

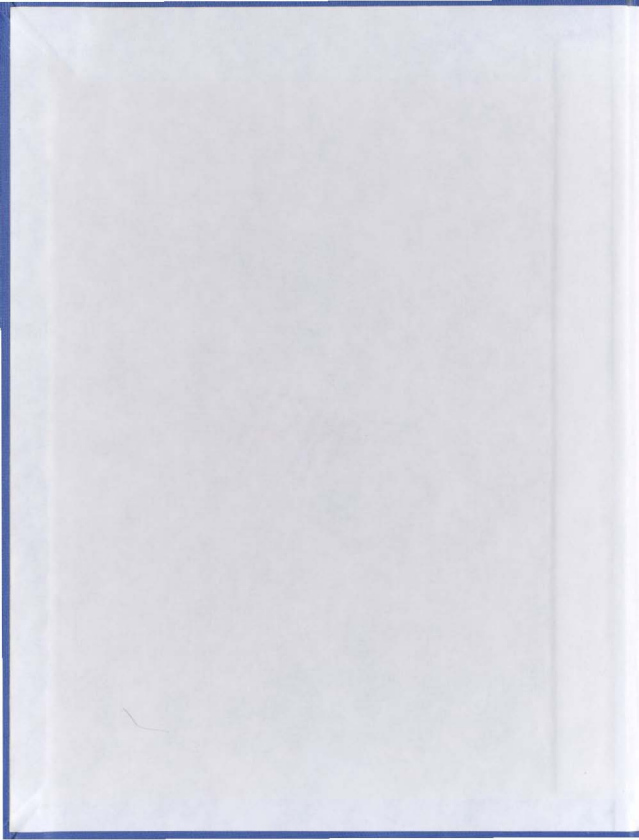
THE ENGLISH-CANADIAN LABOUR
PRESS AND THE GREAT WAR

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

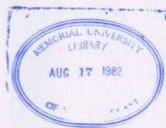
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THE ENGLISH-CANADIAN LABOUR PRESS AND THE GREAT WAR

by

©Vincent Rendell Porter, B.A. (Hons.), B.Ed.

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

The Great War of 1914-18 not only caused unsurpassed death and destruction, but also provoked considerable social change. The English-Canadian labour press commented widely and vigorously on both the causes of the conflict and its effects.

The research for this thesis involved a thorough examination of six important Canadian labour papers for the period 1914-1919. These were the Canadian Labor Leader, the Voice, the Labor News, the Western Clarion, Industrial Banner and the BC Federationist. Some smaller, and less significant papers such as the Brandon Confederate, were also briefly perused.

As the War wore on, the papers developed an intense conviction that great social change was in the offing, and that it would bring the workingman greater freedom and significant economic gains. The thesis suggests that when the immediate post-War era offered only high prices and equally high unemployment rates, the labour press, and the people for whom it spoke, felt betrayed and angry. It was this sense of betrayal that contributed significantly to the industrial unrest of 1919.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the course of researching and writing this thesis, the author is indebted to many people. The Government of Newfoundland provided valuable financial assistance in the form of a Provincial Government Fellowship. The staff of the University library, especially those people in the inter-library loan section, were very helpful in getting much of the necessary material. Professor Hugh Tuck of Memorial University's History Department read portions of the thesis and added valuable comments. My supervisor, Professor Joe Cherwinski, not only offered advice and the necessary critical comment, but, along with my wife Diane, provided the encouragement and prodding that resulted in the completion of this project. A special thanks must go to Linda Bennett who painstakingly corrected many grammatical errors, helped me develop a consistent format, and typed the final draft.

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INTRODUCTION

Wars are cataclysmic. Wars of the magnitude of World War One are especially so for they invariably must provoke searching criticism of man and his society, undermining its basic tenets to an extent not seemly possible before. Such was certainly the case with the great conflict of 1914-18. It dramatically separated the twentieth century from its predecessor.

René Albrecht-Carrie, in The Meaning of the First World War, called it "the great break with the past".¹ Another historian of note, Joseph Carter, in 1918: Year of Crisis, Year of Change, saw the end of the conflict as "the beginning of the world of today".² But unlike most epoch making events of history, the social effects of the Great War were so profound that it did not have to await the hindsight of historians to gauge its import. Even contemporaries could see its significance. Canada's wartime Prime Minister, Robert Laird Borden, was one such observer. In his diary of 11 November, 1918, he recorded his impressions of what had transpired through what had certainly been the bloodiest four years in the world's history:³

The world has drifted from its old anchorage and no man can with certainty prophesy what the outcome will be. I have said that another such war would destroy our civilization. It is a grave question whether this war may not have destroyed much that we regard as necessarily incidental thereto.

¹ René Albrecht-Carrie, The Meaning of the First World War, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965, p. 172.

² Joseph Carter, 1918: Year of Crisis, Year of Change, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968, p. vii.

³ Quoted in Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, Canada: 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1974, p. 338.

The hostilities provoked considerable concern and comment from all segments of society. Much of that comment was not directed at the conflict itself, but at the effect that it was producing on society. The English Canadian labour press was especially active in this regard, and it is upon their opinion - for the most part, editorial - that this thesis dwells. Essentially, it documents the major concerns of the papers from 1914 to 1919.

This discussion is a slight departure from much of the historiography of the period culminating in the Winnipeg General Strike. It is concerned with an institution, namely, the labour press, but only as a window on a world which the various papers described. They expressed ideas which, in many cases, were demonstrably the hopes and dreams of the Canadian working class. The thesis is not at all concerned with regional or ethnic differences since many of the concerns of the labour press were common to every worker. Everyone felt the impact of the War in respect to inflation; there was general concern and anger at the profiteering. These and other issues were nation-wide. This discussion also precludes much attention to the machinations of unions and union leaders since the volatile nature of Canadian society during and immediately after the Great War seems a little beyond the manipulative skills of a few radicals.

The thesis draws on a number of the labour papers but is mainly concerned with four of the major ones. Foremost among these was the Toronto-based Industrial Banner published by the educational arm of the Toronto Trades and Labor Council. The Banner became the "official" organ of the Independent Labor Party in 1917. Hamilton's Labor News was also selected

since it, too, was one of the country's leading labour papers strategically situated [for propaganda purposes] in the industrial heartland of Canada. The News was an independent. One of the best known and most respected papers, the Voice, was published in Winnipeg. It, too, was an independent until August, 1918, when its operation was taken over by the One Big Union, and, thereafter, was known as the Western Labor News. The British Columbia Federationist was the most important, and certainly the most moderate, of the two West Coast papers to be examined; the other was the Western Clarion, devoted, like its patron the Socialist Party of Canada, to preaching orthodox Marxism. The Federationist was closely affiliated with the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council. The Canadian Labor Leader was also selected for examination for two reasons. Being Nova Scotia-based, it provided a measure of regional balance. It was also, like the other papers, of generally high quality. The writing was good and the analysis thoughtful. Though small, the Leader claimed "correspondents" in many cities throughout the country.⁴

All of the above papers, with the exception of the Western Clarion, had a common characteristic that was fundamental to their being selected as the basis for this thesis: they were all broad-based, generally moderate labour papers which appealed to the whole spectrum of the working class, rather than to a specific trade or narrow political orientation.

⁴Robbins L. Elliott, "The Canadian Labour Press from 1867: A Chronological Annotated Directory", CJEPS, 1948, p. 223.

Such papers provided a more generalized view of society than did, for instance, the Canadian Plate Printer or the Soviet. Consideration was also given to selecting papers that, for the most part, saw both the beginning and the end of the War since fatalities among the labour press were quite common.

Some of the papers were, however, extremely stable. Joseph Marks edited the Industrial Banner for twenty-eight years, and was succeeded in 1929 by a like-minded moderate socialist, James Simpson.⁵ A.W. Puttee served in the same capacity at the Voice until it folded in 1918. Puttee, like Marks, was a moderate who was elected to the House of Commons for a four-year term in 1900.⁶ The Federationist had two wartime editors, R. Parmeter Pettipiece, a moderate socialist, and J.W. Wilkinson of the Carpenters' Union. Both men contested several British Columbia elections.⁷ The Labor News featured a very conservative craft unionist, R.C. Landers, during the first year of the War. In 1915, he was replaced by the equally conservative Gordon W. Nelson, a strong supporter of Samuel Gompers. In 1917, as the News grew progressively more radical, Fred Flatman, a socialist and Independent Labor Party supporter, became editor. The Canadian Labor Leader was directed by W.J. Newald until it folded in 1918.⁸

⁵ Ibid., p. 222.

⁶ David Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union, Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1978, p. 66.

⁷ Ibid., p. 123.

⁸ Elliott, "The Canadian Labour Press", p. 225.

Though the stability of some of these papers can be easily demonstrated, it is not so easy to answer the more perplexing questions of circulation and influence. According to McKim's The Canadian Newspaper Directory, the Industrial Banner had a circulation of more than twenty-three thousand in 1913, and though it was not listed thereafter, one can safely assume that it neither declined nor increased much during the war years. Circulation for the other papers shows unusual stability, between three thousand and seven thousand copies per paper.⁹ These figures may, however, be questionable. For instance, McKim's put the circulation of the BC Federationist at a little less than seven thousand in 1918, while the Federationist itself, which supposedly supplied McKim's Directory, offhandedly indicated, in a subscription drive in early 1918, that it was publishing twelve thousand weekly copies.¹⁰ It only seems safe to assume that the papers which this thesis examines had a combined circulation of more than fifty thousand but probably less than a hundred thousand. If the three-readers-per-paper formula applied, then the readership was considerable.

Unlike conventional newspapers, the labour press did not only reflect the political and social values of its clientele. They did not merely react, but advocated a new order. They did not conceal the fact - indeed, they advertized it - that their raison d'être was to educate the working

⁹A. McKim, The Canadian Newspaper Directory, 1913 and 1918. MUN Microfiche, #2899.

¹⁰BC Federationist, 18 March, 1918.

class. One can only suppose that because the papers sold, aided albeit by labour unions, there must have been many thousands of people somewhat receptive to their message. Union affiliation was certainly a factor in getting the papers in the hands of the workers, and in distributing the papers, not only in their cities of origin, but also throughout the provinces.

Circulation figures could be construed as a belittling measure of the influence and significance of the labour press. In the short term, their influence may have been minimal. But it must be remembered that the purpose of these papers was to spread ideas, and to have these ideas take root and grow. Though progress in that regard may have been slow, they could at least feel, as John Maynard Keynes did, that "...the power of the vested interests is vastly exaggerated when compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas".¹¹ The labour press certainly stands out as pioneer promoters of many pieces of social legislation that are now taken for granted.

One final note on the nature of the papers: they were not "news" papers. In fact, they rarely reported news aside from labour "happenings". If, for instance, one's awareness during the War extended no further than the labour press, one might have been blissfully unaware that Passchendaele ever happened. It was even difficult to find the exact date of the 1917 election. As for the election coverage itself, Liberal Party advertisements, which appeared regularly during the campaign, carried far more

¹¹ Quoted in John Kenneth Galbraith, The Age of Uncertainty, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977, p. 11.

"news" than did the papers themselves.¹² The labour press did not assume the role of reporting the news; their readers presumably already had access to that through the daily papers. And so the labour papers confined their efforts to analysis - with a labour bias, of course.

This thesis makes no pretenses to covering all that the labour press was concerned with. Its scope is fairly limited. It is neither a history of Canada during the Great War, nor a history of the labour press during that epic struggle. Rather, its purpose is basically two-fold: on the one hand it attempts to document the attitude of the labour press to war in general, and to the First World War in particular. Since the papers tended to emphasize the social effects that the War was producing, the thesis, almost by necessity, dwells considerably upon the hostilities as an agent of change, as seen through the eyes of the labour press.

¹² See, for example, the full page advertisement in the BC Federationist, 30 November, 1917. Forty-two "mistakes" of the Borden Government were outlined.

CHAPTER I

The Militarist Threat

In the years prior to the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, war was not generally looked upon as the basest of social ills. Indeed, it was an acceptable means in the pursuit of policy goals. Such means, though, were most certainly becoming all the more unacceptable as the twentieth century dawned, and as saner means of settling differences - arbitration, in particular - appeared to be in the ascendancy. Some groups in North America and Europe were even ideologically committed to peace. Among these were the leaders of international socialism and unionism. Their opposition to war sprang from the fact that what they considered their personal constituency, the working classes, always seemed to contribute a disproportionate share to the casualty count while gaining the least from the struggles. Too, practically all socialists of the prewar period believed in the orthodox Marxist interpretation of war, that it was caused by competition among capitalists. And who wanted to serve as cannon fodder for the capitalists?

With such an anti-war stance, it was not altogether surprising that the Socialist International repudiated war at both its Stuttgart conference in 1907¹ and the Copenhagen meeting of 1910.² Both conventions called upon the working classes of the world to refuse to take up arms in the event of an outbreak of hostilities.

¹Patrick Ferraro, "English-Canada and the Election of 1917", Montreal: unpublished MA thesis, McGill University, 1971, p. 180. Hereafter cited Ferraro, "Election".

²A.W. Palmer, A Dictionary of Modern History, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1962, p. 163.

Canada's socialist-labourites were no less opposed to war than their foreign comrades. The country's Trades and Labor Congress, at its Calgary convention in 1907, endorsed the stand that the International had adopted at Stuttgart. They further resolved that should war ensue, they would attempt to organize Canadian workers in a general strike as a sign of opposition to recruitment.³ The Congress produced a similar resolution when it met in Saint John in September, 1914. Peace was still held up as a worthwhile principle. With the War already a month old, however, it was merely that, a principle; for the convention, while it condemned the War, simultaneously sanctioned it by expressing the desire to see "the despotism of Europe levelled to its final destruction".⁴ No matter how much the labourites opposed war on principle, the levelling of Germany certainly required resorting to arms.

This contradiction and ambivalence concerning the War was as much a characteristic feature of the labour press as it was of labour leaders who felt compelled to pronounce upon such matters during public discussions. The essential purpose of this chapter is to document the evolution of the thought of the labour press in respect to militarism and the causes of the War. As will be seen, most of the ambivalence of the labour press concerning the question of cause lay with the mainstream.

³Ferraro, "Election", p. 181.

⁴Ibid., p. 181.

Neither the extreme right wing [of labour] as typified by the Labor News nor its bipolar contemporaries as personified by the Western Clarion harboured any such doubts. Because both papers add an extra dimension to labour press attitudes concerning the War and its causes, they are both treated separately from the moderate grouping and from each other. The Western Clarion, in particular, serves an additional purpose; that is, through its rigidity, it accentuates the more reasoned and dispassionate approach that developed in the other papers.

A second and somewhat minor concern of this chapter is with the "growth" of militarism in Canada. This subject is discussed for two reasons: the labour press did express "fear" that the culture of the Prussians could become rooted in Canada, and so on that level, it is deserving of some treatment in this discussion of militarism. It does, however, serve another purpose. To a significant degree, it exposes the nature of the labour press itself as it sought to make a mountain out of a molehill, and found that it could not even convince itself that the threat of militarism in Canada was real.

During the first few months of hostilities, the labour papers, excluding the Labor News, held on to their pacifist convictions. They condemned both sides in the struggle while offering little or no support for either. The first comments came from the Voice of Winnipeg. It pointed out the fallacy of the old idiom that one could only prevent war by preparing for it. The result of nations having become "top heavy with armaments" was all too plain to see.⁵ Central Canada's leading

⁵Voice, 14 August, 1914.

labour paper, the Industrial Banner, also took a rather principled stand against the conflict. It could find absolutely no justification whatsoever for the conflict, and pronounced its abhorrence at this "crime of crimes, the feast of ghouls". Even at this early date, 14 August, the paper showed some awareness of just how bloody the struggle would become as it suggested that Canada's call for 22,000 men would escalate "even up to 100,000".⁶ The consternation of the two papers would certainly have been suitably amplified had they realized the extent to which they had underestimated its manpower requirements.

The most critical and unequivocal condemnation of the War came, not unexpectedly, from the West Coast. The Western Clarion, mouthpiece of the Socialist Party of Canada, brought its own particular Marxist interpretation to the conflict. The War, it cynically declared, was a "dynastic" struggle wherein the working class would "release each other's entrails merely because they have been ordered to do so by some designing knave or knaves".⁷ The British Empire at least did little to refute this accusation as it continually recruited on the basis of "King and Country", "King" always coming first. The BC Federationist, while not directly alluding to that situation, did suggest that only "the people" had the right to send "the people" to War, but in denouncing the "intoxication" which supported the struggle, tacitly admitted that the people identified with the King.⁸

⁶Industrial Banner, 14 August, 1914.

⁷Western Clarion, 15 August, 1914.

⁸BC Federationist, 7 August, 1914.

The opposition of the labour press notwithstanding, the people did support the war effort. As J. Castell Hopkins noted in the Canadian Annual Review, the declaration of war was met with outpourings of enthusiasm throughout the Dominion. Patriotic singing of the "Marseillaise" and "Rule Britannia" were commonplace as Canadians expressed their support. Curiously enough, only in the Anglo-Saxon heartland of Toronto were there exhibitions of anything but unrestrained enthusiasm. There, Hopkins observed, the declaration "was taken very soberly and quietly".⁹ Generally, however, young men flocked to the colours seemingly fearful that the tardy would miss the excitement.¹⁰ This was certainly the view of the conservative Labor News which on 21 August, 1914, predicted that by Christmas the Russians would "dine in Berlin".¹¹ But among the labour papers, the News was the oddity in a very sceptical lot.

While some doubt over the justification for the conflict lingered, throughout the War, blanket condemnation of all participants gradually ceased. This can be attributed to a number of factors. First and foremost was the fact that the labour press, in denouncing the conflict, was really a voice in the wilderness, almost completely smothered by the large and influential jingoist dailies, countless patriotic organizations,

⁹ J. Castell Hopkins, The Canadian Annual Review, Ottawa: The Canadian Annual Review Publishing Company, 1914, p. 142-3. Hereafter cited Hopkins, CAR.

¹⁰ John Herd Thompson, The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978, p. 23. Hereafter cited Thompson, Harvests.

¹¹ Labor News, 21 August, 1914.

government propaganda, and the general public. The chances of remaining immune to the prevailing opinion, given its pervasiveness, were in all probability remote. Also, with such widespread support for the War, the labour papers probably felt a need to accommodate to some degree the views of their readership - as well as those of the government censor.¹² An even more important consideration, however, and one that is supported by the evidence, is that as the emotional shock of the beginning of the conflict wore off, the papers were able to look at the War in a more analytical light. And as they cast off the intellectual straight jacket of doctrinaire pacifism, to cry "A plague on both your houses" no longer seemed appropriate.

