage Worker and Farmer*, Vancouver (1912)

*The Socialist and the Sword*, by George Ross Kirkpatrick, Vancouver (1912)

Kirkpatrick was a member of the reformist Socialist Party of America rather than the Socialist Party of Canada. In 1916, he ran for Vice-President of the United States when Eugene V. Debs was in jail. *The Socialist and the Sword* is, in fact, an extract from Kirkpatrick's book *War – What For?*, published in 1910, and sold by the SPC in Vancouver. In 1936, Kirkpatrick resigned from the SPA and helped organise the Social Democratic Federation of America. He died a year later.

*Why not enjoy what you produce?*, by William Davenport, Vancouver (1912)

*The Fallacy of Reform* (1912)

This was probably only a leaflet by the editor of *The Western Clarion*.

*The Evolution of Human Society*, Vancouver (1912)

*Religion – Thy Name is Superstition*, by J.H. Burrough (1912)

This was compiled from a lengthy series of articles originally published between 1910 and 1912 in *The Western Clarion*.

*What is Socialism? A short study of its aims and claims*, by W.E. Hardenburg, Vancouver (1912)

*The Working Class and Master Class*, Vancouver (1912)

*The Brunswick Farmer: How the capitalist system levies tribute upon the product of his labor*, Monkton, New Brunswick? (1913)

*Socialism and the Survival of the Fittest*, by J. Connell, Vancouver (1913)

This was originally a series of articles published in *The Western Clarion* of 8, 15, 22 and 29 March, and 5, 19 and 26 April 1913. The pamphlet was written by Jim Connell, the famous author of 'The Red Flag', and had been previously published in London, England, by the Twentieth Century Press in 1908.

*The Way to Power*, by James B. Osbourne, Vancouver (1913)

*The Slave of the Farm*, by Alf Budden, Vancouver (1914)

Secondary title: "Being letters from Alf Budden to a fellow farm slave and comrade in revolt". This is a different, longer version of an earlier pamphlet of

around 1910. It was first published by the Dominion Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Canada in 1914. A later edition of 1918 includes additional letters up to 1916 and a postscript by the DEC dated 1st January 1918. This version has 64 pages. The pamphlet was an important exhibit at the trial of Bill Pritchard in Winnipeg in January 1920.

*Gems of Socialism*, Lindsay, Ont., Local of the SPC (1916)

*Who are the Dreamers?*, Winnipeg (1918)

*Blood and Iron*, Winnipeg (1918)

“*All I Possess*”, Winnipeg Local number 3 (1918)

Peter Campbell says that this was a letter that John Taquette Goolrick wrote to *The Liberator*, a radical American magazine published in Flint, Michigan. Goolrick was, at that time, living in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

*Shall Socialism Triumph in Russia?*, Alberta Provincial EC (1919)

A pamphlet in the SPGB archives. Pro-Bolshevik.

*The Russian Situation*, Alberta Provincial EC (1919)

Another pamphlet in the SPGB archives.

*Economic Causes of War*, by Peter H. Leckie, Vancouver (1920)

This pamphlet was published by the SPC under the terms of the bequest of the late SPC member George Whitehead of Vancouver. An associated series of pamphlets, with attractive covers featuring a poppy, were published by “The Whitehead Estate” in Vancouver for the Socialist Party of Canada, although this is not always specifically stated (the back covers have the red flag emblem of the SPC but without lettering). The first in the series had a note explaining that the pamphlets were published due to the Canadian government’s ban on the publications of Charles H. Kerr Co, of Chicago. The titles in the “Whitehead Library” were:

1. *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels);
2. *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific* (Frederick Engels);
3. *Wage-Labor and Capital* (Karl Marx);
4. *Marxism and Darwinism* (A. Pannekoek);
5. *Value, Price and Profit* (Karl Marx);
6. *Causes of Belief in God* (Paul Lafargue).

Although the Pannekoek title was certainly intended as the fourth in the series, it is uncertain as to whether this famous pamphlet was actually issued

*The Criminal Court Judge and the Odd Trick*, by E. Belfort Bax (1920)

According to Adam Buick, the catalogue of the University of Toronto lists this pamphlet, which is a reprint of two articles by Bax.