There were early indications that the moderate papers in particular were not fully convinced of Britain's guilt. Though this trend was not firmly established until mid-1915, it became clear in 1914 that many papers were having second thoughts as to Britain's culpability. Among the numerous editorials of 1914 that condemned both the Allies and Germany, there appeared the odd, out-of-character piece defending the British cause: The Voice, for instance, issued a number of broadsides, throughout 1914, at all belligerents. Yet, on 2 October, it completely excused the growth of British military power, on the grounds that it served as a "protective response" against a nation whose "ruling passion" was anything but peaceful. Germany's ceaseless striving for "military pre-eminence", argued

¹² The Canadian Forward was the only one of the papers to admit that it was being censored. It was eventually banned in 1917 and its editor, Isaac Bainbridge, was jailed.

the Voice, contributed enormously to the outbreak of war in August.¹³

This waffling also appeared in the Industrial Banner and the BC Federationist. As early as 4 September, 1914, the West Coast paper, while it remained mute as to the justice of the Allied cause, called for the elimination of the German "military caste" so that peace might finally reign in Europe. It even declared that any vacillation "in the face of such a plain proposition" could not be considered!¹⁴ A Banner editorial on the 23 October, 1914, was just as clear in its denunciation of Germany. It called the Kaiser the "supreme personification" of militarist ideals, ideals that had to be eliminated before the War could be concluded.¹⁵

Apart from the patriotic Labor News, none of the papers offered Britain any measure of praise during 1914. But this came early in 1915 as the Industrial Banner became the first of the papers to openly concede that the British Empire, for all its faults, still comprised "the freest federation" of nations in history and deserved support in its fight against militarist Germany.¹⁶ The Voice and the Federationist traversed the same editorial path and came to give the British Empire their reluctant support.

¹³Voice, 2 October, 1914.

¹⁴BC Federationist, 4 September, 1914.

¹⁵Industrial Banner, 23 October, 1914.

¹⁶Industrial Banner, 3 March, 1915.

Two papers that did not stick to the mainstream were the Labor News and the Western Clarion. The Clarion, from the beginning of hostilities to the end, changed its opinions very little. It argued that there was no moral justification for the conflict for either side. It contended that the search for overseas markets for surplus production led inevitably to the clash of empires.¹⁷ The German workers - "our comrades" - were absolved from blame. They were mere pawns in the diplomatic-financial game of intrigue which forged the alliances that produced "the carnival of blood". All the belligerents were judged equally guilty including Great Britain whose intervention on behalf of Belgium was termed the "excuse", not the "reason", for its participation.¹⁸ As late as June, 1918, the paper still called for the destruction of "all thrones", and sarcastically urged its readers to join the Amalgamated Society of Slaughterers.¹⁹

The Labor News was at the opposite end of the spectrum from the Western Clarion. Though published in a city with a long and turbulent labour history,²⁰ the News was anything but an exponent of radicalism. And just as its labour attitudes were conservative, so, too, were its views on international politics for the first two years of the War.

¹⁷ Western Clarion, 12 September, 1914.

¹⁸ Ibid., 10 October, 1914.

¹⁹ Ibid., June, 1918.

²⁰ A number of Hamilton's industrial conflicts are briefly noted in Craig Heron and Bryan Palmer, "Through the Prism of the Strike: Industrial Conflict in Southern Ontario, 1901-14", CHR, Vol 58, p. 439. For a detailed account of worker militancy and employer intransigence in Hamilton during WW I, see Myer Siemiatycki, "Munitions and Labour Militancy: The 1916 Hamilton Machinist's Strike", Labour/Le Travailleur, Vol. 3 (1978), p. 131-151.

It saw the conflict as a fight between good and evil, "civilization against the Prussian barbarians",²¹ "a war for humanity if ever there was one".²² Though the News would become radicalized and eventually fall in step with the Federationist, Voice, and Banner, throughout 1914-15 it trumpeted the Allied cause as vigorously as any of the jingoist dailies, and just as unquestioningly.

Meanwhile, the thought of the Voice, Federationist and Industrial Banner continued to undergo subtle changes. By mid-1915, after the slaughter of so many Canadians in battles like Ypres - many succumbing to poison gas²³ - it became increasingly difficult for the labour press to maintain its impartiality. They were after all continually inundated by completely false press reports²⁴ of German barbarity. All of the labour papers took it as fact that the "Huns" routinely - and gleefully - murdered children and pregnant women. While perhaps not realizing it, the papers were slowly, but inexorably, being drawn toward the mindless anti-German feelings of the times. It is perhaps to their credit that they resisted as long as they did, by attempting to indict capitalism as a cause of war, before yielding to the emotions.

²¹ Labor News, 18 September, 1914.

²² Ibid., 10 July, 1915.

²³ For a description of the German gas attack on the Canadians at St. Julien, see John Swettenham, McNaughton Vol. I, Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1968, p. 44.

²⁴ With the possible exception of the weekly Saturday Night, Canada's newspapers accepted the government propaganda as news. So, too, of course did the newspapers of the other belligerents. See for example, Philip Knightly, The First Casualty, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975.

By mid-1915, when the papers no longer had the heart to continue to attack Britain, it seems almost inevitable that capitalism should come under attack. For while the British "race" and certain institutions could be exonerated, capitalism could not. Also, through the simple application of Marxist theory, it could be easily linked, with imperialism and militarism.

The Voice typified the unconvincing approach that the labour press - including the extreme leftists - took to capitalism as a cause of the War. In a rather simplistic analysis on 16 July, 1915, the Winnipeg paper suggested that if private property did not exist, "there could obviously be no war". As rather awkward proof of that, the Voice directed its readers to examine the greed that was readily apparent with the coming of war.²⁵

Germany defended Kiau-Chau* sic because that outpost of "Kultur" promised to be worth millions someday. Russia entered the war to get a part of the Mediterranean; Italy, to regain the Trentino; Germany, to expand; and England to hang on to what she has got.

A further editorial a month later actually intimated that capitalism had deliberately and knowingly caused the War. Though the Voice was almost certainly speaking out of political expediency rather than conviction, it did declare that capitalism had fully matured by 1914 and was in danger of collapse. To prevent that, argued the editorial,

²⁵ Voice, 16 July, 1915.

*Kiouchou or Kiou Chou. The Germans forced the Chinese to lease them this area of the Shantung Peninsula in 1905. With Germany engaged in War in Europe in 1914, the Japanese moved in and supplanted them, DC Watt, A History of the World in the Twentieth Century, 1899-1918, London: Pan Books Limited, 1967, p. 78, 280.

it needed investment opportunities, and very cleverly and insidiously found them in the manufacture of arms for the unquenchable appetite of the War.²⁶ This argument was, of course, central to the Western Clarion's duration-long, anti-War stance. It saw "the incident at Sarajevo as a pretext for war... It was and is a business war", declared the paper in December, 1918.²⁷

Surprisingly, the Voice and its moderate contemporaries were not very convincing in trying to equate capitalism and the world conflict. The elaborate conspiratorial scenarios that they painted suggests that their motive was only to try and indict capitalism, and not to discern the causes of the War. It was all very artificial and did not possess that tone of conviction that was so apparent when the labour press spoke from the heart. Also, the papers did not have time to develop the theme fully. By the time they had gotten around to attacking capitalism, two other ideas began to dominate their thinking. On the one hand they began to believe that the War was paradoxically leading to a better, almost utopian new order. On the other hand, their distaste for Germany had by 1916 intensified into hatred, and so "prussianism" as a cause of the conflict blinded them to all other causes, including capitalism.

²⁶Voice, 27 August, 1915.

²⁷Western Clarion, December, 1918.

Certainly, by 1917, the labour press was in near unanimous agreement on German war guilt. Surprisingly, however, the papers did manage, to some degree, to distinguish between the "Military Caste" and the German people. Periodically, they did, of course, succumb to passion and denounce all Germans but generally they directed their vitriol at the Emperor. He and militarist followers increasingly became the focal point of the press's attacks. Even the Voice, almost certainly the most restrained of the papers, generally withheld nothing in denouncing the Emperor. He was consistently referred to as "fanatical and insane", as a "murderer" who showed no remorse over the "sinking of the Lusitania, the murder of Nurse Cavell, the aerial raids upon defenseless English towns".²⁸ Other papers consistently echoed the same sentiments, and became convinced that the Kaiser was not only the instigator of war, but had deliberately started the struggle to prevent the growth of democracy.

"Democracy" became a virtual obsession of the labour press during 1917-18. And generally when such developments occurred, the papers were invariably able to link them with other predominant issues of the day. Perhaps such a tendency was merely accidental. Perhaps, too, it was reflexive, a consequence of being overly acquainted with the Marxist idea of the "scientific" development of society. For whatever the reason, the papers were certainly able to neatly - if not convincingly - establish a link between nefarious militarism and the growth of democracy.²⁹

²⁸ Voice, 7 September, 1917.

²⁹ This theme is treated in greater detail in a subsequent chapter.

Thus, the BC Federationist declared as early as December, 1915, that Germany started the War in order to substitute "natural passions" for "social aspirations".³⁰ Two years later, it was still certain that Germany could only maintain its "prussian character" by stopping democracy through war.³¹ This idea also emerged in the Labor News nearing the end of the struggle. It pointed out that³²

Habsburgs and Holenzollerns [sic] have been all for the growth of an arrogant and powerful aristocracy. In the land responsible for war and militarism, agriculture, industries, science, etc. has [sic] been made accessories to the cause of autocracy for centuries...It is this hatred of democracy and the fear of the "Day of Democracy" that caused Prussianism to bring on the war.

Though the labour press did become fervidly pro-War, this, at times, appeared to be the consequence of having to choose between the lesser of two evils. And while there was little doubt in their mind that Germany was the greater threat, the papers did not confuse patriotism with support for Canada's political and economic establishment. They did profess their loyalty to the cause, but political oppositions cannot do otherwise when faced with such motherhood issues. Because the War enjoyed such widespread support, the labour press was thrust into the position of having to support the struggle without supporting the organization most responsible for its prosecution, namely, the government. And just as their anti-German stance was derived from the threat of militarism, so, too, were many of their doubts about Canada's government.

³⁰ BC Federationist, 10 December, 1915.

³¹ ibid., 17 April, 1917.

³² Labor News, 20 September, 1918.

While the labour papers did reach the conclusion that a brave new world would emerge from the War, they did not extend credit to the establishment for fostering its development. Indeed, they suggested that certain segments of Canadian society, including the Government, seemed intent on foisting militarism upon the Canadian people.

This idea that militarism was afoot in Canada was perhaps the shallowest of all the attempts by the labour press to disparage the government. From the first murmurs of concern in 1915 to the end of the sporadic campaign in 1918, the arguments remained unconvincing and so obviously politically inspired.

In its broadest terms, there was, of course "evidence" of creeping militarism in Canada. But one had for the most part to be more than a little cynical to see such signs as obvious portents of militarism. The exigencies of the War obviously created a need for the government to exercise an abnormal degree of social, political and economic control, including censorship and detention without trial. These measures could be construed as signs of militarism. So, too, could the activities of patriotic zealots, Boy Scout organizers, and a host of other people. The fact that the labour press at one time or another saw all such organizations as threats to democracy suggest that they were more interested in scoring political points than in stopping militarism.

The Voice issued the first warnings against Canadian militarism in June, 1915. At the time of course the paper had not come around to all-out support for the War, and professed some alarm at the number of young heretofore peaceful Canadians undergoing military training. It ominously suggested that widespread and intensive military training

could produce very undesirable psychological and, subsequently, social effects. The Voice argued that militarism was a state of mind, and thousands of young people were being indoctrinated with its precepts. In time, warned the paper, they would desire to test their new-found skills on "the real thing".³³ The Voice presumably feared that these soldiers might be used in Canada. These types of charges continued in the Winnipeg paper for the next ten months, and were climaxed by the most ludicrous of the many conspiracy theories advanced by any of the labour papers. Near the end of April, 1916, an editorial cited unnamed psychologists who argued that sailors and soldiers were the easiest people to "hypnotize". For that reason, the Voice thought that the capitalists would attempt to prolong the struggle until the army of destruction produced a compliant army of industrial workers who would be "more amenable to suggestion".³⁴ As the paper became more stridently anti-German, its concern for rising militarism at home moderated, though did not disappear completely. The same could be said of all the others, apart from the Western Clarion which, predictably, felt that Canada was already militaristic, differing from Germany only in degree.

Any denial of the usual civil rights, whether in Canada or Great Britain, was usually greeted with either protests or ponderous concern. As the British Government began adopting legislation that involved considerable social control, the British labour press reacted quite

³³Voice, 25 June, 1915.

³⁴Ibid., 28 April, 1915.

adversely. Their Canadian counterparts often mimicked them, and periodically carried reprints of articles that had appeared in British papers. The Labor Leader of London was the most common source. Thus, the Voice agreed fully with the Leader's assertion that the Defense of the Realm Act, the Munitions Act, and the National Register Act all presented proof of a rising tide of militarism in the Empire's heartland.³⁵ It was becoming increasingly obvious, argued an August, 1915, editorial, that an efficient military machine was incompatible with democracy.³⁶ Curiously enough, Canada's own War Measures Act was rarely referred to in this whole debate even though it was potentially just as repressive as was its British counterpart. Also, of course, the censorship, which all of the papers were subject to, might very well have made denunciation of the War Measures Act highly unlikely.

³⁵ See Arthur Marwick, Britain in the Century of Total War, Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1968. The Defense of the Realm Act, like Canada's War Measures Act, provided for sweeping powers by the authorities. Not only were there provisions made for the enforcement of censorship, but the legislation also authorized the government to control such "rights" as drinking habits. The National Register Act (1915), not unlike the Canadian measure a year later, registered and classified manpower. What raised the ire of British labour most of all, however, was the Munitions Act (1915). It made provisions for the settlement of disputes in the munitions industry, limited profits, and set up a tribunal to deal with offences under the Act. The clause which caused most concern affected workers' mobility, thus making it difficult for labouring people to take advantage of the tight labour situation that the War quickly produced. The article concerning the so-called "leaving certificate" stated that a person shall not give employment to a workman who has within the previous six months...been employed...with munitions work...unless he holds a certificate from the employer by whom he was last employed that he left with the consent of that employer.

British labour feared that such restrictions on workers' mobility would depress wages while doing nothing about rising prices. See Marwick, Britain, p. 74, 100.

³⁶ Voice, 20 August, 1915.

Because the labour press saw a clear and pressing need for an efficient military machine in Britain, they were not unduly critical of the war measures adopted by the British Government. They were not, of course, totally convinced that such extreme measures were necessary, but they were at least excusable given the exigencies of the War. Significantly less "militaristic" practices in Canada were regarded somewhat less indulgently. The attitude of the Industrial Banner toward government by Order-in-Council serves to demonstrate the point. Even though the labour press must surely have recognized the hazards of trying to conduct total war through the time-consuming and very public method of parliamentary debate, the Banner condemned the government for doing just that. It bemoaned the fact that millions of dollars were being spent without the consent of either the Commons or the Senate, and suggested that government in Canada had become "nearly as autocratic as it is possible for such an institution to be in a self-governing democracy". The Toronto paper dismissed as "a thinly disguised excuse" the notion that the exigencies of the War required quick and decisive action! As far as the Banner was concerned, it was merely indicative of a growing tendency to apply Prussian tactics at home.³⁷

Much of the concern, both real and pretended, no doubt grew out of a sense of impotence that the labour press certainly felt during the course of the struggle. The government gave neither labour unions nor the labour press any reason to believe that they could have any impact on even those policies which directly affected them. The Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, for instance, was extended to the munitions

³⁷ Industrial Banner, 12 May, 1916.

industry in March, 1916, right at the time when labour was tight. The Act provided for a mandatory "cooling-off" period before any work stoppage could occur.³⁸ The labour press saw this as a further indication of militarism. In Fools and Wise Men, David Bercuson contends that "such actions were all too common" and served to antagonize rather than placate labour.³⁹ While the labour press expressed little concern over the IDI Act specifically, its means of introduction only confirmed the papers' worst fears; that the government was indeed becoming too autocratic. The BC Federationist considered the tendency to circumvent Parliament unfortunate in light of the thousands who were dying to have "liberty and justice" enthroned.⁴⁰

The government was no less dictatorial on the street than it was in Parliament according to the labour press. Coercive recruiting measures were condemned by the Industrial Banner in 1916 as a clear manifestation of "the militaristic spirit" rather than military necessity. The paper protested that recruiting officers had become so numerous and obnoxious in Toronto that one could "not perambulate the street without being held up and annoyed" by one of them.⁴¹ Escaping the recruiting officers did not mean that one escaped the pressure to enlist. Canada's young women engaged in a practice of pinning flowers on young men of military age who were not in uniform. The intent of these flower children was to shame the

³⁸ David Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union, Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1978, p. 60.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 61.

⁴⁰ BC Federationist, 20 October, 1916.

⁴¹ Industrial Banner, 12 May, 1916.

"shirkers" into enlisting. Invariably, the labour press linked the practice with militarism, and the young women, with the upper class.

Also held up for public scrutiny by the labour press were the soldiers who returned from the War for some reason or another before its conclusion. Some of them came home injured. Many of them seemingly came home angry as practically all of the labour papers reported more than one incident where labour meetings were broken up by rowdy soldiers and ex-soldiers. The Banner found it lamentable that people who had fought for democracy in Europe should attack it in practice in Canada. As far as the Banner was concerned, free trade unions were fundamental to any democracy.⁴² The Federationist of British Columbia also complained bitterly about the disruptive tactics [on labour meetings] employed by these people. The paper suggested that their behaviour was worthy of Kaiser's Germany and "the crude brutalities of medieval days".⁴³ The Federationist continued to voice strong concern about the direction that Canadian society was heading throughout the remaining years of the War. Numerous visits from the censor in the last two years of the struggle⁴⁴ may have made the Federationist a little less specific in its criticism, but it made it no less significant. It slyly indicted by suggesting that it was not allowed to indict, by declaring that it was becoming "seditious" to renounce war, and protest against "human slavery".⁴⁵

⁴² Industrial Banner, 2 June, 1915.

⁴³ BC Federationist, 2 March, 1917.

⁴⁴ J. Castell Hopkins, CAR, 1918, p. 307-314.

⁴⁵ BC Federationist, 10 May, 1918.

To its credit, the labour press, particularly the Industrial Banner, saw militarism not so much in terms of periodic governmental disregard for democracy, but as a state of mind. This certainly appeared to be its motivating force in its persistent campaign to keep the militarist out of the nation's schools.

By early 1916; and with the War far from resolved, some members of Toronto's Board of Education became convinced that military preparedness seemed more important than ever before. Furthermore, they reasoned that the best place to begin such preparations was with the young. Given the attitude which the Industrial Banner had often and tirelessly expressed regarding militarism, it was little wonder that the paper stood firmly opposed to this proposal. Its opposition was certainly emotional and ideological though it initially approached the subject in a rather dispassionate manner. It suggested that such a program would be foolhardy in view of the fact that there were far better ways for the government to spend money. The paper also assumed that military training among the nation's children could have no effect upon the outcome of the War; and since this "war to end all wars" would see the demise of militarism, it could have no use in the distant future.⁴⁶ The matter kept cropping up throughout March and early April, though by mid-April, the Banner assumed that everybody well understood the futility of teaching a trade "that would henceforth have its tools confined to museums".⁴⁷ There the matter rested, and judging from lack of comment in any of the papers

⁴⁶ Industrial Banner, 17 March, 1916.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 21 April, 1916.

throughout the summer of 1916, the Banner might have been justified in thinking the proposal shelved. That, however, was not so. In October, Toronto's education officials agreed to petition the Federal Government to institute basic military training for all Canadian school children beyond kindergarten! There is no evidence indicating whether or not the government gave it serious consideration. But the Banner certainly did. This only proved to this very anti-militarist paper that Canada was indeed headed in a militarist direction; that there were people in influential places who "could not inoculate the virus any too soon to get the poison working right". The paper found it incomprehensible that the Board of Education wanted to build on the "rampant militarism which is responsible for the War", especially in view of the fact that armies and navies were destined to disappear "to the vanishing point".⁴⁸ Of course, there was an inescapable ambiguity in the professed concern over militarism concomitant with the strongly held belief that this was indeed "the war to end all wars". And while the Banner was certainly sincere in its objections to military training, its worst fears were probably overstated.

Though the War ended in late 1918, the labour press was not convinced that militarism had been completely extinguished. Though it certainly was of secondary importance, especially to such paramount ideas as the dawning utopia, the papers frequently expressed their opposition to it. Even the

⁴⁸Industrial Banner, 3 November, 1916.

most optimistic of the labour press, the radical successor to the Voice, the Western Labor News, rejoiced at the coming democracy but ruefully observed that it could not be taken for granted; for Prussianism had been defeated by Prussianism, and as such remained on all too pervasive philosophy. The News realized that force could not extinguish it; it could only acknowledge "the spirit of the times" and agree to its own demise.⁴⁹ The BC Federationist did not expect that to happen overnight. Only four days after the end of hostilities, the West Coast paper thought there was too much talk about "being prepared", "policing actions" and the like, ideas that could, according to the Federationist, result in compulsory military service.⁵⁰ The Labor News went even further. It suggested that Canadian youth in such organizations as the Boy Scouts and the Navy Leagues were already being imbued with a sense of militarism though such groups were considered ignorant of "what they are creating".⁵¹ Perhaps, that was why the labour press considered militarism so dangerous: its development could appear so innocuous.

In a way, the Treaty of Versailles seemed to justify the papers' fear of militarism. Many of them certainly saw it in that light. Among them was the Western Labor News which declared that the Treaty was "no triumph of great principles and high ideals" based upon the "undeniable rights of humanity". The News called it a peace that "prepares fresh conflict, creates new grievances... an emulation of the brutal demands made at

⁴⁹ Western Labor News, 8 November, 1918.

⁵⁰ BC Federationist, 15 November, 1918.

⁵¹ Labor News, 4 April, 1919.

Brest Litovsk".⁵² The views of the Industrial Banner were strikingly similar to those of the Winnipeg paper. It maintained that militarism had triumphed in Europe, and with flagrant disregard for those who had died to destroy it, had manifested itself in, of all things, the peace treaty. The Banner prophesied all too accurately that⁵³

the conditions out of which came the old war are there waiting to make the new war... for the treaty will reduce Europe to a barbaric welter of misery and tribal conflict, only to be followed by a universal war more barbaric than the last.

So, while German militarism had not triumphed, it was brutally obvious to the labour press that the need for revenge and retribution had not passed with the hostilities. And as usual, idealistic papers like the Industrial Banner believed that such conditions did not augur well for the future.

To summarize, the search for the causes and problems of the Great War was not painstaking for the labor press. Indeed, socialism's prophets and propagandists had, since Marx, foretold how capitalism would lead to militarism and war. The War was a golden opportunity for the labour press to vilify capitalism, to demonstrate how right the prophets had been. But it was not merely that, and it was only infrequently that the labour papers looked at it in that light. Of course, they believed that socialism would result in the demise of militarism. However, throughout the War, the papers were more convinced of the need to defeat militarism,

⁵² Western Labor News, 18 July, 1919.

⁵³ Industrial Banner, 6 June, 1919.

both at home and abroad, than to enthrone socialism. For the notion that militarism had caused the war was not merely an automatic, ready-made response to armed conflict; the papers actually believed what they were saying. There was, as historians have since verified, more than a measure of truth to their arguments.

The "campaign" against militarism in Canada was not so convincing.

- The papers were no doubt concerned about censorship, the denial of certain civil rights, the more systematic application of legislation such as the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act. They probably felt that the country's ruling conservative element was using the War to suppress labour's rights; but they implied much more. They insinuated that there was a danger of a Prussian-style militarism imposing itself upon an unsuspecting Canadian public. And it seems only fair to say that the papers did not believe that themselves. In short, the fear of militarism in Canada was more pretended than real, designed to score political points.

CHAPTER 11
A Question of Sacrifice

As Canadians flooded the recruitment centres in the Fall of 1914, the Voice observed that while so many people appeared willing to sacrifice their lives, few expressed the same willingness to part with their money.¹

The Federationist, in suggesting that the War had been started by "gun merchants and financiers who hold national governments in the hollow of their hands", declared itself in favour of confiscating all profits arising from the conflict. For "as long as people profit from war", argued the paper, "nations will continue to skewer themselves on their greed".² Thus, early in the War, the labour press voiced its doubts and concerns over the sacrifices that Canadians were making.

On one side, at least, the sacrifices were indeed substantial. When the guns finally fell silent in November, 1918, more than sixty thousand Canadians had fallen "for King and Country". Thousands of others came home crippled in mind and body. But in 1918, the news was not all bad. The Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company showed a record profit of \$3.5 million, up from \$236 thousand in 1914. The Steel Company of Canada "had a most prosperous year" with profits totalling \$5.3 million, up 900% over 1914.³ Had there really been equality of sacrifice during the Great War? To this question, the labour press gave a resounding "No".

¹Voice, 6 November, 1914.

²BC Federationist, 25 September, 1914.

³J. Castell Hopkins, CAR, 1919, p. 415.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the means by which the labour papers sought to demonstrate the inequality of the sacrifice. It will offer a brief review of business activity during the hostilities, highlighting some of the more notable examples of the profitability of war. It will point out the efforts of the labour press to contrast the plight of the unemployed - later, the underpaid - worker with a business community enjoying a surfeit of profits. Lastly, the chapter will show how the labour press tried to incriminate the government for tolerating the inequities especially in respect to food prices.

For most English Canadians, at least, there was little doubt as to what the extent of the sacrifice should be. The propagandists had settled that question early with widespread reports of German atrocities. "Hun" and "Boche" were identified early with cruelty, and that impression only strengthened as the War wore on. If there ever was a war between good and evil, this was it. People were expected to protect everything that was dear to them from that perverse Prussian "kultur". Thus with such clearly defined antagonists, the proposition facing Canadians in 1914-18 was quite clear: either accept Teutonic domination with all its attendant evils, or prepare to sacrifice all to preserve the accumulated blessings of years of development of democratic institutions. The intense emotions of the times could not accept qualified commitments from any group, be it the Liberal Party of 1917, or the profit-oriented business community. Profit meant self indulgence.

The one area of agreement between the labour press and the businessmen was the desirability of a German defeat. Paradoxically, however, it was in part because of that general agreement that the labour press found

profits so unacceptable, especially those seemingly in excess of the norm. Also, partly because of these profits, the labour press could wholeheartedly and fervently condemn both Canadian society and the German militarists. Canada, with its capitalist system of exploitation, could hardly claim to be a model for humanity from the point of view of the labour press. In many instances, these propagators of socialism and "educators" of the working class considered capitalists and conservative governments only slightly more conscionable than the Hun. The labour press used the War to highlight that very point.

While the papers were obviously opportunistic, there can be no suggestion that they merely used the War to further their own ideas. They readily condemned capitalism and government failure to check profiteering, but they certainly felt justified in doing that. For they saw profits, sometimes, obviously, large profits, being made by a few while literally hundreds of thousands of Canadians demonstrated a willingness to sacrifice not merely their money, but their lives, for a cause which seemed universally worthwhile. In this fight to crush Germany and "enthroned democracy", self indulgence was simply unacceptable since it ran counter to the fulfillment of these twin goals.

There can be little doubt that business did make substantial profits during the course of hostilities. But irrespective of whether they did or did not, the simple fact remains that people believed that profiteering

was rampant.⁴ Protestations to the contrary in both government and business publications, notably the Labour Gazette and Industrial Canada, had no effect whatsoever. Indeed, mistrust of both institutions apparently hardened as the War wore on. Certainly, the high prices could not be explained away in terms of "shortages", "market forces", and all the rest of the jargon that was used to dampen the concern. As the contemporary economist of wartime Canada, W.A. MacKintosh suggested a few months after the end of hostilities, high prices had only one meaning for most people - high profits.⁵ MacKintosh argued that something should have been done to allay people's suspicions, many of them unfounded. Instead, the politicians gave "sermons on the dangers of tampering with economic law when what was desired and needed was practical advice". When inquiries were undertaken, according to MacKintosh, "they tended to corroborate rather than disprove" what the general populace suspected. In what was almost certainly a reference to the case of Sir Joseph Flavelle, MacKintosh stated that "the one notable case which came up for public review ended in the publication of a few facts which left the head

⁴Many of the major dailies believed that profiteering was widespread. Two liberal - and Liberal - dailies, the Toronto Star and the Ottawa Citizen were just as convinced as the labour papers of the culpability of the business community in so far as profiteering was concerned. The Globe found the cronies of Sam Hughes particularly repugnant. Saturday Night, an independent weekly, made bitter and repeated attacks upon Sir Joseph Flavelle, head of the Imperial Munitions Board. These attacks continued throughout November and December, 1917, while the paper supported Union Government. Even the Financial Post urged the Government to take full responsibility for directing war-related industries. For a review of the Post, see Gayle Dzis, "The Financial Post on the Home Front", (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Waterloo, 1973.)

⁵W.A. MacKintosh, "Economics, Prices and the War", Queen's Quarterly, April, 1919, p. 459.

of the firm concerned convinced of his righteousness, the public convinced of his guilt, and the government in a quandary".⁶

So much adverse publicity swirled around the business community during the War that there was little wonder people were ready to believe the worst. During 1915, it was revealed that contractors had defrauded the Manitoba Government of more than a million dollars in the Government Building Scandal.⁷ Mackenzie's and Mann's repeated trips to the public till to bail out the privately owned Canadian Northern Railroad was not overlooked either.⁸ In military purchases, there was a litany of scandalous activities including spavined horses, substandard boots, and of course the infamous Ross rifle. Other charges concerned profiteering in drugs, binoculars, trucks, field dressings, bicycles, even jam.⁹ In 1915, President Shaughnessy of the CPR opposed Sam Hughes' call for 500,000 men on the grounds that the nation's industrial affairs would suffer serious disruptions.¹⁰ For his patriotism, Shaughnessy was awarded a baronetcy. Hidden from public view, there were machinations completely at odds with the public pronouncements on an all out,

⁶ Ibid., p. 452-459.

⁷ Saturday Night, 28 August, 1915.

⁸ Ralph Allen, Orderly by Fire: Canada, 1910-45, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1961, p. 56-61.

⁹ Ibid., p. 92.

¹⁰ Delbert Terence Haylock, "The Historical Tradition behind the Establishment of the Employment Service of Canada, 1896-1919", Dalhousie: Unpublished MA Thesis, 1970, p. 73.

patriotic effort. Peter Edward Ryder, in his study of the Imperial Munitions Board, found many businessmen motivated by profit and not by patriotism. Frederic Nicholls of the Canadian General Electric Company was typical of the genre. In November, 1914, Nicholls agreed to install plant equipment to produce shells, but only if the government could guarantee a five-year market.¹¹

The insatiable appetite of the conflict created a market with limitless demand, and corresponding opportunities for profit. The Financial Times understatedly called Stelco's large profits for 1918 "a very satisfactory performance".¹² During the same period, the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company increased its net earnings by 1500%.¹³ Similar increases were recorded by nearly every sector of Canadian industry. The railways did not do well, and the pulp and paper companies fared relatively poorly. During the four years of hostilities, the latter companies' value of production rose by slightly more than 100%.¹⁴ The adverse publicity created by the profits surprisingly caused little hesitancy among the business community in publicizing their performance. Rather, Industrial Canada, a publication of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, boasted of the record: from 1914 to 1917, iron and steel

¹¹ Peter Edward Ryder, "The Imperial Munitions Board and its Relationship to Government, Business and Labour, 1914-20", University of Toronto, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, 1974, p. 15.

¹² Financial Times, 19 April, 1919.

¹³ Hopkins, CAR, 1919, p. 415.

¹⁴ Ibid.

exports increased by 186%, and its value from \$15.5 million to \$305 million. Only agricultural implements showed a decline, by 50%.¹⁵

Were these profits exorbitant? Industrial Canada tacitly suggested they were exceptional. Though much of the adverse comment from a variety of sources was termed "uninformed criticism", G.M. Murray, editor of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association monthly did concede in a July 17 article, that business was doing very well. But he condemned "the narrow minded people who see only the big profits of the moment" instead of looking at business activity over a number of years. Murray also admitted that not all of the money was being reinvested to increase Canada's productive capacity; "some of the special profits that have accrued from war account" were being disbursed as "extra dividends", and some was being "reserved" for reconstruction.¹⁶ The thousands who stood in the unemployment lines in 1919 might well have wondered what had happened to these reserves.

Simply stated, the labour press trusted neither the government nor the business community. They had good reason to avoid putting much faith in the businessmen, for apart from the fact that many of them were no doubt profiteers, there was also the question of attitude. Employers generally looked upon labour as merely another commodity whose price fluctuated with the demands of the market. E.G. Henderson, President of the CMA, implicitly alluded to that line of thought when he appeared

¹⁵ Industrial Canada, September, 1917, p. 789.

¹⁶ Ibid., July, 1917, p. 490.

before Ontario's Royal Commission on Unemployment in 1915. In defending business, he declared that¹⁷

the fact that rates of wages have been well maintained when the supply of labour so far exceeded demand bears eloquent testimony to an attitude of fairness and helpfulness on the part of the employers.

That kind of not so benign paternalism was patently obsolete in a world where equality was at least implied in the propaganda that exhorted both workers and businessmen to give a united effort. To expect a national emergency, even total war, to eradicate years of ingrained suspicion, and to hope that erstwhile adversaries could become trusting partners, was perhaps asking too much.

At the very beginning of the War, before profiteering became an issue, the cynicism was already apparent. In early August, 1914, the BC Federationist watched the unemployed troop to the recruitment centres and opined that men would "sooner take a chance of being shot than try to eke out a living in Vancouver this winter".¹⁸ In an era when there was no precedent foretelling a correlation between war and jobs, the labour press had not even a promise of employment to look forward to. Indeed, the Industrial Banner had only Providence to thank for the jobs that were created in the winter of 1915 - digging out from exceptionally heavy snow storms.¹⁹ In short, the labour press saw absolutely no good whatsoever emerging from the War, and feared that it would become merely an opportunity for business to make more money.

¹⁷Quoted in Voice, 13 August, 1915.

¹⁸BC Federationist, 7 August, 1914.

¹⁹Industrial Banner, 5 February, 1915.

The labour press gave the war effort qualified support from the beginning. Its backing would certainly have been more than half heartedly given had not the issue of profits and profiteering intervened. The often moralistic papers could not really condone the sacrifice of bodies while money seemingly enjoyed protection. There was, however, one paper which saw things quite differently. That was the Labor News of Hamilton. The News had neither qualms nor doubts about the War, and that attitude was well reflected in its early comments on the needed sacrifice.

During the first few months of hostilities, the News concerned itself only with old fashioned patriotism, exhortations to worker and soldier, condemnation for the shirker and the Hun. While papers like the BC Federationist were arguing that war and profit were nefariously related, the Labor News was maintaining that this was not the time to discuss such matters. The News even downplayed the concerns of the major dailies as it related to unworkable rifles, crippled horses, bad food at the front, and the like. It felt that such negativism would only prolong the conflict.²⁰

Whether inadvertently, or by design, the Labor News looked upon the bright side of things. In the steel city, war quickly made itself felt. As early as March, 1915, the News noted the positive effect that the hostilities were having upon the unemployment lines. It even declared that the future looked brighter as it predicted further war production,

²⁰ Labor News, 6 April, 1915.

and erroneously reported that the British War Office was insisting upon the implementation of a fair wage clause in all contracts awarded to Canadian manufacturers.²¹

Throughout 1915, and the following year, the News remained an unabashed patriot, and defender of the status quo. Instead of condemning the wealthy, it merely asked for donations of guns so that the workers might end the career of "old bughouse Wilhelm".²² In so far as it was concerned, the issue of the War was clear cut. It saw Germany as the personification of evil, and so had to be disposed of. As for the incessant fault-finding of the other labour papers, the News usually disregarded it, though periodically ridiculed what it saw as mere sophistry. Papers like the Industrial Banner for instance often bemoaned the fact that the "unpropertied classes" were doing a disproportionate share of the fighting, a fact that the News thought wholly self evident and natural given the preponderance of their numbers.²³

In its inclination to accept the decisions of government and business in directing the war effort, the Labor News had few imitators among the contemporaries. In the main, the papers showed a vociferous reluctance to accept government's guidance of the war economy. They also rejected the idea that business would produce in good faith the necessary material for waging war. Contrary to the interpretations of the Labor News, the labour press in general realized that the "unpropertied class"

²¹ Ibid., 21 March, 1915.

²² Ibid., 23 July, 1915.

²³ Labor News, 17 December, 1915.

had to carry the burden of the fight if the War was to be won. The papers' argument was moral, and based partly upon that assumption; that the wage earners would indeed have to fight. That being the case, however, the labour press became genuinely outraged when they realized that while countless thousands offered up their lives, there were too many others motivated as usual by profit. For the sake of impact, of course, the labour papers highlighted the "abnormal" profits, but the overall thrust of their argument was against profits per se.

As industry responded to the growing demands of the war machine, the co-existence of worker sacrifice and business profits became increasingly intolerable. Industry continued to insist on the former while cultivating the latter. At least, the papers thought so. In September, 1915, the Industrial Banner lashed out at the "mouth patriots" who, with the one hand contributed to patriotic funds while with the other slashed the workers' wages to pay for their contributions. The paper declared that if anyone deserved public acclaim, it was certainly not the rich who merely donated ill-begotten gains; it was instead the workers and soldiers whose contribution to the preservation of freedom was terribly obvious. The Banner made a pointed reference to the mechanics* who continued to accept sub par wages even when the demand for their services was threatening the supply.²⁴ The Federationist also used the mechanics as an illustration of the true colours of the business community. It pointed

* As used here, mechanics refer to a host of jobs associated with maintaining and tooling factory machinery.