*Two Essays on History*, C. Stephenson and G. Delville (1921)

This is a pamphlet in the SPGB pamphlet collection.

*The Socialist Manifesto*, Winnipeg (1944)



Although updated and somewhat altered, and including an introduction by Jim Milne, this was effectively the sixth edition of the 1910 Manifesto. 5,000 copies were sold.

*The Meaning of Social Revolution*, by J. Milne (1945)

Another pamphlet from the SPGB pamphlet collection.

*The Russian Revolution...Its Origin and Outcome*, Winnipeg (1948)

*The World of Abundance*, Victoria (1973)

A reprint of articles from the *Socialist Standard*.

*Lenin Distorts Marx*, Victoria (1978)

A reproduction of 23 articles from the *Socialist Standard*.

*Comment le capitalisme d'Etat est arrivé en Russie*, Quebec/ Victoria (1978)

This was a special *Socialisme Mondial* edition, published as a pamphlet. There were a number of other SM pamphlets in French and put on sale in Quebec, but these were published in Luxembourg and Belgium some years later when the journal had moved to Europe.

*Economics Exposed*, Victoria (1994)

A reproduction of eight essays by Clifford Slapper originally published in the *Socialist Standard*. The front cover states that this pamphlet was issued by the World Socialist Movement (the collective name for the SPC-SPGB group of parties) but the back clearly indicates that this was a SPC endeavour.

## *Appendix Three*

### **An Electoral History of the Socialist Party of Canada**

The following is a condensed account of the Federal and Provincial elections fought by the Socialist Party of Canada. The candidate, constituency, number of votes and percentage of total votes have been given wherever possible. A cross preceding the name means that the candidate was elected. It should be noted that electoral records are by no means complete.

1905: Ontario, Federal		
James Simpson	North Toronto	211 (2.6%)
1906: Ontario, By		
James Simpson	North Toronto	250 (3.8%)
1907: British Columbia, Provincial		
James Cartwright	Alberni	43 (8.90%)
William Harrison Moore	Fernie	285 (40.66%)
+ John McInnis	Grand Forks	232 (43.77%)
William Edgar Dynes	Greenwood	176 (30.19%)
William John Ledingham	The Islands	11 (3.03%)
+ James Hurst Hawthornthwaite	Nanaimo City	455 (50.22%)
Francis Edward Phillips	Nelson City	96 (13.35%)
+ Parker Williams	Newcastle	259 (46.67%)
John William Stalker Logie	Okanagan	92 (5.65%)
Archibald Francis Berry	Rossland City	98 (18.67%)
Wallis Walter Lefeaux	Revelstoke	94 (11.71%)
Charles Edward Kilby	Richmond	48 (5.53%)
George Edgar Winkler	Similameen	29 (5.50%)
William Davidson	Slocan	119 (30.28%)
John Edward Dubberley	Vancouver City	599 (1.99%)
Eugene Thornton Kingsley	Vancouver City	618 (2.04%)
Richard Parmenter Pettipiece	Vancouver City	602 (1.99%)
James Hackett McVety	Vancouver City	616 (2.04%)
Robert Stebbings	Vancouver City	598 (1.98%)
James Cameron Watters	Victoria City	443 (3.53%)
1907 (August): British Columbia, By		
Eugene Kingsley	Vancouver	521 (18.06%)
1908: Ontario, Federal		
James Simpson	North Toronto	220 (2.60%)
1909 (January): British Columbia, By		
+ James Hurst Hawthornthwaite	Nanaimo	686 (62.88%)
1909 (January): British Columbia, By		
Henry Noble Coursier	Revelstoke	132 (18.94%)
1909: British Columbia, Provincial		
James Cartwright	Comox	206 (20.96%)
John William Fitch	Cranbrook	143 (10.18%)
John David Harrington	Fernie	649 (30.10%)
John McInnis	Grand Forks	334 (33.40%)
George Heatherton	Greenwood	204 (33.01%)
+ James Hurst Hawthornthwaite	Nanaimo City	786 (62.88%)
John Henry Matheson	Nelson City	148 (31.81%)
+ Parker Williams	Newcastle	379 (52.64%)
James Foulds Johnson	Okanagan	188 (7.62%)