²⁴ Industrial Banner, 17 September, 1915.

to the opposition of the CMA to the recruitment of Canadian mechanics for British industry in the spring and summer of 1915, and suggested that if the Manufacturers' Association was as "enthusiastic in their desire to facilitate the plans of the British Empire as they profess, the best thing they could do is facilitate the passage of mechanics to Britain".²⁵ The Federationist, of course, conveniently overlooked the fact that Canadian manufacturers were making a valid point. They contended that such a recruitment effort would not only harm them by depleting the skilled labour supply but would also hamper the nation's productive capacity.²⁶

But even when business had a valid point to make, they either made it poorly, or the labour press chose to ignore it. Such ineptitude and seeming greed as prompted the CMA to oppose sending Canadian workers to Britain accomplished nothing more than arouse suspicions that the war merchants worked with a "business as usual" attitude. The Voice, like its counterparts, for instance, felt that business had an obligation to subordinate "pence" to the common good, to place the general welfare of the state above individual well being.²⁷ The Marxist Western Clarion, typifying the opinion of the extreme left wing, saw nothing unusual in the behaviour of these "gnomes and ghouls of capitalism". Unlike the moderate papers, it was not surprised that the capitalist would "lick

²⁵BC Federationist, 2 July, 1915.

²⁶Industrial Canada, July, 1916, p. 396.

²⁷Voice, 17 December, 1915.

their juicy chops in pleasant anticipation of more profits while the awful work of butchery and rapine proceeds".²⁸

The Clarion certainly overstated the case. There was, however, an incredible measure of insensitivity shown by the corporations during the course of hostilities. For along with the casualty toll, the daily papers published the annual financial statements of companies which appeared to be reaping a fine harvest from the blood letting. So perhaps it was not surprising that as the death count mounted, the labour press continued to berate business even more vigorously. The last two years of war were in that regard a repeat of the first two, characterized only by deeper distrust, increasing bitterness and cynicism.

As a yardstick of the sacrifice, the labour press could always juxtapose casualties and unemployment statistics with profits. By 1916, labour shortages replaced unemployment in most industries, but the economic problems of the country's workforce continued. It was supplanted, however, by another problem, that of inflation which from mid 1915 to July of 1916, climbed at a rate of 15%. Wages did not keep pace.²⁹ Indeed the only people who appeared to be beating inflation were the businessmen, a fact which caused the Western Clarion to greet the "Happy New Year" of 1916

²⁸ Western Clarion, August, 1915.

²⁹ Labour Gazette, July, 1921, p. 968.

with this observation:³⁰

Hypocritical junk! Nothing pertaining to happiness suggest itself to workers armed with a knowledge of the past. Capitalist manufacturers with fat contracts ... can look happily forward. The earth and its fullness is theirs.

The rhetoric was more subdued in the other papers generally, but the message was essentially the same as the Clarion's. On 6 April, 1916, the Voice matter-of-factly stated, "Capital is making money out of the War". While it referred to no company in particular, as was usual, the paper described profits as "inordinate" while "patriotic donations" at 5% ensured a guaranteed income from the War long after the slaughter ceased.³¹ The 5% referred to the interest paid on Victory Bonds, a rather small amount considering the inflation rate. The Voice was correct, however, in suggesting that the wealthy, in buying the bonds, were assuring themselves of a post-war income; by far the biggest purchasers were the banks and the corporations.³² These, too, were the same people who, the Banner charged, "prate most about patriotism and loyalty to the flag", yet "put up the loudest holler" at the slightest sign of taxation.³³

³⁰ Western Clarion, January, 1916.

³¹ Voice, 6 April, 1916.

³² See R. Craig McIvor, Canadian Monetary, Banking and Fiscal Development, Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1958, p. 106. Of the \$250m yielded by the second and third war loans, the banks subscribed \$110m. Of "very considerable importance in contributing to the success" of government fund raising was the existence of "abnormally large profits", which made it possible for business to buy bonds.

³³ Industrial Banner, 3 March, 1916.

In suggesting that the business community was a vociferous critic of taxation, the Banner was, of course, wrong. Indeed as a group, the businessmen accepted the Income Tax and the Business Profits Tax of 1916 with relative equanimity. In reference to the latter tax, they acknowledged that "25% on profits in excess of 7% can scarcely be held to be burdensome". The CMA did feel that the "fair" though admittedly "politically...unwise" method would have "exact[ed] from the farmer, and even the wage earner his proportionate contribution".³⁴

No matter how large the taxes might have been, the labour press would almost certainly have considered them totally inadequate. To the press, these were not merely taxes on profits, but taxes on profits that were criminally acquired. Thus, when the BC Federationist, in March, 1916, saw business taking place in an "unparalleled reign of graft",³⁵ it was not merely voicing its own convictions, but beliefs common to the whole labour press. The "war contractors" as they were sometimes called were simply not trusted, and any money which they made was generally assumed to have come from corruption. The BC Federationist suggested that no matter what the extent of the national need, the capitalists would not stray from the "time-honored ethics" of trying to maximize profits.³⁶

³⁴ Industrial Canada, July, 1916, p. 379.

³⁵ BC Federationist, 31 March, 1916.

³⁶ Ibid., 31 March, 1916.

Because business, according to the labour press, showed no inclination to deviate from the profit motive, it reasoned that government had a responsibility to control the companies. At the same time, the papers felt that government could do something about the sorry state of the wage earners. It was generally assumed that wages did not keep pace with the cost of living during 1914-16. To remedy this situation, labour organizations, including the labour press, pressed the authorities to make fair wage clauses mandatory in all contracts awarded by the Canadian Government and the Imperial Munitions Board. Sir Robert Borden agreed with the request, and had fair wage clauses included in work done for his government. However, the IMB proved to be considerably more intransigent even though a long list of powerful figures on both sides of the Atlantic approved of the idea. These included the Federal Minister of Labor, Thomas Crothers, Director of Labour for the IMB, Mark Irish, and the British Minister of Munitions, Winston Churchill. The one immovable stumbling block was the IMB's head Sir Joseph Flavelle, described by David Bercuson as a believer in "the rock-solid principles of individualism".³⁷ Initially, he feared making conditions "too onerous" for Canadian manufacturers which would drive much needed business to the United States.³⁸ Later, he offered the rather lame excuse that the inclusion of fair wage clauses would only create problems in the many factories working quite well without them.³⁹

³⁷ David Bercuson, "Organized Labour and the Imperial Munitions Board", Industrial Relations Industrielles, Vol. 28, P. 611, 613. Hereafter cited Bercuson, "Organized Labour".

³⁸ Ryder, "The Imperial Munitions Board", p. 378.

³⁹ Bercuson, "Organized Labour...", p. 605.

The result was that labour did not get its fair wage clause. Instead, in an attempt to curb the increased industrial unrest in the munitions industry,⁴⁰ the government placed the workers under the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act.

Surprisingly, the labour press accepted the IDIA with very little objection. The BC Federationist continued to campaign for a fair wage clause, seemingly almost oblivious to the fact that the IDIA was intended as a substitute. The Act, which basically provided for a thirty day cooling-off period before the commencement of a strike, did not sit well with the Industrial Banner. The Banner was the only paper which suggested that this was merely another attempt by the government to make the worker live with as little as possible while allowing the arms merchant a free reign to exploit the situation for his own profit. The paper realized that it could do little to reverse the situation, but hoped that the introduction of the restrictive IDIA would "make the workers do a little serious thinking".⁴¹ In its opinion, this was simply another example of the workers bearing the burden of war.

With labour's failure to win a fair wage clause, strikes rose alarmingly, as did both the numbers of workers and the numbers of companies involved. In 1916, for example, 26,000 workers engaged in work stoppages while, in 1917, this figure rose to 50,255. The companies

⁴⁰ Man-days lost due to strikes jumped from 95,000 in 1915 to 1.1 million in 1917. See Buckley and Urquhardt, Historical Statistics of Canada, Series D426 - 433, p. 107.

⁴¹ Industrial Banner, 24 March, 1916.

affected numbered 332 in 1916 but increased to 758 in the following year. Man-days lost increased by 500%.⁴² Clearly, Canada's workers were far from satisfied with the economic side of the War. What little government interference there was in the economy seemed designed to harm workers rather than protect them from unscrupulous profiteers. The IDIA was certainly viewed in that light, even though Borden had tried in vain to force Flavelle to accept the fair wage alternative. This failure only contributed to the common notion that government was inactive and heedless of labour's needs.

If profits and government inaction in curbing them did not convince the labour press that workers were bearing a disproportionate share of the War's cost, rising food and fuel prices might very well have.

Apart from militarism, which the papers constantly decried, the rampaging cost of living was the one specific issue which raised the ire of the papers more than any other. The dissatisfaction which it generated, developed from the assumption that high prices were unnecessary; and that government could control these prices at will. Indeed, the government did acknowledge on occasion that it could control the high prices, but its reasons for not doing so were quite different from what the labour press believed.⁴³ The papers also believed that the government was downplaying the real cost of living increases and publishing false reports. The Industrial Banner, for example, suggested that

⁴²Buckley and Urquhart, Historical Statistics, p. 107.

⁴³Hopkins, CAR, 1917, p. 364-367. High prices enforced thrift.

workers knew the reports to be false, since they were well aware of "how far their pay envelope will go".⁴⁴

By mid-1916, the expressions of concern over rising food prices increased appreciably. The tenor of the editorial opinion was symbolized by the comments of Toronto's Banner in its September 1 issue. It argued that the people had the right to be protected from the "patriotic speculators and fourflushers" who controlled the food industry. It rapped the government for its "inexcusable inaction" in dealing with these matters, but resigned itself to the status quo; since it was "common knowledge" that the profiteering corporations "owned" Ottawa's politicians, the paper expected nothing to be achieved until these politicians got "their ears to the ground" to "find out what the electorate, the people are talking about".⁴⁵

Throughout 1916 and into the first half of 1917, the labour press did its part to make the politicians aware of the general desire to have food prices controlled. The campaign was persistent and intense, and, at times, the rhetoric reached a fever pitch. Those feelings did not merely derive from the fact that the socialist labour press and conservative governments were natural enemies. On the issue of food prices, the papers, one and all, were moved by more than a desire to score ideological points. They firmly believed that there was no reason for the high prices; that Canada, with its vast storehouse of natural wealth should have been

⁴⁴ Industrial Banner, 23 March, 1916.

⁴⁵ Industrial Banner, 1 September, 1916.

able to provide its citizens with the necessities of life at reasonable prices. The consensus was that high prices grew out of greed, and a simple unwillingness on the part of the government to take on the food profiteers. The Voice considered price control a mere matter of resolve, a government decision that would raise few problems in its implementation.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, food prices continued to escalate, up 38% by the end of 1916 as compared with 1914, and the labour press was crying out for remedies. So disgusted was the Voice in the spring of 1917, that it suggested that every warehouse in the country should be "ransacked" and its hoarded supplies released upon the market.⁴⁷ A Government Report on the Cost of Living had pointed out as early as 1915 that hoarding was taking place on a large scale but nothing had been done about it.⁴⁸ Instead, the high prices were usually blamed on shortages, an explanation that carried little weight with the labour press. As the BC Federationist pointed out in 1916, the wheat crop had been "prolific" in 1915, and "good" in 1916 yet bread prices continued a steady climb. Thus, the answer to high prices was simple: profiteering.⁴⁹

⁴⁶Voice, 11 May, 1917.

⁴⁷Ibid., 11 May, 1917.

⁴⁸Board of Inquiry into the Cost of Living, Report, 1915, p. 30.

⁴⁹BC Federationist, 20 October, 1916.

There can be no doubt that the labour press believed that profiteering was widespread. They saw man so well equipped "to satisfy the material needs of society", and could offer no explanation for the economic conditions other than greed.⁵⁰ In a way, of course, they were right. But they spoke from a socialist vantage point, and their own sense of idealism seemingly blinded them to the fact the greed was a necessary feature of capitalism. The high prices might very well have reflected that feature, but it also provided that very necessary economic service of stimulating supply, and then determining how that supply was shared. The labour papers believed that price should be determined by the cost of production. As such, there were justified and unjustified prices.

The spiraling cost of living was considered totally unnecessary in Canada, "a land", according to the Industrial Banner, "flowing with milk and honey". The Banner failed to see how the government could sit idly by while⁵¹

millionaires grow like mushrooms; where corporations flagrantly advertise in the daily papers that they make thirty percent, and more, per annum, over and above the war taxes; where governments legislate for big business; where war contractors, profiteers and grafters are glutted at the trough; and the public treasury is raided with impunity.

⁵⁰Industrial Banner, 8 December, 1916.

⁵¹Industrial Banner, 18 May, 1917.

Until 1917, such allegations produced few results. Both industry and government continued to preach "the identity of interest" shared by labour and capital, a point of view that by the middle of the War was not subscribed to by a single paper. The opinion expressed by the Voice in April was typical of the Canadian labour press in general. It maintained that labour could not co-operate with government and industry until those two institutions showed some measure of sensitivity for labour's problems.

The all important concern, food prices, was beginning to be acknowledged by the authorities by mid-1917. Of course, an important consideration in this regard was that the labour press was only one of many voices demanding government intervention. Large dailies such as the World of Vancouver, the Ottawa Citizen and the Toronto Star also demanded government action in dealing with rising costs of living. The public, generally, complained,⁵² and action was taken. The end result of all the uproar of course was the establishing of the office of Food Controller. W.J. Hanna, an Ontario Tory MLA and a Standard Oil lawyer, headed up the office. His mandate might well have been enacted by the labour press itself: he was empowered to "make regulations where he deems it in the public interest...governing the prices of any article of food, and the storage, distribution, sale and delivery thereof".⁵³ For a government with a well-documented reluctance to tamper with the market place, these

⁵² David Edward Smith, "Emergency Government in Canada", CHR, Vol. 50, 1969, p. 434.

⁵³ J.A. Corry, "Growth of Government Activities in Canada, 1914-21", CHA Reports, 1939-40, p. 63.

measures appeared as powerful as they were popular. It certainly seemed as if the government had finally gotten "its ear to the ground".⁵⁴

"Consumers as a class", wrote J. Castell Hopkins in the Canadian Annual Review, assumed Food Controller was synonymous with price controller.⁵⁵ So, too, did the labour press. The Industrial Banner, for example, though it confessed considerable misgivings about "the corporationist taint" of Hanna, called his appointment "the crowning achievement" of the Borden Administration.⁵⁶ The accolades and acclaim was shortlived when it became painfully obvious that the free enterprise lawyer had no intention of deserting his capitalist principles for socialist ones. For "Mr. Hanna", according to the Canadian Annual Review, "did not care much for price fixing".⁵⁷ Three months after assuming office, he let it be known that he would not "accede to the demand...to cut prices down".⁵⁸ His interest lay in stimulating production while conserving all available food supplies possible. High prices merely facilitated these objectives; so the cost of food continued to climb - with the blessing of the "Food Controller".

⁵⁴Industrial Banner, 1 September, 1916.

⁵⁵J. Castell Hopkins, CAR, 1917, p. 365.

⁵⁶Industrial Banner, 29 June, 1917.

⁵⁷J. Castell Hopkins, CAR, 1917, p. 365.

⁵⁸Text of Hanna's speech in Ibid., 1917, p. 367.

The government obviously had no intention of instituting price controls even though their own investigation had revealed considerable problems. Just two months prior to Hanna's public refusal to fix prices, the Report on Cold Storages in Canada, compiled by the Acting Commissioner of the Cost of Living, W.F. O'Connor, had this assessment of the whole food situation:⁵⁹

The food consumer has suffered as a result of the war. The food purveyor has not. He has seen to it that he has been well and significantly paid. Accordingly, while yielding much deserved credit to the cold storage companies of Canada for the capable manner in which they have grappled with the problem of supplying the needs of the armies and the people of Great Britain and the allies, it will be well to remember that the performance has been strictly upon business lines and not upon patriotic lines.

This indeed, had been the point that the labour press had been trying to make since 1914, that the sacrifice was unequal. O'Connor thought so, too: "The consumer who alone has suffered for his country in the process, is the patriot", his report stated.⁶⁰

By the Fall of 1917, the labour press seemed to lose all hope of forcing the government to take a stand against food prices. If the O'Connor Report, with its indictment of the food industry, could not make the authorities act, then the labour papers probably realized that they had little chance. Nothing changed. Sir Joseph Flavelle remained head of the IMB even though he and his W.H. Davis Company of Toronto had been severely criticized by the cold storage report. The Labor News which acknowledged that "the searching criticism of war conditions" had fostered

⁵⁹ Report is quoted in part and summarized in *Ibid.*, p. 446-7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 446-7.

in it a new radicalism,⁶¹ seemed more than a little subdued in declaring that "Canada merely drifts and lets the profiteers hold high carnival and awards the most expert of them with titles of nobility".⁶² Meanwhile, "Standard Oil Bill" Hanna did nothing, all of which prompted the Toronto-based Marxist paper, the Canadian Forward, to call him a "huge, hilarious, side-splitting joke".⁶³ For the consumer who could only live with the problem, the "food controller" was the architect of very few jokes; and if success were measured by immediate outcomes, the labour press would have to be considered a poor champion of the consumer.

The failure of working class institutions, such as the labour press, to markedly affect government policy was no doubt an influential factor in moving labour to establish its own party and contest the 1917 election. The contest, of course, only added to the sense of impotence. The Independent Labor Party did not elect a single member as Borden's newly formed Union Party swept English-speaking Canada. But throughout the campaign, the papers had continued to raise the issue of profits and profiteering, amazed, like the Industrial Banner, that such an "irresponsible and grafting bunch of politicians and profiteers" could go before the country as "unionists, win-the-war champions, etc., etc.". ⁶⁴ The Unionists shrugged off the charges by ignoring them; their only acknowledgement that a labour press existed was the advertisements which

⁶¹ Labor News, 4 October, 1918.

⁶² Ibid., 9 November, 1917. Flavell was made a Baronet - hence, "His Lordship" - even though he was continually labelled as a profiteer; and was investigated in 1917 in respect to bacon prices.

⁶³ Canadian Forward, November, 1917.

⁶⁴ Industrial Banner, 8 December, 1917.

appeared in the papers urging the "working man" to help them make the Quebec "shirkers" do their share. Of course, the pitch worked perfectly. Borden won a huge majority.

Electoral defeat appeared to have a sobering effect on the labour press. The papers remained critical of government policy but seemed to resign themselves to the fact that Borden "and his profiteering bunch" would remain for the duration of the War. Labour and labour parties, which, according to the BC Federationist had "achieved nothing more consequential than dying" were forced to look to the post-War for sustenance and encouragement where electoral success was considered "not only possible, but inevitable".⁶⁵

After the 1917 election, no new issues emerged to occupy the papers as did, for instance, the rising cost of living. They continued to snipe away at government, rehashing many of the old charges that they made so eloquently earlier. The Voice, for example, continued in 1918 to attack the cold storage companies for hoarding "tons" of food until prices rose sufficiently to satisfy the greed of owners.⁶⁶ Nothing suggests that the authorities listened.

Thus, long after the labour press realized that they had little effect on policy, they continued to decry profiteering. This seeming incongruity arose from the papers' raison d'être: as "educators" of the working class, their ultimate aim was to nullify the likes of the

⁶⁵ BC Federationist, 8 February, 1918.

⁶⁶ Voice, 22 March, 1918.

Unionists through the raising of class consciousness. As a following chapter will describe, they believed that that objective would be realized in the post-War era.

As for the equality of the sacrifice, the Labour press believed, that it simply did not exist. One could ignore the large profits completely, and the inevitable question would beg an answer: were any profits, large or small, really proper "in this struggle for peace on earth, goodwill towards men".⁶⁷ The Labour press did not think so and, therefore, demanded an end to the "miserable alliance" that allowed business "to wring millions out of this war for democracy".⁶⁸ They continually pointed out that were profiteering to cease, the industrial unrest which became quite apparent in 1917 and 1918, would end.⁶⁹

In the final analysis, the profiteers were callous traitors in the eyes of the Labour press. Government was also indictable, for they allowed it to persist. The papers were convinced that the businessmen had fought the War on a business-as-usual basis. While the workers gave their lives for democracy, and accepted wages that did not meet their needs, the wealthy used the War to build up their treasure chests. The Labour press spent the greater part of 1916-18 preaching that idea, and could only hope that the message would sink in in the future.

⁶⁷ Canadian Labor Leader, 9 February, 1918.

⁶⁸ Canadian Labor Leader, 9 February, 1918.

⁶⁹ Industrial Banner, 11 May, 1918.

CHAPTER III

The Dawning of Labor's Day

In Canada in the North Atlantic Triangle: Two Centuries of Social Change, John L. Finlay stated:¹

Three shocks in particular have affected the development of these three societies [Britain, United States, Canada] that of war, that of new science, and that of depression. Of the three, the most salient has been the first - war.

Unlike most historical epochs, where social ramifications become apparent only with the passage of time and the benefit of hindsight, contemporaries of the Great War were well aware that the struggle was producing profound changes in thought. The purpose of this chapter is to document those changes as seen through the eyes of the labour press. More specifically, it will attempt to demonstrate the extent and intensity of the enormously high expectations for a better post-war world that developed during the course of the war. Those expectations were voiced by all manner of people - intellectuals, the clergy, the politicians and the businessmen, labour unions and their most articulate spokesmen, the labour press.

To examine those ideas put forward by the labour press during the course of the Great War is to uncover, to a degree, the underlying causes of the unrest of 1919, including the Winnipeg General Strike. There is admittedly a problem of proof which arises in trying to connect specific events with certain ideas. However, there is no denying that "in the life of man, ideas are facts as surely as are atomic bombs and

¹John L. Finlay, Canada in the North Atlantic Triangle: Two Centuries of Social Change, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 268.

chocolate souffles".² The historian, Robert J. Shafer, in his Guide to Historical Method, calls ideas "the engines that chiefly determine the direction of human movement".³ This book contends that what labour said during the great struggle of 1914-18, offers a reasonable explanation for the unrest it became embroiled in after the War. The labour press as disseminators of these ideas, as self-styled "educators of the working class", helped fuel the engines which determined social relationships after the War. For that reason, what these papers said must be considered important. And what they basically said was this: that social change and a better world were imminent, and that nothing less would be acceptable.

There was good reason for the labour papers to feel as they did about the future. The War provoked immediate institutional change including the extension of the franchise to women in most provinces, greater acceptance of public ownership and limited electoral success for labour candidates. These gains, however, only whetted the appetite for greater change, and certainly increased expectations accordingly. The labour press came to believe that a whole new social order was emerging. Indeed, one historian has called the Great War "the beginning of the world of today"⁴ while another termed it "the great break with the past".⁵ Insofar as the rejection of past values was concerned, the First World War did

²Robert J. Shafer, A Guide to Historical Method, Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, 1969, p. 19.

³Ibid., p. 19.

⁴Joseph Carter, 1918: Year of Crises, Year of Change, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1968, p. vii.

⁵Rene Albrecht-Carrie, The Meaning of the First World War, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1965, p. 172.

mark a new beginning. It radically altered the way men saw themselves in relation to their fellowmen, their society and their work. This was vividly expressed in the pages of the labour press, and corroborated by the writings of people who, in many cases, did not look favourably upon the social transformation.

By the end of the War, the opinion of all of the papers had become as one: they all expected a new world to arise from the ashes of the War. This unity, however, had certainly not been present at the beginning of the hostilities. Indeed, during the first two years of the struggle, there were a variety of opinions expressed as to the impact that the War might have in shaping society. The Canadian Labor Leader, the Industrial Banner and the Western Clarion, though possessed of radically different ideologies, agreed from the very beginning that the War might sound the death knell for capitalism. The BC Federationist and the Voice were far less optimistic about the possibility of the War producing anything but death and destruction, though the Voice did waver somewhat from its tendency to despair. The Labor News of Hamilton, as in its attitude towards most issues of the day, initially stood all alone. As far as it was concerned, the War was a contest of arms, and not a vehicle for social change. A lot of blood was spilled, and a lot of change did occur before the News realized that a war could be more than just a war.

The optimism which was clearly expressed in the first wartime editorials of the Western Clarion, Canadian Labor Leader, and the Industrial Banner now appear surprisingly prophetic. The Clarion, for example, in keeping with its collapse-of-capitalism rhetoric commented early on the profound social change that it foresaw.

"We fully expect", said the paper, 1 September, 1914, "that an era of revolt will come out of this war or follow closely upon its heels".⁶ Given the unrest of 1919, it is tempting to attribute the Clarion with an exceedingly perceptive social insight. This would almost certainly be a mistake. For while the paper's forecast was most accurate, it, without doubt, resulted more from wishful thinking than superior judgement. The same might be said for the initial reaction of the Industrial Banner. This Toronto paper, though inclined as much towards reason as rhetoric, usually appeared much more convincing.

The Banner generally approached problems in a manner which combined reason with passion and rhetoric. And so it was that a mere ten days after the outbreak of war, the Banner suggested that capitalism had exposed itself for what it really was, a competitive and aggressive philosophy that led to war. Because capitalism had thus so embroiled humanity in this struggle, it felt that the workers of the world would hold it responsible. The prevailing system of "plutocracy" would be erased by a "truer democracy" that would be "reared upon the ruins" of a civilization characterized by greed and inequality.⁷

"Democracy" became a catchword for the labour press some years before Woodrow Wilson elevated it to the status of an allied war aim. The Industrial Banner used it regularly during the first months of war to describe the society it expected to unfold. Committed as the Banner

⁶ Western Clarion, 1 September, 1914.

⁷ Industrial Banner, 14 August, 1914.

was to socialism, it was not surprising that its democratic ideal embraced the economic tenets of that philosophy. Therefore, as governments throughout the world began assuming greater control of their economies, this was taken by the Banner to mean the inevitable triumph of democracy. For instance, it hailed the election of a Labor Government in Australia as an event that would "hearten the cause of democracy throughout the civilized world".⁸ In fact, the paper became so convinced that the movement to state ownership was irrevocable, that in May, 1915, it rashly predicted that "inside of ten years, there will not be a private mine ... in operation in Australia, Britain and North America".⁹

Throughout 1915, and into 1916, the Industrial Banner continued to invoke reformist government policies as mere omens of things to come. The paper was not only hopeful that the future would see greater public ownership of business, but indeed seemed certain that this would be the case. There were, indeed, promising signs that government was beginning to see itself as something more than a passive bystander in the economic and social affairs of the nation. Ontario introduced its first Workman's Compensation Act in January, 1915. Saskatchewan and Manitoba both enacted "fair wage" legislation in 1916. Of course, such legislation had been on the books of the Federal and New Brunswick Governments for years, but unlike the two Western Provinces, had not bothered to establish any

⁸ Ibid., 11 September, 1914.

⁹ Industrial Banner, 14 and 28 May, 1915.

machinery for its administration.¹⁰ Also in 1916, women won the right to vote in both Alberta and Manitoba.¹¹ But the measure that held greatest significance for the Industrial Banner was the imposition of a Business Profits Tax in late 1915. While the tax never yielded more than \$21 million (as compared to \$173 million for Customs and Excise in 1917-18), this did not really matter;¹² it was the principle that counted, that of a Conservative Government taxing its corporate friends. With such radical departures from the norm, the Banner thought it "unsafe to predict what further startling innovations" might occur should the War continue for two more years. It also noted that in 1916, "the principle of nationalization", having been firmly established, would not be easily cast aside in the post-war period.¹³ It, however, offered no examples of any large scale public ownership; neither did the Western Clarion though it also commented upon the increasingly accelerated "trend towards nationalization".¹⁴

While relatively minor policy changes made necessary by the exigencies of the War were significant for the Clarion and the Banner, papers like the Voice, BC Federationist and Labor Leader found it less so. For the

¹⁰Labor Gazette, Ottawa: King's Printer, 1950, Vol. 50, p. 1424-25.

¹¹Canada Year Book, Ottawa: King's Printer, 1917, p. 680.

¹²O.D. Skelton, 'Canadian Federal Finance - II', Queen's Quarterly, October, 1918, p. 201.

¹³Industrial Banner, 18 February, 1916.

¹⁴Western Clarion, June, 1916.

Voice and Federationist in particular, there was nothing idealistic about the struggle, and there was little hope that any great ideals would emerge incidentally from it.

The British Columbia paper was by far the most pessimistic. Well aware that nationalism had transcended socialism even among most committed socialists, the Federationist saw the conflict as a great setback for the working class. It could only hope that the carnage of the struggle would force the world's workers "to lend a more willing and chastened ear" to the teachings of international socialism.¹⁵ But even in this regard, the paper showed little signs of optimism, probably because too many years of fruitless "educating" had made it cynical and a little contemptuous of the working class. In September, 1914, it suggested that man had an "aptitude for trying every wrong way before he seems to think of the right one". And even though this capitalist war would bring death and destruction, the Federationist thought it unlikely that that would change.¹⁶

The Voice differed from its West Coast counterpart only in degree. Its generally gloomy editorials did periodically point to a glimmer of hope, though that was rare. On most occasions, as in early October, 1914, for example, it saw "democratic principles" becoming "more and more submerged" as only a monstrous military machine could check the aspirations of the Germans. The Voice feared that that could only be supplied by

¹⁵BC Federationist, 21 August, 1914.

¹⁶BC Federationist, 23 October, 1914.

Czarist Russia, a country which could hardly be considered an inspiration to the world's people. Furthermore, even in defeat, Germany would exert a negative influence: German nationalism would make the peace nothing but an "armed truce", maintained by huge standing armies, said the Voice.¹⁷

In the infrequent editorials where the Voice did express some qualified optimism, it, like the Industrial Banner, looked first to instances of government intervention in the economy. Of course, it was not seduced by uncharacteristic government activism as was the Banner, but it did find a measure of sustenance in the new taxes, public ownership and the like. However, the Voice realized that a revolution was not imminent, that, indeed, "humanity has a long row to hoe" before justice would prevail.¹⁸ Throughout 1914 and 1915, it continued to look upon the War as an event with too many debits to offer encouraging signs of social change.

During 1916, there emerged a significant change in the very nature of the way that the labour papers looked upon the War and its relationship to social change. From 1914 through 1915, the papers found their "evidence" for an emerging new order in two ways. First of all, they incessantly pointed to such institutional innovations as nationalization and the taxing of profits as irreversable trends that would promote greater economic equality. Secondly, they clung rather assiduously to the sterile notion that capitalism would be rejected as an economic system for having caused the War. In short, change would come because

¹⁷Voice, 10 September, 1915.

¹⁸Ibid.

it was rational; it made good sense. For people who believed in democracy as resolutely as the papers' editors implied that they did, it appears paradoxical that the labour press never once suggested, during the first two years of hostilities, that change would come because the workers would demand it. Practically without notice, the working class became radicalized in two years of War, a development that drew the attention of non labour writers as quickly as it did that of the labourites. But when the labour press did notice, it certainly began to propagandize it and draw sustenance from it. This development did not, of course, appear simultaneously in all the papers. The BC Federationist and the Labor News remained rather pessimistic until 1917; but the Voice, Western Clarion and, in particular, the Industrial Banner became convinced that the attitude of the working class had undergone such profound change that their reversion to a quiescent docile work force was hardly imaginable.

The War was not quite two years old when no less a personality than David Lloyd George suggested that the conflict had raised "issues not thought of before, deep, searching, permanent issues".¹⁹ A most fundamental issue for the labour press was the relationship between the employer and his employees. The Western Clarion, by mid 1916, had become quite certain that the struggle had produced an irrevocable repudiation of the self mentality, and a rejection of the idea that one's

¹⁹Quoted in Industrial Banner, 8 September, 1916.

station in life was determined by providence.²⁰

The old idea of "God's Will" and reward will be yours (after suffering the trials and tribulations of this damnable system) is changing. Instead of waiting until we are dead, we are beginning to realize that happiness can be gained here; instead of accepting that everything that falls to our lot is ordained, it has been discovered that intelligent acts by the workers can affect the condition of their lives.

Perhaps one indication of the demise of fatalism was the number of strikes that hit Canada in 1917, up nearly 300% over 1914.²¹ The wartime worker was certainly more demanding than he had been in July, 1914, more convinced that his welfare lay to some degree in his own hands.

The cautious Voice began noting with regularity in early 1916 that the Canadian worker had indeed changed. The paper found it difficult to express exactly what it saw transpiring, suggesting at first that Canada was moving along the road to "state socialism", propelled by an army of industrial workers convinced of the merits of public ownership.²² This idea that change was inevitable became more embedded as the War wore on, and it was reflected, as the Voice suggested, in the refrain of thousands of men and women wondering "What is it all for?"²³ The vision of the future may have been hazy and ill defined, but it was a vision with a promise of a better world. As such, it was captivating both for the workers and the papers.

²⁰ Western Clarion, July, 1916.

²¹ Buckley and Urquhart, Historical Statistics, p. 107.

²² Voice, 3 March, 1916.

²³ Ibid., 24 December, 1916.

The Industrial Banner by 1917, was in a state of euphoria, so convinced was it that the workers had finally been aroused. The paper thought that "the new spirit" would produce untold benefits as governments and employers would in the future have to respond to this new vibrancy.²⁴ The Banner reasoned that the challenging aura that emanated from the working class would not be ignored. And how right they were!

By 1917, not only the labour press had discovered a demanding and forceful working class. Other segments of society were becoming equally aware that the Canadian workers were not merely hoping for change but, indeed, were demanding it. As early as April, 1917, even Industrial Canada tacitly acknowledged as much. It wishfully suggested that there was no reason to fear the future even though "most people seem to have visions of millions of unemployed stalking hungrily in search of wages and threatening violent social disorder".²⁵ Sir Edmund Walker, President of the Bank of Commerce, in a speech to shareholders in 1917, did not try to pretend that all was quiet among the labouring classes. He addressed directly the bitterness and anger that was directed at the business community, and suggested that those who defended business were "accused" of supporting capitalism and defending "what are called the Big Interests".²⁶ In effect, one of the most respected classes of the pre-War years came to be looked upon with considerable animosity during the years of War.

²⁴ BC Federationist, 24 March, 1916.

²⁵ Industrial Canada, April, 1917, p. 1598.

²⁶ Ibid., January, 1918, p. 1317.

It is difficult to suggest why opinions shifted so dramatically in less than half a decade. Perhaps it was because in an era of total war, the common soldier and the common worker discovered how important he was, far beyond Wellington's "scum" that fought at Waterloo a hundred years before. They were needed, desperately needed, by nations that saw themselves engaged in nothing less than a death struggle. And in appealing to them for sacrifice, governments and industry may have contributed to the decline of individualism and the emergence of the idea that the collective, capably directed, was better able to confront the great problems of the day, whether problems of peace or war.

Two papers, the BC Federationist and the Labor News initially put little faith in this idea that the War would produce significant social change. As late as March, 1916, the West Coast paper cynically maintained that "having done their duty for King and Country", the soldiers would return home to find the "old system" still firmly entrenched.²⁷ It was not until May, 1917, that the Hamilton paper acknowledged that the War was having an effect on the emergence of democratic government throughout "the civilized world".²⁸ By July, the transformation was complete: this labour paper, which in its win-the-war patriotism could not support the bitter Machinist Strike in 1916 in Hamilton, one year later rejoiced at the fact that the workers could no longer be arbitrarily "driven to the

²⁷ BC Federationist, 24 March, 1917.

²⁸ Labor News, 4 May, 1917.

mouth".²⁹ The Federationist, too, changed as evidenced by this editorial of March, 1917, a position that, once adopted, only hardened.³⁰

If this European War does not dislocate the spine of capitalism...it will certainly give it a jolt. It is beyond reason that...men...will return to civil life without first having many of their previous ideas knocked out of them by...the war. It is inconceivable that they should return to their previous walks of life and find conditions...far worse than before the war; and expect them to tamely submit to those harsher circumstances of life.

Having accepted the idea that the War was producing a mental revolution of considerable proportions, exactly how convinced was the labour press that something worthwhile would develop from it? The answer to that seems to be: very convinced. The tone of the editorials in late 1917 and 1918 suggest not merely confidence but smugness, so much so that there were occasions when the papers cautioned themselves against over-optimism.

One thing seems certain; by late 1917, practically every one of the labour papers was convinced that an era had passed. In December of that year, for instance, the Labor News stated that people had "caught a glimpse of the vision of the future" and would not be denied its promise.³¹ In issue after repetitive issue, the same refrain was repeated again and again. The Federationist, the Voice, Banner and the Canadian Labor Leader found themselves enthralled at what they saw in the working class.

²⁹ Ibid., 27 July, 1917.

³⁰ BC Federationist, 31 March, 1917.

³¹ Labor News, 1 December, 1917.

The Leader rejoiced at the "new song upon their lips",³² and pointed to how the conservatives were finally paying attention. "Even the reactionary press", it remarked, "the great statesmen, the political leaders ... concede that labour will rise to power and become the dominant factor" in a system that would provide the "greatest good to the greatest number of people".³³

There remains the question of exactly what kind of system the labour press had in mind. No doubt it involved elements of socialism, but rarely did the papers ever suggest that Canada would become a fully socialist nation. They were, it seems, so intent on spreading the good news about the rosy future, that they found little time to describe exactly the basis on which that future would be built.