Henry Kempster	Revelstoke	121 (9.93%)
George Bernard Casey	Rossland City	160 (26.06%)
Thomas Y. McKay	Skeena	163 (11.97%)
John William Bennett	Slocan	172 (31.97%)
Peter Garvie	Vancouver City	1,227 (2.39%)
Eugene Thornton Kingsley	Vancouver City	1,883 (3.67%)
Moses McGregor	Vancouver City	1,218 (2.37%)
William Murray MacKenzie	Vancouver City	1,231 (2.40%)
Richard Parmenter Pettipiece	Vancouver City	1,428 (2.78%)
George Oliver	Victoria City	659 (3.41%)
Alexander M. Oliver	Ymir	366 (34.37%)
1909 (October): British Columbia, By		
William Bennett	Fernie	611 (41.54%)
1909 (22 March): Alberta, By		
+ CM O'Brien	Rocky Mountain	555 (37.83%)
1912: British Columbia, Provincial		
Parker Williams	Newcastle	-
Wallis Lefeaux	Comox	355 (33.84%)
William Davidson	Fernie	763 (41.69%)
George Oliver	Esquimalt	25 (2.92%)
1910: Manitoba		
George Armstrong	Winnipeg	246 (4.59%)
1912: Alberta, By		
Joseph R. Knight	Edmonton	183 (4.92%)
1913: Alberta		
Joseph R. Knight	Lethbridge	282 (10.49%)
CM O'Brien	Rocky Mountain	1018 (38.81%)
1914: Manitoba		
George Armstrong	Winnipeg	928 (5.86%)
1915: Manitoba		
George Armstrong	Winnipeg	804 (8.65%)
1916: British Columbia		
Bill Pritchard	Comox	246 (11.57%)
John McDonald	Fernie	218 (11.20%)
Albert Goodwin	Trail	262 (19.07%)
John Harrington	Vancouver	1,380 (1.44%)
1917: Federal		
Joseph R. Knight	Red Deer	701 (6.54%)
George Paton	Medicine Hat	460 (4.22%)
1917: Alberta, Provincial		
Joseph R. Knight	Red Deer	786 (22.02%)
Sydney Keeling	Edmonton East	243 (3.66%)
John Reid	Edson	203 (11.44%)
1920: Manitoba, Provincial		
+ George Armstrong	Winnipeg City	2767
Robert Russell	Winnipeg City	1535
Helen Armstrong	Winnipeg City	433

1920: British Columbia, Provincial		
John Burrough	Prince Rupert	676 (19.68%)
John Dennis	Vancouver	1451 (0.72%)
Sid Earp	Vancouver	1694 (0.84%)
John Harrington	Vancouver	2956 (1.46%)
William McQuoid	Vancouver	1524 (0.75%)
James Smith	Vancouver	2267 (1.12%)
Christopher Stephenson	Vancouver	1818 (0.90%)
1921: Alberta, Provincial		
Frank Williams	Calgary	1745
Marie Mellard	Edmonton	883
1922: Manitoba, Provincial		
George Armstrong	Winnipeg	1273
1924: British Columbia, Provincial		
William Pritchard	Nanaimo	1083 (31.14%)
John Harrington	Vancouver	3281 (1.73%)
1932: Manitoba, Provincial		
George Armstrong	Winnipeg	849
1933: British Columbia, Provincial		
James King	Burnaby	29 (0.25%)
William Black	Vancouver-Burrard	109 (0.27%)
Sydney Earp	Vancouver Centre	71 (0.25%)
Rodney Young	Vancouver Centre	63 (0.22%)
John Burrough	Vancouver Centre	98 (0.24%)
1935: Federal		
John Taylor	Vancouver Centre	251 (1.11%)
1936 (October): British Columbia, By		
Christopher R Walker	Vancouver-Burrard	45 (0.22%)
1937: British Columbia, Provincial		
James King	Vancouver Centre	234 (0.68%)
John Burrough	Vancouver East	53 (0.13%)
1939: British Columbia, By		
John Burrough	Vancouver Centre	74 (0.67%)
1945: British Columbia Provincial		
Ray MacLeod	Vancouver Centre	105 (0.25%)
1945: Manitoba, Provincial		
James Milne	Winnipeg	222
1952: British Columbia, Provincial		
Harold Holtby	Vancouver Centre	276 (1.26%)
1961: Federal, By		
Don Poirier	Esquimalt-Saanich, BC	122
1963: British Columbia, Provincial		
George Jenkins	Esquimalt-Saanich	75
1967: British Columbia, Provincial		
Larry Tickner	Oak Bay	54