As for the vision itself, it was not merely the wishful thinking of overly-fertile minds. As the papers often suggested, the "reactionaries" were taking notice. The CMA Journal, Industrial Canada, made frequent reference to the air of expectancy that pervaded the country. The intellectuals and politicians, too, spoke of it. McGill economist, social critic and humourist, Stephen Leacock, wrote quite extensively on the stirrings of the once quiescent working class. He saw "parliamentary discussion limping in the wake of popular movement" as the workers sought

³² Canadian Labor Leader, 23 March, 1918.

³³ Canadian Labor Leader, March, 1918.

short cuts to economic well being through the "suicide of the general strike".³⁴ Upper Canada College headmaster, W.L. Grant, detected a "movement of thought" that was sweeping away the old ideas of the past and replacing them with the democratic ideals born of four years of war.³⁵ Mackenzie King, in his Industry and Humanity, recognized the enormous catalyst of social revolution that the War was, and suggested that it revealed "fundamental principles" of human relations that "cannot be ignored".³⁶ The future Prime Minister referred expressively³⁷ to the need to replace the time-worn system of master-servant management. And so it went. Change became a catchword, loaded with implications for the future, discussed at labor meetings, church meetings,³⁷ at business conventions and in Parliament. The labour press, which had long preached the desirability of social revolution, could be forgiven for feeling that one was imminent. Like the Western Labor News a few days before the Armistice, all the papers felt that democracy would be implemented "in accordance with the principles promulgated during the years of war".³⁸ Lacking the insight that Keynes was to bestow upon the world

³⁴ See Stephen Leacock, "The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice" in Allan Bowker, (ed) The Social Criticism of Stephen Leacock, Toronto: University of Toronto, 1973, p. 75, 87.

³⁵ W.L. Grant, "Education of the Workingman", Queen's Quarterly, Vol. 27, October, 1919, p. 161.

³⁶ Mackenzie King, Industry and Humanity, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1918, 1973, p. 17.

³⁷ See Edward A. Pulker, "The Role of Anglicans in Reform of the Economic Order in Canada, 1914-45", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ottawa, 1974, and Marion Royce, "The Contributions of the Methodist Church to Social Welfare in Canada", Toronto: Unpublished MA Thesis, 1940.

³⁸ Western Labor News, 8 November, 1918.

some years later, none of the papers so much as alluded to the possibility of depression shattering everyone's dreams. And why should they? They had an answer to economic problems: public ownership.

The increasing tendency of the Government to intervene in the economy had, from the beginning of the War, been treated as a harbinger of change. As the struggle wore on, the heady rhetoric of the future utopia so occupied the attention of the papers that they neglected to discuss the basis of that "brave new world", and so ideas such as nationalization rarely got mentioned. But in the last year or so of the struggle, the great utopia did begin to clarify, and, not surprisingly, its doctrinal basis appeared very familiar.

Indeed, the labour press offered very sound reasons why government ownership would make for a better world for the workingman. No one could fail to see that the state had been a more effective organizer of the nation's resources than the aggregate of thousands of competing individuals. The papers could be forgiven for expecting that when state production did not have to support the ravenous appetite of the war machine, man would become incomparably better off. Of course, the papers expected opposition to the extension of public ownership, but, naturally, felt that "what had proved so successful in time of war", would not be simply cast "aside as altogether impractical in days of peace".³⁹

³⁹ Canadian Forward, 16 February, 1917.

Simply stated, the labour press believed that in the War, the planned economy had proven itself superior to unfettered capitalism. Again, the reasoning was logical if not totally convincing. The BC Federationist, for instance, pointed out that during the War, even though the "best men" had been removed from the economy, state interventions, which resulted in "the systemization of the methods of production", enabled an inferior work force to meet both the needs of the ravenous war machine and the home market.⁴⁰ The papers were convinced that evidence in support of public ownership was so overwhelming that it would be impossible to ignore, especially in view of the relationship the labour press saw between economic well being and democracy. As the Labor News suggested in October, 1918, "Political democracy is a delusion unless builded upon and guaranteed by a full and vibrant industrial democracy".⁴¹ Thus the War had been fought for a measure of economic equality as well as the defeat of militarism!

The labour press was probably seduced by the rhetoric of the War, some of which it created. The constant barrage of government propaganda, with its emphasis on democracy, created the illusion that Canada was fighting for a better world. To some, that meant merely a world without Prussianism; but to an institution such as the labour press, preoccupied as it was with economic matters, it came to stand for a lot more. It meant, if not economic equality, then, at least, economic well being for all.

⁴⁰ BC Federationist, 13 September, 1918.

⁴¹ Labor News, 4 October, 1918.

The War obviously produced a tremendous mental impact. The labour papers reasoned that the new "thinking" working class would demand the benefits of the socialist state. Indeed, their acceptance of anything but such a state of affairs was rarely considered; nothing else was deemed democratic, simply because no other economic system was based upon equality. The papers assumed that the reforms that were introduced during the course of the hostilities would continue, for, in the words of the BC Federationist, that was only "the starting point for a real democratic movement".⁴² The Federationist and its cohorts were quite convinced that the Great War marked a definite break with nineteenth century society, and that it would usher in a twentieth century more materially and more spiritually rewarding for the workers.

This belief in the attainability of a better world in the twentieth century was one of the curious ironies of the First World War. While a large proportion of the "civilized" world was engaged in the most monstrous struggle that mankind had ever witnessed, there arose a belief that the post-war would hold limitless promise. It is a paradox that can only be explained through speculation. René Albrecht-Carrié in The Meaning of the First World War attributes it to the mentality of an age that current generations find difficult to appreciate. While such phrases as "a world fit for heroes to live in" might presently be termed corny or "pie in the sky", he suggests that in 1918, such was not the

⁴²BC Federationist, 8 November, 1918.

case; "the climate of expectations was enormously high".⁴³ Perhaps the embattled belligerents needed the hope to endure the misery of the War.

For whatever reasons, the conflict of 1914-18 did have great significance and produced a long-term impact. The Western Labor News appears to have analyzed the situation correctly in late 1918 in an article aptly titled "The Revolution of the War". It pointed out that the long, drawn-out struggle resulted in the wrecking of "the framework of society that hung over from the nineteenth century". The old aristocratic idea of "place" was considered beyond "re-adjustment" while "the ancient dependence on the established things" was thought gone forever.⁴⁴ The Conservative Party which tended to voice the "ideology" of "established things" could certainly agree to that after suffering a humiliating defeat in the 1921 election.

It cannot be said that the labour press was totally-naïve in prophesying the emergence of a new world. The material benefits that were expected were certainly not realized in the immediate future, but the crucible of war forged attitudes that were no doubt instrumental in bringing about the defeat of the Ontario Conservatives of 1919, and the Federal Conservatives of 1921. In both elections, the voters gave considerable support to political organizations that more accurately reflected the ideas that grew out of the War, the Ontario Conservatives being replaced by a farmer-labour coalition, while, federally, a group called the Progressives surpassed the Conservatives in parliamentary

⁴³ Albrecht-Carrie, The Meaning, p. 91.

⁴⁴ Western Labor News, 13 September, 1918.

strength. When one considers the difficulty third parties have since had in making their mark upon Canadian politics, the volatility of the post-War world can be better appreciated.

Among the labour papers themselves, there was one that mirrored the changing times more than any of the others. That was the Labor News of Hamilton. For the first two years of war, the News reflected the views of the conservative Gompers-style unionism, shunning political action and lambasting those papers which advocated it, especially the Industrial Banner. By the middle of 1917, it became one of the most radical papers in the country, as convinced as the idealistic Banner that "Labour's Day"⁴⁵ was dawning.

⁴⁵See J.S. Woodsworth, "The Dawning of Labor's Day With Economic Freedom", in the BC Federationist, 30 December, 1918.

CHAPTER IV
An Unexpected Reality

The labour press spent much of 1916-18 forecasting the emergence of a post-War order wherein the workingman would reign supreme. There is little doubt about the sincerity of the papers in this regard: they fully believed that not only would the working class have greater political power after the War, but they also anticipated a growing economic equality after the conflict had ended. Much of this depended, of course, upon the triumph of socialism. As far as the labour press was concerned, that prospect, though not in the immediate future, was inevitable with time.

The future did not unfold as anticipated. The Canada of 1919 bore little resemblance to the utopian-like society that the labour press had awaited for three years. As the munitions plants closed down, the jobless rate began to soar. The return to civilian life of hundreds of thousands of men exacerbated the problem. To make matters worse, prices continued to rise; by December, 1918, the cost of living had risen 61% over 1913. By the end of 1919, a further 18% increase was recorded.¹ Those who were working, needed more. But all too many simply needed a job, and jobs were scarce. That innocent, and seemingly infectious hope that had so characterized the labour press during the latter half of the War, quickly evaporated.

This chapter will examine in some detail, the reaction of the papers to conditions in 1919. It will briefly review the expectations for a better world that arose during the course of the War, with a view towards demonstrating the anger which the denial of these expectations would bring.

¹ Labour Gazette, July, 1921, p. 968.

A significant portion of the chapter will be devoted to what the labour press saw as a betrayal of the nation's interest by the government which, instead of continuing on its interventionist course, began to revert to an economic system that the labour press found wanting. In the course of that discussion, some attention will be given to suggestions put forward by the labour press for the purpose of creating jobs. And merely to demonstrate that these papers were not simply the voices of a few revolutionary malcontents crying in the wilderness, the chapter will show that other, less political segments of society often held views that paralleled those of the labour press.

That anger and the sense of betrayal that the papers so obviously felt practically from the Armistice onward, was almost predictable. The War had created a climate of opinion that was openly hostile to the capitalist system, a system upon which the Government of Sir Robert Borden pinned its hopes for "reconstruction". Many businessmen frankly acknowledged, during the latter part of the struggle against Germany, that the system was being questioned. The President of the Bank of Commerce, Sir Edmund Walker, admitted as much in a speech to shareholders in 1917:²

Out of this turmoil has come a bitterness towards all who, by any stretch of fancy, can be held responsible for existing conditions, a bitterness often without any real basis, and which is accompanied by explosions of wrath directed at whatever happens to be the nearest object of criticism, but, if continued and kept at a fever heat as it has been of late promises ill for our country after the war.

²Text of speech given in Industrial Canada, January, 1918, p. 1317.

Such was the temper of the times that Sir Edmund knew in advance the reaction that his remarks would provoke. He would, he acknowledged, "be accused of defending capital and what are called the Big Interests".³

The labour press pinned considerable hope for a better post-War world on the fact that confidence in capitalism had obviously plummeted during four years of War. Much of this could be attributed to two things: business seemed to be making inordinately large profits during the hostilities, and so was wide open to criticism. Of equal importance was the fact that government intervention in the economy, limited though it was, appeared to make things work more efficiently. As proof of that, the papers repeatedly pointed to the nation's ability to supply both war needs and domestic needs. It, therefore, followed that if the same interventionist policies were not adhered to in constructing a better Canada after the War, then, the labour press would be upset. They would feel betrayed; for during the latter part of the great struggle, the papers often noted how the workers, unlike the corporations, had foregone immediate benefits in order that that nation be saved. The Canadian Labor Leader made this point most vividly in a 4 May, 1918, editorial:⁴

While the workers justly resent the many injustices that have been heaped upon them; while they believe that the interests of the people have been flagrantly neglected, and profiteers have been allowed to amass huge fortunes out of the agony of war, they realize that when the very existence of the state is at stake, the loyal support of every citizen must be rendered. Not because they approve or condone the shortcomings of some of those at Ottawa but because they place the welfare of the state before every other consideration.

³ Ibid., p. 1317.

⁴ Canadian Labor Leader, 4 May, 1918.

Thus the expectations that had been generated were in some ways a measure of the debt that Canada owed its working class.

The War had barely ended when a number of the papers began reminding the government of its obligations to the workers. The Labor News, in a stance that became typical of that paper, demanded, as early as 15 November, 1918, that something be done to stem the flow of lay-offs that the cessation of hostilities had provoked.⁵

"we" have produced the shells, and "you" have fought the fight for democracy. Who, then, has the greater right than WE, meaning you and me, to interpret the meaning of the word?

The Western Labor News also took a bellicose approach to post-War problems. The revolutionary News was quite certain that unless the Government of Canada made some effort to correct the unemployment problem, there would be a heavy price to pay as evidenced by events in other countries:⁶

Revolution in Russia! Revolution in Austria! Revolution in Bulgaria, Revolution in that benighted country where we were told the tame slaves of the Kaiser would never revolt. How far will the revolution spread?

The "revolution" which the Western Labor News saw as a universal phenomenon did not have the same violent overtones in Canada as it produced in many countries of Europe. But given the nature of Canadian society at the beginning of the War, there can be little doubt that during the course of the struggle, the country's people experienced a revolutionary change of mind. The world of order and place of 1914 was

⁵ Labor News, 15 November, 1918.

⁶ Western Labor News, 22 November, 1918.

simply not accepted in 1919. The War had provoked men to thinking, had, in the words of one historian, been the "catalyst" that "clarified" and brought to the surface Canadians' "latent discontent with laissez-faire capitalism".⁷ The labour press was obviously discontented with the system. But the government gave no indication that it, too, was ready for radical economic change.

It quickly became apparent that the labour papers had made an incorrect assumption concerning the demise of capitalism. Simply because the system had "proven" itself ineffective in the nation's hour of greatest need seemed in itself sufficient reason for replacing it. It was soon demonstrated that politics, and hence, the organization of an economy does not follow such logic. The business and political elite of Canada, with its interest vested irrevocably in private enterprise, did not intend to let the system go simply because it lacked the confidence of the working class. Indeed, it soon became apparent that with the demands of the War removed, the attitude of the government towards its role in society had not changed much since 1914.

The Federal Government, though vilified daily by the labour papers for its handling of the economic problems of the country, saw its responsibilities in very limited terms. Historian James Struthers, in his study of the Government's handling of unemployment from 1918 to 1929, pointed out that unemployment tended to be seen as a problem for

⁷Edward A. Pulker, "The Role of Anglicans in the Reform of the Economic Order in Canada, 1914-15", University of Ottawa: Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1974, p. 75.

the cities to deal with, as had always been the case. The only people that the Federal authorities felt any obligation to were those men who were mustered out of the army.⁸ In the opinion of the government, the War had not changed responsibilities in the least; it still considered poor relief a problem for the cities.

As to long-term economic solutions, the government, by doing almost nothing, seemed content to await the upturn of the cyclical capitalist economy. Cosmetic "reconstruction", such as settling returned soldiers on vacant land, had little impact upon the massive unemployment problem that plagued Canada in 1919.

The labour press became increasingly angry over the lengthening unemployment lines. In their opinion, there was simply no reason that thousands of Canadians should have to endure the hardships that accompanied having no job. To support them, there were the seemingly irrefutable economic arguments: Canada had fought four years of war on an endless flow of money; if such resources, the paper reasoned, could be poured into such madness as war, then surely, a few million dollars could be found to fight the evil of unemployment. In its own peculiarly simplistic way, the Western Labor News thought that it made much more sense to increase the wealth of the nation by creating jobs than by carrying on a war where a "return on investment" was not even contemplated.⁹ To fight that War, of course, the country borrowed heavily.

⁸For a fairly detailed account of the Federal Government's attitude towards, and response to, the post-War problems of unemployment, see James Struthers, "Prelude to Depression: The Federal Government and Unemployment, 1918-29", CHR, September, 1977, p. 277-93. Hereafter cited, Struthers, "Prelude to Depression".

⁹Western Labor News, 22 November, 1918.

a fact that the papers, perhaps conveniently, overlooked.¹⁰ That, however, is irrelevant. For whatever reasons the government may have had for not tackling the unemployment problem more aggressively, any explanation would almost certainly have fallen short of what the labour press wanted. And what they wanted, of course, was the realization of the dream of "democracy". They felt that it was a debt owed, and as such, sensed a deep betrayal.

As the country stumbled through the latter part of 1918, the papers realized that a utopia was not just around the corner. Editorial tone became increasingly defeatist. Typical of what the papers felt was this editorial which appeared in the 6 December, 1918, edition of the Labor News:¹¹

God did not work wonders to feed and clothe a few worthless parasites with the riches of an empire, to fill up their cups out of the tears of orphans and widows, or of mothers robbed of their sons. God did not intend that so universal a blessing, big enough for us all should be directed underground into the obscure, narrow channel of a few private purses, leaving so many loyal, suffering people to sigh and mourn over this destitute condition in the day of public joy.

The BC Federationist, like the News, also was quick to reach the conclusion that relief for the unemployed was not forthcoming. Production for profit still reigned. The Federationist conceded that utopia was lost, and its editor expressed the desire to see, not radical change,

¹⁰ The papers were certainly not ignorant of the fact that the war was financed through borrowing. As a matter of fact, one of their most common concerns during the initial stages of the hostilities was that it would mean an incalculable burden for the country's workers long after the guns were silenced.

¹¹ Labor News, 6 December, 1918.

but mere alleviation of the problem. However, since "from no angle is there any sign of relief", the West Coast paper, like its Hamilton counterpart, had only weak threats and defeatist pleas for help. Labour, it moaned, was not a commodity like concrete goods whose price was determined by the demands of the market; "it has characteristics", it pointed out, "that things, potatoes, for instance, do not possess".¹² Only a few short weeks earlier, the Federationist had assumed that these and far greater questions had been settled in the crucible of war.

The new awareness of reality extended also to the Industrial Banner. It realized that the authorities had no intention of doing anything constructive, but, felt that such passivity would not be long tolerated by workers who had reassessed their own value, and had learned that they were "essential to society's progress".¹³ In the opinion of the labour press, there was only one way to appease this new demanding breed of worker: by giving him a job that provided adequately for himself and his family.

The papers offered some suggestions for the creation of employment. Many of the ideas were novel, maybe even revolutionary in view of the milieu in which they were presented. The Western Labor News, for example, urged the authorities to adopt a proposal put forward at the end of the War by the Returned Soldiers of Winnipeg.¹⁴ That organization

¹² BC Federationist, 27 December, 1918.

¹³ Industrial Banner, 6 December, 1918.

¹⁴ To circumvent the constitution of the Great War Veterans' Association which precluded political action, the Returned Soldiers' Associations were formed with the avowed purpose of working with labour for the betterment of the working class. Western Labor News, 27 December, 1918.

called for the government to assume control of "basic industries", to reduce the work day to six hours, introduce civil and municipal employment schemes, and make pensions and loans available to the disabled.¹⁵

Meanwhile, Hamilton's Labor News also thought that public ownership of certain industries would create more jobs, and that the reduction of the work week to forty-four hours would spread the available jobs around.

The News also thought that the harnessing of the "readily available" sixty million horsepower of hydro would contribute significantly to both job creation and cheap electricity.¹⁶

Through the latter part of 1918, and into 1919, various labour papers made numerous proposals for creating jobs. All involved a considerable degree of government intervention in the economy, usually outright ownership. This, of course, grew out of a certain ideological perspective.