As related in the text there are a number of disputed elections, in which various authorities claim that SPC candidates stood but no results have been found:

1908 Federal: John Houston (Winnipeg, Man.); H. Sherman (Calgary, Alba.)

1936 Manitoba Provincial: Frederick Neale

1935 Alberta Provincial: G.A. Brown, Frank J. Campbell, C.M. Christiansen, Roy M. Devore

It is likely in the majority of these cases that the candidates were withdrawn just prior to polling, possibly due to insufficient funds for the deposit.

## *Appendix Four*

### **Socialist Party of Canada Locals (after 1931)**

In the *Western Socialist*, the main source for this list, a differentiation is not always made between a proper local and a group or local contact (such listing was in any case fairly erratic before 1938). It is possible that some of the information is therefore inaccurate. There is no information prior to October 1933, when the *Western Socialist* was launched, and between January 1942 and late 1943 (due to war circumstances). The period after the Socialist Party of Canada gave up its interest in the *Western Socialist* is particularly badly served as the *Socialist Fulcrum* listed only 'information centres' and *Imagine*, the current journal of the SPC, also gives contact addresses rather than branch details. For this era the only definite information to hand comes from the 1982 SPGB report on the Socialist Party of Canada which definitely states that Victoria was then the only surviving local. Locals are known to have existed in Calgary and St Johns in the pre-1939 period. Indeed, there may have been a local in Calgary until 1950. According to the *OBU Bulletin* of December 29, 1932, there were branches (locals) "operating at Brandon and North Battleford, and others in the formation stage". The first local was formed, in Winnipeg, on June 1 1931.

Brandon	1931 to ?
Calgary	1932 to 1950?
Edmonton	1938 to 1942?
Montreal (1)	1933 to 1934
Montreal (2)	1967 to 1969
Montreal (3)	1973 to before 1982
Moosejaw (1)	1933? to 1935
Moosejaw (2)	1938 to 1942?
Nanaimo	1938 to 1939
North Battleford	1931 to 1935
St. John's	1932 to 1939?
Toronto (1)	1938 to 1942?
Toronto (2)	1964 to 1966 (joined WSPC)
Toronto (3)	1979 to before 1982
Toronto (4)	2005 to date
Vancouver (1)	1933 (split from ILP-SPC) to 1941 (expelled due to pro-war elements)
Vancouver (2)	1943? to 1950
Vancouver (3)	1952 to 1957
Vancouver (4)	1960 to 1965 (expelled over Cannon controversy)
Vancouver (5)	1966 to before 1982
Victoria (1)	1938 to 1958 (became a group)
Victoria (2)	1960 to after 1982
Winnipeg	1931 to before 1982

## *Appendix Five*

### **Socialist Party of Canada Locals 1933-39**

#### **1. October 1933 to July 1935**

<b>Local</b>	<b>First mention</b>	<b>Last mention</b>	<b>Secretary</b>
<b>Calgary</b>	<b>Jan 1934</b>	<b>Jun 1935</b>	<b>Hector McAskill (Jan-Feb 1934) Fred Costin (Mar 1934-June 1935)</b>
<b>Edmonton</b>	<b>Jan 1934</b>	<b>Jul 1935</b>	<b>Roy W Devore</b>
<b>Montreal</b>	<b>Oct 1933</b>	<b>Aug 1934</b>	<b>JH Crump<sup>6</sup></b>
<b>Moose Jaw</b>	<b>Oct 1933</b>	<b>Jul 1935</b>	<b>J Simpson</b>
<b>North Battleford</b>	<b>Oct 1933</b>	<b>Jul 1935</b>	<b>JH Greaves</b>
<b>St John</b>	<b>Jan 1934</b>	<b>Jul 1935</b>	<b>M Wasson</b>
<b>Vancouver</b>	<b>Oct 1933</b>	<b>Jul 1935</b>	<b>William Black or Sydney Earp (Oct 1933) JH Burrough (July 1934-July 1935)</b>
<b>Victoria</b>	<b>Dec 1934</b>	<b>Jul 1935</b>	<b>C Luff</b>
<b>Winnipeg</b>	<b>Jan 1934</b>	<b>Jul 1935</b>	<b>Fred Neale (Jan 1934-Feb 1935) JH Gibson (Mar-July 1935)</b>

#### **2. February 1936<sup>7</sup>**

<b>Local</b>	<b>Secretary</b>
<b>Montreal</b>	<b>WC Currey</b>
<b>Moose Jaw</b>	<b>J Simpson</b>
<b>St John</b>	<b>M Wasson</b>
<b>Vancouver</b>	<b>JH Burrough</b>
<b>Winnipeg</b>	<b>JH Gibson</b>

#### **3. June 1938 to July 1939**

<b>Local</b>	<b>First mention</b>	<b>Last mention</b>	<b>Secretary</b>
<b>Edmonton</b>	<b>Jun 1938</b>	<b>Jul 1939</b>	<b>RW Devore</b>
<b>Moose Jaw</b>	<b>Jun 1938</b>	<b>Jul 1939</b>	<b>J Simpson</b>
<b>Nanaimo</b>	<b>Jun 1938</b>	<b>Jan 1939</b>	<b>RC Walker</b>
<b>Toronto</b>	<b>Jun 1938</b>	<b>Jul 1939</b>	<b>WC Currey</b>
<b>Vancouver</b>	<b>Jun 1938</b>	<b>Jul 1939</b>	<b>JH Burrough</b>
<b>Victoria</b>	<b>Jun 1938</b>	<b>Jul 1939</b>	<b>C Luff</b>
<b>Winnipeg</b>	<b>Jun 1938</b>	<b>Jul 1939</b>	<b>F Neale</b>

---

<sup>6</sup> Montreal Local was terminated on the death of JH Crump.

<sup>7</sup> Only the Vancouver, Winnipeg and Moose Jaw locals were mentioned in the issues from August to May 1938 therefore it is fairly certain that the Montreal and St John locals were terminated in 1936 or not long thereafter.

## *Sources*

### **Books, Articles, Essays and Reports**

- Ahrens, John F., *A History of the Vancouver Locals of the Socialist Party of Canada, 1903-1972* (unpublished manuscript, Vancouver, 1990-91)
- Barltrop, Robert, *The Monument: The Story of the Socialist Party of Great Britain* (London, 1975)
- Barltrop, Robert, *Jack London: The Man, the Writer, the Rebel* (London, 1976)
- Bishop, Reg, *Soviet Millionaires* (London, 1945)
- Bothwell, Robert, *A Traveller's History of Canada* (London)
- Brown, Harry, *For Richer, For Poorer* (Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1994)
- Budden, Alf., *The Slave of the Farm* (Socialist Party of Canada, Vancouver, 1918)
- Buhle, Marie Jo., Buhle, Paul and Georgaka, Dan (editors), *Encyclopedia of the American Left* (Chicago and London, 1990)
- Bumsted, J.M., *The Peoples of Canada – A Post-Federation History* (Toronto, 1992 edition)