The Industrial Banner, for instance, clearly saw no benefit in "reconstruction" - a word that became cliché almost as quickly as it was coined - unless it involved fundamental economic changes. Only through a broad programme of rationalization, argued the Toronto paper, could full employment and a higher standard of living be achieved. The Banner thought that only through publicly owned industries would the worker receive the full product of his labour.¹⁷

The Western Labor News was even more adamant on nationalization. The News saw no point whatsoever in "reconstructing" institutions that had clearly failed to provide Canadians with the

¹⁵ ibid.,

¹⁶ Labor News, 29 November, 1918.

¹⁷ Industrial Banner, 13 December, 1918.

necessities of life. The radical Winnipeg paper called for "reorganization" and the establishment of a system that would produce for humanity and not for profit. "Such a condition", stated the News, "is only possible in a democratically controlled government with democratic industries".¹⁸

The proposals and the grand designs put forward by the labour press lacked only two things. First of all, no mention was ever made of the cost involved. They generally assumed that because money could be found to fight the War, money could be found to put people to work. As always with the truly indignant - and the labour press was certainly that - means become secondary to goals; and by 1919, only one goal existed for most papers, and that was jobs.

Of greater importance, perhaps, than lack of money in the creation of employment was the government's "ideology", as inflexible in its own way as that of the labour press. Instead of becoming more involved in the business affairs of the country, the government of Sir Robert Borden felt more inclined to loosen what few controls existed at war's end. R.J. McFall, who served as the last cost-of-living commissioner for the administration, pointed out that "Most of the members of the government wanted the office abolished along with other war-time controls".¹⁹ Sir John Willison, the noted Liberal and newspaper publisher, who headed up

¹⁸ Western Labor News, 3 January, 1919.

¹⁹ Quoted in Thomas D. Traves, "The Board of Commerce and the Canadian Sugar Refining Industry: A Speculation on the Role of the State in Canada", CHR, June, 1974, p. 159. Hereafter cited Traves, "Board of Commerce".

the Canadian Reconstruction Association was certainly not interventionist-minded. In tory-like platitudes, he called for "conciliation, sympathetic appeal, and laborous effort".²⁰ The labour press wanted solutions, and in its opinion, that involved more than waiting.

The possibility, however, of capitalism being abolished, or, radically transformed, was remote indeed in 1919. Charles F. Rowland, of the Canadian Reconstruction Association, in one of numerous responses to demands for radical change, gave a good indication of what government was thinking in declaring that "even in this ENLIGHTENED AGE, it would be impossible to carry on the industries of the country under conditions other than those which exist".²¹ Quite clearly, the government was not contemplating moving in the direction desired by the labour press.

Essentially, the Federal authorities' only plan lay in waiting the depression out, while trying to alleviate some of the worst problems with an expanded program of public works. Typical of the solutions offered were those outlined by the Repatriation Committee of Cabinet. It promised to increase exports though how this was to be achieved in the face of a worldwide depression, was not spelled out. The Committee also promised to build railways, roads, ships and houses. A protracted loan and training program was also to be extended to farmers.²² These

²⁰ Quoted in Industrial Banner, 17 January, 1919.

²¹ Quoted in Western Labor News, 19 April, 1919.

²² This "program" appeared as a government-sponsored advertisement in labour papers throughout the country in the latter half of February, 1919. See, for example, *Ibid.*, 21 February, 1919.

proposals were never acted upon, however, with any great enthusiasm, since, according to one historian, the government only took real action when serious social upheaval threatened.²³ Appeasing the restless, it appears, took priority over providing jobs.

By late January, a mere two and a half months after the end of the War, most of the papers, apart from the more extremist ones like the Western Labor News, admitted that the dream of a quick utopia had vanished. This was blamed on a reactionary government which, in the estimation of the papers, had betrayed the workers. But simply because a better world had not materialized, was not in itself reason enough to convince the labour press that their whole outlook during the War years had been wrong. Indeed, some significant electoral successes by labour candidates in the early January municipal elections²⁴ in Ontario, only proved to the editors that they had read the population correctly. But minor political victories were not enough to effect any real change.

Hence, the real problem for the labour press was to convince the government that the desire for radical change was widespread, that it had

²³ Struthers, "Prelude to Depression", September, 1977, p. 278.

²⁴ Labour made a number of gains in those municipal elections. The Independent Labor Party got considerable support from all areas of the Province. In Hamilton, the Party, according to the Industrial Banner, 10 January, 1919, "won the clearest cut working class victory in the Country's history". Two comptrollers, five aldermen, and one school trustee, were elected from labour's eleven man slate. Gordon Nelson, editor of the Labor News, defeated T.J. Stewart, Hamilton's Tory M.P. for that city's Commissioner of Hydro-Electric. Kingston also returned a full slate of labourites, three by acclamation. A labour mayor held his office in Brantford. Other cities also saw significant labour gains, Labor News, 3 January, 1919, and Industrial Banner, 10 January, 1919.

the support of more than narrow-interest labour groups. It needed credibility. To accomplish this, the papers used a very simple technique: they pointed to similar demands and criticisms that came from the erstwhile conservative community, or, to institutions and groups that were not politically motivated but were well respected. The churches certainly carried moral authority, and the labour press invoked their concerns. It also publicized widely the demands of a group which arguably had more right to seek change than any other group in Canada, the Great War Veterans' Association.

Though some attention was paid to the pronouncements of all of the churches, the labour press drew mostly on the Methodist, undoubtedly because the Methodists seemed as much concerned with social matters as with spiritual affairs. As early as September, 1918, their Board of Social Services had approved a report calling for the nationalization of all public utilities, "at least all railways, canals, water powers, coal mines, and all means of communication".²⁵ The Church's quest for a new order did not end there. At a Conference in Hamilton in October, 1918, it reaffirmed its commitment to these ideals; the Report of the Committee dealing with the Church, War and Patriotism demanded "nothing less than the transference of the whole economic life from a basis of competition and profits to one of co-operation".²⁶ Clearly, the Church had gone from a problematic approach to change to a philosophic one.

²⁵ From the Report of the Methodist Church Board of Social Services, 5 September, 1918. Quoted in Hopkins, *CAR*, 1918, p. 603.

²⁶ From Report of a Committee dealing with Relations of the Church, War and Patriotism, *Ibid*.

Its philosophy certainly suited moderate labour papers like the Industrial Banner. The Toronto paper was quick to point out the obvious parallels in what it and the Church were saying. In a January, 1919 editorial, the paper quoted extensively from a report that had been issued by the Army and Navy Board of the Methodist Church. That report, in a tone not unlike that of the labour papers, declared it "inconceivable...that we should continue the same selfish methods in our industrial, political and economic life which have characterized the social order of the past years". Nationalization of industry was again demanded in recognition of the need to make industrial democracy the necessary complement of political freedom.²⁷ Such arguments were very much in keeping with the thought of the labour papers.

The papers found the same kind of demands in The Veteran, the voice of the Great War Veterans' Association. Though the GWVA paper and the Western Labor News were poles apart ideologically, they did agree that "the estranging seas" could not provide a "permanent barrier" between North America and a Europe seething with revolution. And The Veteran feared revolution unless reconstruction was carried on under the "most far-reaching terms" by the "most constructively radical and forward looking mind in the Cabinet".²⁸

²⁷Industrial Banner, 17 January, 1919.

²⁸The Veteran, January, 1919, and the Western Labor News, 2 February, 1919.

Unfortunately, Prime Minister Borden's Cabinets were not noted for the progressive minds of their members. The government did practically little or nothing to combat the twin evils of unemployment and high prices. There was, of course, a significant amount of window dressing. The Employment Service of Canada was created in 1918 to get soldiers back into civilian life, and some federal money was granted for unemployment relief. A Soldier Settlement scheme was developed; there was even a proposal put forward for unemployment insurance. But generally, all three levels of government were more interested in deflecting responsibility rather than facing up to a very serious problem.²⁹ The extent to which they did manage to avoid doing anything was evidenced by the fact that the "bad times" of 1920-21 were still to come.

High prices were tackled in the same make believe fashion as unemployment. The Board of Commerce, for instance, was created with the power to investigate and prosecute cartels, but the "sane" men appointed to that body, helped resolve "the tension between the law and the intent behind the law".³⁰ In effect, little was achieved. And little was intended.

²⁹ Struthers, "Prelude to Depression", p. 278, 279, 290. Struthers contends that the municipalities, the provinces and the Federal Government played a game of "constitutional evasion" with the unemployment problem. As late as 1924, the Ontario Premier pointed out, "Where the Province has any direct responsibility, I am at a loss to understand".

³⁰ Trave's, "Board of Commerce", p. 160. Judge Robson of Manitoba and W.F. O'Connor, the wartime cost-of-living commissioner were two prominent appointees to the Board. Robson was a well-known conservative, while O'Connor's appointment was opposed by the Minister of Labour, Gideon Robertson, on the grounds that O'Connor was not the "champion of the people" he was widely believed to be, but a friend of the sugar refining interests.

By early spring, 1919, when it became readily apparent that government lacked either the will or the ability to tackle the nation's problems, they were faced with another serious concern, mounting social unrest.

Though many in government and business were quite content to blame the "irresponsible agitator",³¹ the labour press held a vastly different view. The papers argued, and a Royal Commission which went to work that spring confirmed,³² that the roots of the unrest were purely economic. None of the papers made any pretense whatsoever to finding more elaborate causes. A few days after the beginning of the Winnipeg General Strike, for instance, the Labor News, in an editorial that was typical of the times, stated without qualification that the growing dissatisfaction stemmed from the inability of the worker to meet the rising cost of living. The paper further suggested that the situation would continue while people were "receiving a great deal less in wages than it takes for them to live". As for the government's apparent inability to afford reconstructive measures, the News attributed that to "the outrageous contracts handed out during the war".³³

³¹ Typical of those who blamed the "irresponsible agitator" was Thomas Findlay, President of Massey-Harris. In a speech to a United Farmers of Ontario gathering at Goodrich, Ontario, Findlay protested that there was "too much rot talk about profits. It is unfair to inflame the public upon the question of profit", quoted in Industrial Canada, July, 1919, p. 147.

³² Refers to the Royal Commission on Industrial Relations, 1919, that was chaired by Judge Mathers, and which presented its report on June 27, 1919. The Commission heard testimony from workers (mostly) and others from across the whole nation.

³³ Labor News, 22 May, 1919.

All the while that the workers suffered from unemployment and high prices, the labour press believed that the business community promoted greater unrest by earning exorbitant profits. The radical Brandon Confederate, which, like the Western Labor News, reflected the feelings of the Winnipeg area around the time of the General Strike, declared that unrest was a worker response to "profiteers both great and small". The paper considered these people, and not the radicals, as "agents of Bolshevism", "the parent promoters of unrest...the instigators of revolt"; for it was their greed, contended the Confederate, that pushed people to look for radical alternatives.³⁴ The Industrial Banner argued likewise, and lamented that wartime idealism was being replaced by "old materialism and sectional greed".³⁵

As the adverse economic conditions persisted, the labour press, too, in its own way became concerned with "old materialism". That, probably, was only to be expected; the worker who lacks the basic necessities of life would, without doubt, desire first and foremost the fulfillment of these needs, and dream less of a utopia. He might not, however, forget that he had been promised better.

* * *

At the end of the War, the labour press sincerely believed that a better world was in the offing. For almost three years, that expectation

³⁴ Brandon Confederate, 7 March, 1919.

³⁵ Industrial Banner, 4 April, 1919.

of a brave new world had dominated their pages, and had influenced practically every editorial they wrote. Furthermore, the papers had believed that in the post-war era, the old conservative system of master and servant, employee and employer, would be replaced by a system which recognized the needs and the worth of the worker to a far greater extent than capitalism. As far as the papers were concerned, the very fact that the government was forced to intervene to an unexpected extent in the economy, and that intervention had produced results, was reason enough to extend the system.

Perhaps if government had appeared more actively interventionist, the labour press would have had less reason to blame and condemn. But the papers saw only a government that refused to apply methods that so obviously worked! That was betrayal.

The government, too, knew that the public, of which the labour press represented a small part, wanted intervention. They wanted to see things being made to happen as in the war years, rather than merely waiting and hoping. The unrest that manifested itself in 1919 was a clear demonstration of that desire. It is somewhat telling that, when threatened, with unrest, the government was moved to act, though usually symbolically. There was never any enthusiasm for tackling either the unemployment problem or the price problem, basically because Borden's government did not believe in a government-controlled economy. One Unionist, for instance, responded thus to the establishment of the potentially powerful Board of Commerce:³⁶

³⁶Quoted in Traves, "The Board of Commerce", p. 160.

I do not believe that the Commission that is to be appointed will secure any immediate radical reduction in prices. But I do believe it may do something to lessen the industrial unrest there is in this country today.

For the government, the unrest was a more serious problem than its causes.

The labour press read the public mood correctly in seeking a more active government. What they failed to realize was that passive governments could sometimes appear otherwise through window dressing. The papers realized also that symbolism, with its accompanying unemployment and high prices, was such a shoddy way to treat people who had made huge sacrifices in defence of high ideals. But having made these sacrifices, and having become politicized partly because of the propagandizing of these ideals, these same people were no longer willing to meekly await the upturn of the cyclical economy. Beliefs to the contrary were confronted with the Winnipeg General Strike.

CHAPTER - V

The Labour Press and the Winnipeg General Strike

The Winnipeg General Strike occupies a conspicuous position in Canadian labour history. In a country that is better known for its deference to authority, the Strike stands out as a marked example of a social-industrial disturbance of a significant nature. In the context of this paper, the Winnipeg troubles serve a very important function. On the one hand, it demonstrates the extent and depth of labour's dissatisfaction with the existing order, while it also brings to an end any lasting illusions which the labour papers might have still harboured concerning a post-war utopia. As the strike developed, and as the government began applying its repressive measures, it became abundantly clear to practically all of the labour papers, with the exception of minor ones like the Brandon Confederate, that a workers' paradise was not in Canada's immediate future. This chapter will very briefly outline the affair itself; though very briefly since the Strike has been adequately documented elsewhere.¹ The chapter's primary aim is to describe the attitudes of the labour press towards the Strike, and determine the effect that its defeat had on the papers, especially on the idea of an emerging new order.

This discussion has, on more than one occasion, intimated that Canada was virtually seething with unrest since the end of the Great War. The beginnings and subsequent developments of the Strike certainly testify more to that than to the power of a few radical union leaders to inspire a following.

¹ See D.C. Masters, The Winnipeg General Strike, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973, 1950; and David J. Bercuson, Confrontation at Winnipeg: Labour, Industrial Relations, and the General Strike, Queen's University Press, 1974.

Much of what happened in Winnipeg during the troubled months of May and June, 1919, was characterized as much by spontaneity, as by careful planning. Granted, the Metal Trades Council did begin the course of events that eventually swelled into a general work stoppage by striking a number of metal shops on May 1. In the two weeks, however, between that first call and the eventual declaration of a general strike, fifty-two other unions had walked off the job. In effect, the Strike was practically general before the organizing group had gotten around to calling it so.² When the Winnipeg Trades and Labor Council did finally call out its entire membership of 12,000, they were joined by at least twice, perhaps three times as many, non-unionized supporters.³ The Toronto Star, which throughout the affair maintained that there was "no soviet" in the city, estimated that at least 35,000 workers were on strike, while half of the city population of 200,000 were sympathetic to the strikers' aims and desires.⁴ Sympathetic strikes occurred from Vancouver to Montreal as workers all across the country expressed their support for the Winnipeg workers.⁵ Clearly, this was not simply an ordinary withdrawal of services; but an indication of the change that four years of war had provoked in quite ordinary people.

²Ralph Allen, Ordeal by Fire: Canada, 1910-45, New York: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1961, p. 178.

³John Craig, The Years of Agony, 1910/1920, Toronto: Natural Science of Canada, 1977, p. 119.

⁴Toronto Star, 23 May, 1919.

⁵David J. Bercuson, "The Winnipeg General Strike, Collective Bargaining and the One Big Union Issue", CHR, Vol. 51, June, 1970, p. 169.

The Canadian worker of 1919 appears to have developed a determination to fight for the realization of some of the egalitarian dreams that, nearing the end of the War, had seemed so close at hand. Evidence of this was the industrial and social unrest that suggested an intense dissatisfaction with the worst features of the laissez faire post-war era. By their strikes and demonstrations, workers were questioning the very premises on which Canadian society had so comfortably rested for so long. One of these premises was deference to authority which often meant, as was pointed out by Stephen Leacock, respect for millionaires.⁶ Having fought four long arduous years for "democracy", the workers of 1919 showed a distinct reluctance to proffer that same regard; they were no longer convinced that Providence had favoured the rich man, and so made him deserving of his wealth. Given the widespread acceptance of stories of profiteering and fat war contracts,⁷ he was more likely looked upon as the recipient of political rather than divine favour.

Of course, the more conservative of the economic and political elite were reluctant to admit that Canada's workers had so changed in a mere four years. George B. Nicholson, a Unionist MP and Chairman of a parliamentary High Cost of Living Commission, acknowledged a change, but not a lasting one - "a natural nervous strain", he called it, "through

⁶ See Bowker, The Social Criticism, p. 78.

⁷ Hopkins, CAR, 1918, p. 325. Hopkins, whose friends included Joseph Flavelle, came frequently to the defence of the business community. He did acknowledge, however, that "The manufacturers and capitalist made money" from the war, "many in moderation, some with a conspicuous lack of moderation". The fact that this had permeated the public mind was given as a cause for "labour difficulties".

which the whole world has passed as a result of four years of war". He thought that the unrest would disappear with the passing of "economic pressure" and the "irresponsible agitator".⁸

Not everyone was as willing as Nicholson to attribute the unrest of 1919 to the ever convenient "irresponsible agitator". The noted economist, W.A. Mackintosh, writing in the April, 1919, issue of Queen's Quarterly, argued that some of the unrest stemmed from the refusal of people to believe that prices could not be controlled. Mackintosh personally believed that something could have been done about the profiteering.⁹ Meanwhile, the Quebec MP, Ernest Lapointe, blamed the whole problem, including the Winnipeg General Strike, on the government's refusal to take constructive action.¹⁰ At the same time, opinion in the country was polarizing to an extreme degree as the dissatisfied - which included the labour press - called for action, while "the other half" counselled patience. Colonel J.B. Maclean of Maclean's Publishing Company, speaking in 1919 to delegates to the annual CMA convention, noted this polarization, and blasted his "narrow-minded" audience for their obstinacy and intransigence at a time when sensitivity and flexibility was called for.¹¹

Ultimately, the unrest must be looked at in the context of the War. For whatever the business community might think, high prices and unemployment in themselves did not trigger the marches, strikes and riots that so

⁸Quoted in Industrial Canada, July, 1919, p. 157.