- Campbell, Peter, “‘Making Socialists’: Bill Pritchard, the Socialist Party of Canada and the Third International’ in *Labour/ Le Travail*, no. 30 (Fall 1992)
- Campbell, Peter, ‘East Meets Left: South Asian Militants and the Socialist Party of Canada in British Columbia, 1904-1914’ in *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, no. 20 (Fall 1999)
- Campbell, Peter, *Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way* (Montreal and Kingston, 1999)
- Campbell, Peter, *The Socialist Party of Canada: ‘Impossibilism’ Revisited* (unpublished essay, Kingston, Ontario, no date)
- Canadian Parliamentary Guide* (Vancouver, 1903)
- Chief Election Officer, *Electoral History of Ontario: Candidates and Results with Statistics from the Records, 1867-1982* (Ottawa?, 1983?)
- Davies, Raymond Arthur, *This is our Land: Ukrainian Canadians Against Hitler* (Toronto, 1943)
- De Monzie, Anatole, *Petit Manuel de la Russie Nouvelle* (Paris, 1931)
- Dobb, Maurice, *Soviet Economic Development since 1917* (London, 1948)
- Editors of Time-Life, *Canada* (Amsterdam, 1987)
- Elbert, Ronald, *The Paper War: Conflict and Democracy in the Socialist Party of Canada, 1960-70* (unpublished thesis, University of Massachusetts, Boston, 2001)
- Electoral History of British Columbia, 1871-1986*
- Ellenbogen, Karla Rab, *Role-modelling Socialist Behavior: A Biography of Isaac Rab* (self-published, Somerville, Mass, USA): Appendix A contains some useful letters from Rab relating to a number of SPC members, particularly regarding the Vancouver Local and the 1960s controversies.
- Engels, Frederick, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (London and New York, 1968)
- Gambone, Larry, *The Impossibilists: Selections from the Press of the Socialist Party of Canada and the One Big Union* (Montreal, 1995)
- Girard, Frank and Perry, Ben, *The Socialist Labor Party, 1876-1991: A Short History* (Philadelphia, 1991)
- Gosnell, R., *The Year Book of British Columbia, 1903* (Vancouver, 1903)
- Hercuson, David, *Confrontation at Winnipeg* (Montreal, 1990)
- Herreshoff, David, *American Disciples of Marx: from the Age of Jackson to the Progressive Era* (Wayne State University, Detroit and Toronto, 1976)
- Hirsch, Richard, *The Soviet Spies: The Story of Russian Espionage in North America* (London, 1947)
- Judd, Denis, *The Life and Times of George V* (London, 1973)
- Kealey, Gregory S. and Whitaker, Reg. (editors), *R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins: The Early Years, 1919-1929* (Canadian Committee on Labour History, St. Johns, Newfoundland, 1994)
- Kealey, Linda, *Enlisting Women for the Cause: Women, Labor and the Left in Canada, 1890-1920* (Toronto, 1998)
- Kendall, Walter, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain* (London, 1969)
- Krawchuk, Peter, *The Ukrainian Socialist Movement in Canada (1907-1918)* (Toronto, 1979)
- Labriola, Antonio, *Socialism and Philosophy* (Chicago, 1934)
- Lenin, Vladimir I., *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* (Little Lenin Library edition, 1935)
- Livingstone, Ken, *Livingstone’s Labour: A Programme for the Nineties* (London, 1989)