⁹W.A. Mackintosh, "Economics, Prices and the War", Queen's Quarterly, April, 1919, p. 462, 464.

¹⁰Debates, House of Commons, 2 June, 1919, p. 3010-3013.

¹¹Quoted in Industrial Canada, July, 1919, p. 157.

characterized the troubled times of 1919. One can turn to a surfeit of explanations presented to the Mathers Commission, (established to investigate social and industrial unrest), by the workers themselves. Invariably, these bitter workers reflected on the War, and suggested a relationship to the current unrest. One man, an ex-soldier, confessed that "for years and years I never did any thinking", but started to do so during the course of the hostilities. Another man discovered that the War had taught that "every man was equal, and no man was entitled to be master and owner of resources".¹² It was a lesson that the labour press could well identify with.

When, therefore, the Winnipeg General Strike started, the papers supported it fully. The Labor News, Eastern Federationist, British Columbia Federationist, Industrial Banner, Brandon Confederate and the Western Labor News were among the many papers which gave it unqualified support. Basically, all of them saw the Strike as an attempt by the workers to wring justice out of an unfair and unyielding system.

Perhaps because of the obvious and pervasive sense of intense dissatisfaction, the labour press showed no surprise at the outbreak of the general strike in Winnipeg. Many of the papers had, by the spring of 1919, become convinced that the differences between labour and capital were irreconcilable. The more radical members of the fraternity, such as Winnipeg's own Western Labor News, were becoming increasingly Marxist, and spoke often of the need to replace capitalism with a "communistic

¹²Minutes of the Royal Commission on Industrial Relations, 1919, p. 558, 465.

commonwealth".¹³ While such statements could very well have been construed as deliberate plotting, they were almost certainly no more than idle speculation. The labour press in general was given to philosophizing, and the Western Labor News in particular was prone to overstatement. But during the course of the whole Strike, none of the papers played-up the affair enough to suggest that they realized it was to become a historically significant event. As a matter of fact, they emphasized it little more than other labour troubles.

Given the nature of union politics in Canada in 1919, it is worth mentioning that there is simply no evidence to suggest that the more conservative eastern papers were deliberately ignoring this Strike that involved the One Big Union. The support which the papers gave the strikers, indicates quite clearly where their sympathies lay. Also, they spent considerable time rebutting the many conspiracy charges that were levelled at the strikers by people in government, industry and the daily press.

During the first few days of May, unrest throughout the country was common, but there was nothing dramatic enough to indicate that a general strike might erupt. As late as May 16, the Western Labor News continued to demand action from government on the perplexing problems of unemployment and escalating prices. In the same editorial, however, it made an observation that appears especially acute in light of the events that were to take place in Winnipeg. It suggested that churches, mass meetings,

¹³ Western Labor News, 2 May, 1919.

and public speakers were inciting revolt simply because the traditional "safety valve" for discontent, Parliament, had become isolated and aloof from the problems of the country. The paper felt that as long as government continued to reflect oligarchic rather than popular opinion, social discontent would continue unabated.¹⁴ At that moment in time, the News seemed unaware of the fact that it was in the midst of a major labour uprising.

In Toronto, the Industrial Banner periodically proclaimed its solidarity with the Winnipeg workers throughout the course of the Strike. It did not, however, see the affair as worthy of its undivided attention. From a distance, the Winnipeg troubles might have appeared dwarfed by Toronto's own. The city's local TLC body talked of a "general cessation" of work throughout the spring of 1919. There were several major strikes. On May 1, more than 8500 metal workers walked off their jobs in search of higher wages and shorter hours. They were joined a week later by 3148 meat packers, 400 printers, and an additional 4660 metal workers. Such work stoppages were common throughout the summer especially among the metal trades.¹⁵ The Banner, therefore, did not need Winnipeg to fill its

¹⁴ Ibid., 16 May, 1919. This idea apparently originated with the New Statesman, a British paper.

¹⁵ See Industrial Banner, May 2, 9, 16, June 27, July 4, 1919. In response to the unrest, the city of Toronto passed "red flag" laws in mid-May, declaring that "No person use, display, carry, wave, or otherwise exhibit any flag...or other device intended to encourage...opposition to constituted law and order, or to lead to unrest, strife or discontent among the people", quoted in Ibid., 23 May, 1919.

editorial page. Predictably, of course, it found time to suggest that what was happening in the prairie city was symptomatic of the feelings of people throughout the country.¹⁶ In its last May issue, the paper declared that "every" worker in Toronto supported the Winnipeg strikers, realizing as they did that the struggle for "economic justice" being waged in that city, affected every worker in the entire nation.¹⁷

Like the Banner, the other papers realized that the problems that confronted the Winnipeg workers were not unique. The Eastern Federationist in Nova Scotia was especially supportive, perhaps because it had a similar situation brewing in its own backyard. A general strike started in Amherst on May 20 and lasted well into June. Four days after the Amherst strike commenced, the city's Federation of Labour which referred to itself as the One Big Union, lent its moral support to Winnipeg by a vote of 1185 to 1.¹⁸ The Federationist applauded this manifestation of the "sympathetic principle", and compared it to the support that the Empire lent the mother country in four years of bitter war.¹⁹

At the other end of the country, the Strike did not generate any great enthusiasm or controversy. The British Columbia Federationist treated the call for a general work stoppage as one of several news items

¹⁶ Ibid., 23 May, 1919.

¹⁷ Ibid., 30 May, 1919.

¹⁸ Nolan Reilly, "The General Strike in Amherst, Nova Scotia, 1919", Acadiensis, Spring, 1980, p. 56-77.

¹⁹ Eastern Federationist, 7 June, 1919.

in its May 22 issue. The significance of the strike did not register at all. Strangely enough, the paper did not even interpret the affair in ideological terms. As a matter of fact, it had more to say about the abundance of overstatement than about the Strike itself.²⁰

Democracy is alright in Germany, or any other place but at home. But let democracy be so much as mentioned in Canada, and we are told that revolution is stalking our midst, that constitutional government is threatened.

The Federationist considered the Strike neither revolutionary nor Soviet-inspired. It saw the outbreak as a last recourse by which the workers hoped to wring the most basic of democratic rights, namely collective bargaining, out of intransigent and reactionary employers. The paper was convinced that the Strike could be ended by the mere granting of that right.²¹ It was a sentiment shared by many.

There were, of course, radical ideologues like the small Brandon Confederate which viewed the Strike as the culmination of a long process. With its predilection for the dramatic, the paper considered the outbreak unavoidable. The influence of the Marxian dialectic is obvious in its observations.²²

There are always those who oppose progress and stand for...the conservation of the existing order of things. In the age of revolution such as we are now passing through, these reactionaries are bound to suffer for they have put their faith in the old doctrine that the few shall dominate the many: that day is at an end, the old order changeth, capitalism is at an end. Democracy is knocking at the door.

²⁰ British Columbia Federationist, 22 May, 1919.

²¹ Ibid., 6 June, 1919.

²² Brandon Confederate, 16 May, 1919.

Those of the Confederate's persuasion, possessed of the certainty of cause and effect that might well escape the more relective, were in a definite minority. The expectation of revolution was no longer very prominent in the labour press. The authoritarian ending of the Strike would crush the idea completely.

By early June, measures to stop the strike and its leaders were evolving. An amendment to the Immigration Act, Section 41, made it possible to deport those who sought to overthrow the government.²³ Also Section 98 of the Criminal Code was amended to make it unlawful to associate with those who "propose or defend the use of violence to bring about either political or economic change". Membership in such an organization, or attendance at such meetings, were punishable by up to twenty years in prison. To make matters worse, the repeal of Section 133 removed basic protection for the disenchanteds; it had stated that it was "not seditious to point out the mistakes of government in good faith".²⁴ These were draconian measures indeed.

The evident paranoia reached into the military also. An amendment to the Militia Act in June increased Canada's permanent force from 5000 to 10,000 men. The military authorities considered that a "necessary and urgent matter before the rising tide of the unemployed faced the rigours of the winter". The Minister of Militia, General Mewburn, was prompted

²³Masters, Winnipeg General Strike, p. 103.

²⁴Ibid., p. 138.

to increase such "aid to the civil power" by the Winnipeg strike.²⁵

The labour press was obviously incensed at the heavy-handed methods which ended the Strike. They were generally convinced that the manipulation of the country's laws was a real indication that, as the Eastern Federationist suggested, labour would be trampled upon while "the rich, blood-sucking profiteers" would be allowed free rein.²⁶

To their credit, the papers seemed to instinctively realize that the laws, no matter how oppressive, would remain in force for some time. Therefore, rather than seek immediate changes, they tried to reap some political gain by pointing out the fallacy of past government policy in respect to immigration. For no sooner had the amendments to the Immigration Act been passed, than a spate of "We told you so" editorials appeared. Typical of these very illiberal condemnations was this one which appeared in the Labor News, 12 June, 1919, which self-righteously declared that it had²⁷

protested time and time again against the wholesale importation of these people,* and now Canada is beginning to reap the benefits of its mad desire to populate the country with anything that would work cheap.

²⁵ John Swettenham, McNaughton, Vol. 1, 1887-1939, Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1968, p. 180.

²⁶ Eastern Federationist, 28 June, 1919.

²⁷ Labor News, 12 June, 1919.

*Some of "these people" had been in Canada since 1899. Others had served with the Canadian army; one had been twice wounded. All were denied trial by jury and had their cases heard by a special committee of the Immigration Department, Western Labor News, 1 August, 1919.

The Eastern Federationist was quick to point out that it, too, had opposed immigration, and that had the government listened to its warnings, dictatorial measures would not be necessary to halt the Winnipeg General Strike.

It might appear that the labour press was implicitly accepting the alien agitator argument that the government had propagated. This, however, was not so. It simply found the need of the authorities to resort to such measures politically convenient. The Federationist, for instance, needled the establishment by suggesting that "Capital had mixed the medicine, and now don't like the taste of it", and predicted that it would "have to cough up a lot more before long".²⁸ As for the deportation of aliens, the paper considered it a foolhardy and futile attempt to legislate out of existence ideas which were considered threatening.²⁹

In a sense, the Federationist was right; the government could not bury ideas. It could, however, suspend their implementation, and this the labour press seemed to understand. The Industrial Banner, for instance, showed no surprise at the government's tampering with the law; it expected as much from a capitalist government.³⁰

The papers realized that the crushing of the Strike marked the end of the dream of a utopia. The affair had ruthlessly demonstrated that

²⁸Eastern Federationist, 14 June, 1919.

²⁹ibid., 21 June, 1919.

³⁰Industrial Banner, 13 June, 1919.

constituted will of the social and economic elite could prevail against a popular cause. This made the papers examine past pronouncements on social change. The British Columbia Federationist in its last issue, 8 August, 1919, admitted that it had been far too optimistic in the past, that the revolution would not be spontaneous, that it would only come about through worker electoral participation "at every level".³¹ The Western Labor News did not turn away from its radicalism, but it did shake the delusion that a brave new world was imminent; it described labour's mood in September as "hope without enthusiasm".³² It also admitted that the General Strike had been a great defeat for labour, though remained convinced that the march of this "titanic social force" towards justice was "majestically inexorable and inevitable".³³ It is doubtful that the News believed that itself in the fall of 1919. The Industrial Banner, wondering "what did we fight for?" certainly did not.³⁴

To a rather naïve labour press, the Strike forcefully demonstrated the extent to which the constituted authority would go to stop any attempt to effect radical change in Canadian society. And, it must be remembered, the papers had certainly looked forward to this since 1916. The ending of

³¹ British Columbia Federationist, 8 August, 1919.

³² Western Labor News, 19 September, 1919.

³³ Ibid., 31 September, 1919.

³⁴ Industrial Banner, 29 August, 1919.

the Strike made them realize that the conservative nature of the controlling oligarch would accept only slow, gradual change, and only if the existing system could accommodate it without serious disruptions. A political approach, within the existing parliamentary framework, seemed like the only alternative.³⁵

³⁵ Surprisingly, the Industrial Banner, which had been among the most idealistic and democratic of the labour papers, began losing faith in parliamentary democracy at the time when the others were gravitating towards that strategy. This is perhaps suggestive of the disillusionment which all the papers felt in 1919. In a 29 August, 1919, editorial, the Banner declared its "growing distrust of the efficacy of parliamentary institutions" and was leaning towards the "idea of what is called "direct action".

CONCLUSION

War of the magnitude of the great conflict of 1914-18 must inevitably involve virtually every individual of every belligerent nation. Almost of necessity, it must lead humanity to question the basic foundations of the social and political order that allowed it to happen. In such a conflict, everybody feels its impact.

World War I had a special significance for Canada's labour press, just as it did for practically the whole of the Western world's socialist community. In their opinion, military conflict did not originate in the minds of men as nationalist manifestations; it was instead a product of capitalism, which in turn was perhaps socialism's raison d'être. It follows then that the labour press, edited and written almost exclusively by socialists of one kind or another, would exhibit more than a little critical interest in a conflict that became staggeringly bloody and destructive, which involved, moreover, both real and concocted atrocities. The one paper that initially disavowed any taste for socialism, the Labor News of Hamilton, also took a strong pro-war stance.

The purpose of this thesis has been to document the attitudes, the motives and the purpose expressed by the English Canadian labour press to the causes and effects of the titanic struggle. Assessing the effects of the War and its aftermath was the primary goal of the thesis, especially after the initial research suggested a strong connection between the ideals nurtured by the war experience and the social unrest that followed the hostilities.

It was obvious from the very beginning that a major determinant of editorial opinion was the political leanings of the various papers. Without exception, the more socialistic the papers tended to be, the more critical they were. The Canadian Forward and the Western Clarion,

for example, were both Marxist papers which looked cynically upon every move that government made. At the other extreme was the Labor News, a supporter of Gompers-style, conservative unionism. Its strident patriotism was no different from that of the tory dailies.

The largest group of papers can be considered neither extreme right-wing nor extreme left-wing in so far as labour politics was concerned. This group, on which this thesis basically relies, included such well known and widely-read labour advocates as the Industrial Banner of Toronto, the Voice of Winnipeg, and the British Columbia Federationist. Their analysis of the War and wartime Canada was certainly influenced by moderate socialist thought, but not to the extent as to make their opinion entirely predictable. Though committed to a socialist ideal, and hence, to pacifism, these labour socialists were perhaps as objective as most commentators in examining World War One, and gauging its impact upon Canadian society. Their opinions were, admittedly, shaped to some extent by some strongly-held, preconceived notions about war and capitalism, but, so, too, were most peoples'.

So political philosophy did influence the way the various papers looked at the War. This, however, did not prevent the emergence of common themes. These, for the most part, have evolved as chapters in this study. The first and most obvious of these themes is the intense, unrestrained and virtually changeless loathing of militarism. The labour press vilified the philosophy for four years, both the German and the domestic variety. Secondly, there was the ever-present mistrust of both the political and economic establishment, a feeling that was only embellished by the fact that both elites were all too frequently indistinguishable. This mistrust mounted as business profits grew fat on war orders,

while the casualty list increased proportionately. Thirdly, and probably of greatest significance in assessing the intellectual impact of the War on the subsequent post-war social and industrial unrest, was the virtually unquestioning belief in the inevitability of change for the better with the cessation of hostilities. The undefined "New Order" - a phrase that was neither coined by the labour press nor unique to it - was expected to follow quickly when the guns fell silent. When the prophesy did not fulfill itself, the labour press reacted as if the working class had been betrayed by a government that had, tacitly, at least, promised more.

Essentially, these voices of labour came to see the War as an instrument of social change. They seemed to suggest that if the world was to survive, a radical departure from the politics, the spirit, and the institutions which precipitated the struggle was absolutely necessary. The War was a product of the system, and as J.S. Woodsworth suggested, "The true socialist always blames the system".¹ The papers were convinced that militarism and war, far from being in the Treitschkean sense, noble and necessary, was instead base and devoid of any redeeming social value. The general conclusion, and one that was consistent with socialist orthodoxy, was that the War was a product of two evils, militarism and capitalism. The labour press often saw them as inseparable. They certainly believed that where there was capitalism, there was also the roots of war.

¹ British Columbia Federationist, 30 December, 1918.

While the papers were not exactly uncritical of Canadian society, they quickly came to believe that the destruction of German militarism was the essential goal in this "war for democracy". They could not, however, condone the use of "the people" as an endless supply of cannon fodder while the business elite made millions out of their suffering. If democracy was such a universal virtue - and the labour press held it to be - then it was certainly worth pursuing with all the resources at the nation's disposal. That meant that no individual had the right to take part of those resources for his personal aggrandizement, which is exactly what the labour press "knew" the businessmen to be doing.

Thus out of the War came proof of socialism's long-time postulates - that capitalism caused war and then made money from supplying it with the necessary material. Little wonder that the labour press, convinced that the evils of the system had finally been exposed, foresaw a massive rejection of that system with the coming of peace. Reconstruction, or "Reconstruction along more humanitarian lines", as the papers persisted in saying, would surely replace capitalism.

In the end of course, it must be recognized that much of what was said, constituted a mixture of idealism, wishful thinking, and naivete. There was almost certainly some political opportunism involved as well. But the genuine shock and disbelief which characterized the reaction to the post-war problems suggest that the labour press fully believed that the working man had paid his dues during the War, and that he should be justly rewarded for saving the country. When the "New Order" emerged virtually unchanged from the old, the papers came to the conclusion that the workers of Canada had been denied the goal for which they had fought, namely, democracy. Capitalism still reigned supreme, and the economic

miseries of the working class had not been swept away. This thesis has speculated that the social and industrial unrest of 1919, including the Winnipeg General Strike, grew out of frustrations generated by this seeming betrayal.

The question that begs an answer is this: Was the labour press a voice crying in the wilderness? To such an abstract query, there is no easy answer. The labour papers were small in terms of circulation, but as disseminators of social ideas, they probably had an impact beyond that which their numbers might suggest. During the War, the government adopted a number of measures that were certainly at variance with its laissez-faire principles, including extensive investigations into food and fuel prices. Prime Minister Borden also sought greater use of "fair wage" clauses during the War, thinking that it would at least appease labour somewhat, and still some of the angry voices.² Neither these, nor countless other policies, can, of course, be directly attributed to the labour press. But neither can the influence of the papers be dismissed as negligible on a government that obviously had little taste for intervention in the business affairs of the country.

Perhaps of greater import than the influence the papers may have had upon immediate government policy, is their long-term effect. Measuring that is admittedly a highly speculative endeavour as well. But, certainly, one cannot deny that the labour press and countless organs similarly inclined planted the seeds of thought in men's mind that made war far less

²Bercuson, "Organized Labour", p. 609.

acceptable than it was in 1914. In social and economic affairs, no utopia has emerged but the coexistence of the slum and the mansion had become a little harder for an increasing number of people to accept. The labour press cannot claim major credit for these developments, of course, but the effect of its indiscible agitation cannot be totally discounted.

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