- MacCormack, A. Ross, *Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919* (Toronto and Buffalo, 1977)
- Mann, Tom, *Tom Mann's Memoirs* (London, 1923)
- Mardon, Ernest and Mardon, Austin, *Alberta Election Results, 1882-1992* (Documentary Heritage Society of Alberta, 1993)
- Marx, Karl, *The Gotha Program* (New York, 1945 edition)
- Marx, Karl and Engels, Frederick, *Selected Correspondence, 1846-1895, with Commentary and Notes*, (London, 1934)
- McIlroy, Jim, *Australia's First Socialists* (Chippendale, NSW, Australia, 2003)
- McKay, Ian, *For a Working Class Culture in Canada* (St. John's, 1996)
- McKillop, A.B., *The Socialist as Citizen: John Queen and the Mayoralty of Winnipeg, 1935* (Manitoba Historical Society, Toronto, 2002)
- McNaught, Kenneth, *The Penguin History of Canada* (London, 1988)
- Mehring, Franz, *Karl Marx: The Story of his Life* (London, 1951)
- Milne, Jim, *History of the Socialist Party of Canada* (self-published, Winnipeg, 1973)
- Morgan, Lewis H., *Ancient Society* (Calcutta, no date)
- Newton, Janice, *The Feminist Challenge to the Canadian Left, 1900-1918* (Montreal and Kingston, 1995)
- One Big Union, *The Origin of the One Big Union: A Verbatim Report of the Calgary Conference, 1919* (Winnipeg, 1919)
- Pares, Bernard, *The Fall of the Russian Monarchy* (London, 1939)
- Perrin, David A., *The Socialist Party of Great Britain: Politics, Economics and Britain's Oldest Socialist Party* (Wrexham, 2000)
- Peterson, Larry, "The One Big Union in International Perspective: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism, 1900-1925" in *Labour/Le Travail*, 7 (Spring 1981)
- Renshaw, Patrick, *The Wobblies: The Story of Syndicalism in the United States* (London, 1967)
- Rothstein, Andrew, *A History of the USSR* (Middlesex, 1950)
- Socialisme Mondial, *Pour le Socialisme Mondial* (Arlon, Belgium, 1981)
- Socialist Party of Canada, *Lenin Distorts Marx* (Winnipeg, 1978)
- Socialist Party of Canada, *Manifesto of the Socialist Party of Canada* (Vancouver, 1920)
- Socialist Party of Canada, *The Russian Revolution...Its Origin and Outcome* (Winnipeg, 1948)
- Socialist Party of Canada, *The Socialist Manifesto* (Winnipeg, 1944)
- Socialist Party of Great Britain, *Socialism and Religion* (London, 1910)
- Sprenger, Rudolf, *Bolshevism* (Sawbridgeworth, England, 2004)
- Sworakowski, Witold S., *World Communism: A Handbook* (Stanford University, Stanford, California, 1973)
- Taylor, Kerry, "'Jack' McDonald: A Canadian Revolutionary in New Zealand" in *Labour/Travail*, 32 (Fall 1993)
- Wark, Kenneth A., *A Report on Alberta Elections 1905-1982* (Edmonton, 1983)
- Woodcock, George, *A Social History of Canada* (Ontario, 1989)

### **Journals and Newspapers**

*One Big Union Bulletin*  
*Western Clarion*  
*Western Socialist*  
*The Voice*

*International Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue internationale d'études canadiennes*  
*Socialist Standard*  
*Cotton's Weekly*  
*The New Democracy*  
*Weekly People*  
*World Socialist*  
*Labour/ Le Travail*  
*Winnipeg Socialist*  
*Socialist Fulcrum*  
*Socialisme Mondial*  
*Imagine*  
*Socialist Studies*  
*The People*  
*International Socialist Review*  
*Overtime* (Cleveland, Ohio)  
*Monthly Report/ Newsletter* (SPC)  
*The Globe and Mail* (Toronto)  
*The Toronto Star*  
*The Guardian* (London and Manchester, UK)

### **Other Sources**

Correspondence and letters

Various reports and statements by members and former members of the SPC

Socialist Party of Canada Dominion Executive Committee reports and statements

Various reports and statements of the Socialist Party of Great Britain

Tape recordings by members and former members of the SPC (especially William Pritchard's "Reminiscences of the 'old' Socialist Party of Canada", Los Angeles, 1974, which has been transcribed)

Leaflets produced by the Socialist Party of Canada

Photographs of members and former members of the SPC

Ian Angus, "What Socialists Learned from the Winnipeg General Strike": A talk presented at the Marxism 2004 Conference in Toronto, 6-9 May 2004, in a session marking the anniversary of the General Strike. Copyright 2004 Ian Angus. All rights reserved.

Socialist History Project website

Gerald Friesen, "Yours in Revolt: The Socialist Party of Canada and the Western Canadian Labour Movement", University of Manitoba

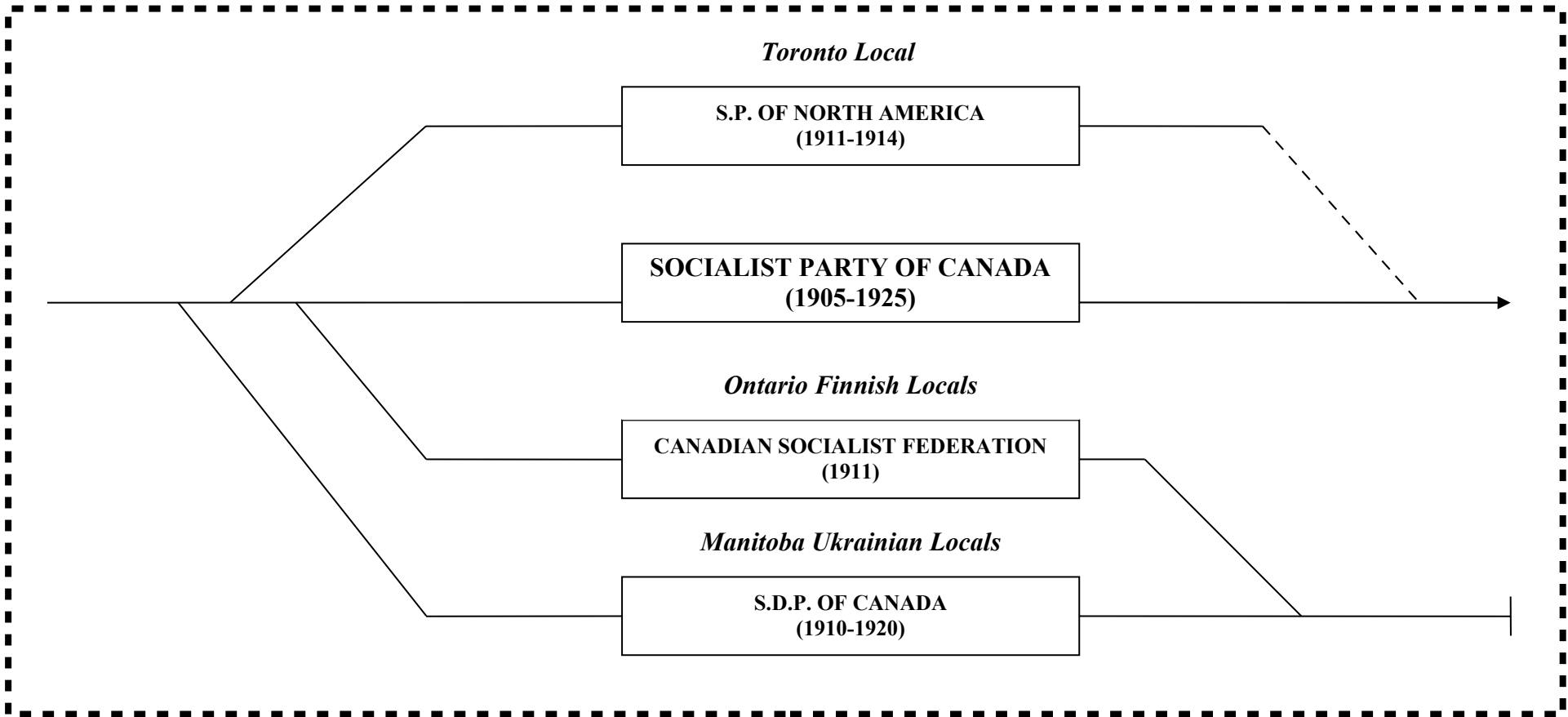
Constitution of the Socialist Party of Canada (4 July 1995)

Ian McKay, List of SPC pamphlets and leaflets

Tom Berridge, "A tale of two city parks", Simon Fraser University Institute for the Humanities [http://www.islandnet.com/beaconhillpark/articles/109\\_speakers.htm](http://www.islandnet.com/beaconhillpark/articles/109_speakers.htm)

"Crowds gathered at Speakers Corner", by Janis Ringuette.

The current address of the Socialist Party of Canada/Parti Socialiste du Canada is Box 4280, Victoria B.C. V8X 3X8.



**Early Splits in the Socialist Party of Canada**